

Caring with Compassion, Planning with Confidence

A Practical Crosswalk for a Person-Centred Palliative Approach to Care

Bridging Compassionate Conversations and Emotionally Intuitive, Competency-Based Care

This tool is designed to help healthcare providers practice emotionally intuitive, competency-based palliative care skills that support patients and families throughout their illness journey. Rooted in the Canadian Interdisciplinary Palliative Care Competency Framework, the tool introduces and applies a crosswalk between three foundational elements that support your daily practices:

- **Palliative Care Competency Domains** – the knowledge, behaviours, and values needed to deliver high-quality care.
- **The Seven Keys from “Hope for the Best, Plan for the Rest”** – questions and conversations that help people plan and cope.
- **Emotional Intelligence (EI) Abilities** – the skills and behaviours you need to recognize, understand and manage emotions to deliver compassionate care.

Together, these elements support a holistic, informed, person-centred, and emotionally responsive care approach.

What Are Competencies?

Competency is the ability to perform a task or function effectively and efficiently. It goes beyond just knowing something or being able to do something. True competency is demonstrated when individuals integrate and apply their skills, knowledge, and attitudes in real-world settings, especially in challenging and unfamiliar situations.

Skills: Practical abilities developed through training and experience, including clinical techniques and interpersonal communication in home-based palliative care.

Knowledge: Acquired understanding of illness, care practices, and cultural contexts essential for effective, informed palliative care delivery in the home setting.

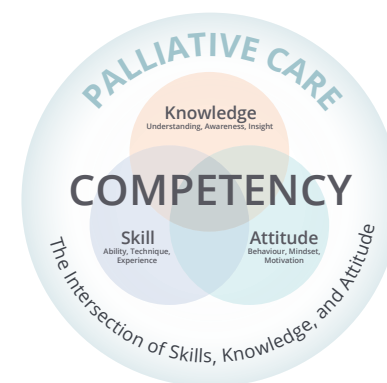
Attitude: Emotional intelligence shapes values and beliefs and guides compassionate, respectful, and emotionally aware interactions.

What is the Crosswalk?

The Crosswalk is a tool that links palliative care competencies