

Civility in the Workplace and its Impact on Patient Care

PART TWO; What is Your Theme Tune

Video Summary

Introduction and Learning Objectives

00:00:00 - 00:01:32

The main objective is to recognize that teams have reputations or "theme tunes," influencing how they are perceived. Understanding this allows teams to manage their reputations effectively. Chris mentions the "Civility Saves Lives" resource, which is free to use commercially or otherwise, emphasizing its importance. He then poses the question, "What's your theme tune?" and transitions into a personal anecdote.

The Registrar's Theme Tune: A Case of Miscommunication

00:01:32 - 00:03:20

Chris shares a story about a registrar whose theme tune for him, unbeknownst to Chris, was the Jaws theme. A senior nurse, Becky, informed Chris that the registrar believed Chris had called them a bad doctor incapable of managing the "shop floor." Chris, surprised by this feedback, as he held a positive view of the registrar's competence, investigated the situation. Checking the rota, Chris realized he hadn't seen the registrar during their shared shifts over the past week, despite working in a large, but not overwhelmingly so, emergency department that saw 700-800 patients daily. This led Chris to conclude that the registrar was intentionally avoiding him.

Addressing Perceived Negative Impressions

00:03:20 - 00:05:50

Chris recounts initiating a meeting with the individual to address the issue directly, expressing their positive view of the colleague's abilities. The colleague initially expressed disbelief, did not think that Chris was being honest; thus, highlighting a disconnect in perception. The conversation then shifted to Chris's commute from Birmingham to Coventry, explaining their habit of arriving early at work around 6:45 am to avoid traffic, entering through the ambulance area to assess the rapid assessment and resuscitation areas.

Morning Rounds and Department Conditions Pre-COVID

00:05:50 - 00:07:13

Chris describes his morning routine of interacting with staff and gathering information. He emphasizes the disinhibited atmosphere and the valuable insights gained. Chris

then details the overcrowded conditions of the department pre-COVID, with patients overflowing from cubicles into corridors, hindering cleaning efforts and creating a chaotic environment.

Conversation with Registrar and Misinterpretation

00:07:13 - 00:08:24

Chris recounts that at the time he asked about the previous night's shift. His question about "when the wheels fell off" was intended to understand the timing of the department's decline, but was misinterpreted by the exhausted registrar as a personal accusation of incompetence. Chris acknowledges the registrar's perspective, given the stressful overnight work conditions and heightened sensitivity to perceived criticism.

Misinterpretations, Communication Effectiveness and Determinants

00:08:25 - 00:14:46

He poses a question to the audience: when communicating with emotion, data, or sarcasm, what percentage do they believe the other person understands? He extends this to email communication, asking the audience to consider their comprehension in both sending and receiving messages. Chris then introduces the findings of Kruger and Epley's study, revealing that people tend to overestimate how much others understand their messages, believing recipients grasp around 80% of spoken or emailed content. Conversely, people believe they understand around 90% of what they receive. Chris notes that people understand about 78% of spoken communication, close to the predicted 80%, but only 56% of emailed communication. This discrepancy is attributed to the instant feedback received during in-person conversations, allowing for clarification and adjustment, versus the lack thereof in emails. Chris then delves into the determinants of communication, starting with words, tone, and movement. He addresses the common misconception that communication is only 7% words, citing Albert Mehrabian's research, which focuses on situations where words and behavior are incongruent. Chris emphasizes that when words and behavior align, words play a much larger role. He concludes by introducing the sender's mood as another communication determinant.

Importance of Mood, Reputation, and Context in Interpretation

00:14:46 - 00:17:15

Chris explains that people interpret information based on their current mood, meaning a negative mood can lead to misinterpreting neutral or even positive statements. He gives the example of busy employees forced to attend a meeting, preoccupied with their workload, and unable to fully engage. Chris then highlights the significant role of the

speaker's reputation, noting that a good reputation encourages listeners to be receptive, while a negative one fosters suspicion. He illustrates this with the scenario of how his message would be perceived differently depending on the audience's pre-existing opinion of him.

Impact of Email on Communication

00:17:15 - 00:18:05

Chris transitions to discussing the impact of email on communication. He points out that email strips away crucial non-verbal cues like body language and tone of voice, leaving only the words on the page for interpretation. He explains that the sender's mood and other contextual factors are lost in email, making it difficult for the recipient to accurately gauge the intended meaning. This loss of information forces recipients to rely solely on the written words, increasing the risk of misinterpretation.

Impact of Email Tone and Sender Reputation

00:18:05 - 00:18:51

Chris discusses the complexities of interpreting email tone, noting the influence of sarcasm, the recipient's mood, and the sender's reputation. He points out that people react differently to emails based on their existing relationship with the sender, with some individuals eliciting positive anticipation while others trigger apprehension.

Anecdote about Shulie and Email Interpretation

00:18:51 - 00:22:34

Chris shares an anecdote about Shulie, his wife, highlighting a situation where he was in trouble with Shulie for an unknown reason, creating a tense atmosphere. It was at this time that Shulie received a positive email from a magazine accepting her unsolicited article and offering her £200 for it. Shulie misinterpreted the email, perceiving sarcasm where none was intended. He explains that Shulie was already in a negative mood due to a previous disagreement, which influenced her interpretation. This negativity bias, while evolutionarily beneficial for threat detection, can lead to miscommunication.

Marius Holmes: A Positive Influence

00:22:34 - 00:24:58

Chris shifts the discussion to positive email interactions, introducing Marius Holmes as someone whose emails always make him happy. He describes Marius as a tall, intelligent, kind, and irreverent individual. Chris shares an anecdote about a talk he gave at a college conference, where Princess Anne was in attendance. He told Marius he planned to use his picture in the presentation, explaining that Marius's humor,

particularly in his email, was the reason. Chris recounts telling Marius about this, to which Marius responded with a straight face, "they are not meant to be funny." Chris reflects on the power of reputation, suggesting that a positive reputation can make even mundane communications seem more appealing.

Birmingham's Treacherous Roads and Road Rage

00:25:02 - 00:26:52

Shifting from reputation to actions, Chris shares a story about Birmingham's confusing road system. He describes experiencing road rage towards reckless drivers in the city's tunnels, but then reconsiders his perspective. Chris concludes that the drivers he initially judged as idiots might simply be lost and stressed, and not intentionally reckless.

Driving Anecdote and Fundamental Attribution Error

00:26:52 - 00:29:48

Chris discusses the concept of fundamental attribution error, where people attribute others' actions to their character rather than the situation. He illustrates this with a personal anecdote about driving in Canada on the opposite side of the road to what he is used to, causing other drivers to perceive him as incompetent. He explains how this relates to the illusion of transparency, where individuals assume others understand their motivations and circumstances, even without explicit explanation. Chris emphasizes the importance of communication to avoid misinterpretations based on observed actions.

Interpreting Actions and Normative Ethics

00:29:50 - 00:32:46

Chris discusses the implications of poor communication and how it leads to misinterpretations of actions. He explains that people generally believe they are doing the right thing, even when others perceive their actions as wrong. This tendency is highlighted by the contrast between how frequently people observe others doing wrong versus how often they admit to doing wrong themselves. This leads into a discussion of normative ethics, specifically within healthcare, where principles like beneficence, non-maleficence, justice, and autonomy guide decision-making. Chris notes that the dominance of these principles varies across cultures, using the example of autonomy being prioritized in his culture while family considerations take precedence in his wife's Bangladeshi culture, where family decisions can override individual autonomy even in end-of-life care.

Different Approaches to Ethics

00:32:46 - 00:35:36

Chris discusses various ethical frameworks. He contrasts principleist ethics with normative ethics, focusing on what makes an action right. He outlines three main groups: consequentialists (focused on the end result, regardless of the means), deontologists (focused on following rules, regardless of the outcome), and those who make practically wise decisions (phronesis) specific to the situation. Chris uses examples like getting kids to school on time despite breaking traffic laws (consequentialism), and the pressure on senior executives to hit targets, leading to potentially unethical behavior (also consequentialism). He cites the Mid-Staffordshire scandal as an example of consequentialism's negative impact. He then contrasts this with deontology, prevalent in UK nursing, where strict adherence to rules is paramount, even if it leads to negative outcomes, again referencing Mid-Staffordshire where nurses were penalized for deviating from rules despite feeling like they had "no choice" at the time. Finally, he introduces phronesis, a more nuanced approach based on making wise decisions in the context of the specific situation.

The Illusion of Transparency and Fundamental Attribution Error

00:35:36 - 00:38:43

Chris discusses the illusion of transparency and fundamental attribution error in the context of medical decision-making. He explains how even small changes in a situation can lead to different "right" decisions, and how doctors are trained to consider these nuances. This can lead to variations in practice, where different doctors make different choices in seemingly identical situations, leading to misunderstandings and the perception of errors. Chris argues that communication and understanding are key to bridging this gap, as understanding others' perspectives requires actively listening and acknowledging that we don't have full access to their reasoning. He emphasizes the importance of accepting that we will sometimes interpret things incorrectly, and that others will misinterpret us as well. By explaining our rationale and listening to others' perspectives, we can navigate disagreements more effectively and make better choices. Finally, he touches on the importance of reputation, particularly in written communication like email, as it's the primary factor we control.

Building Your Reputation

00:38:44 - 00:39:17

Chris discusses the importance of reputation management, suggesting participants consider what "theme tune" they want to play in other people's minds when they interact. He poses the question of how one needs to behave to cultivate the desired perception.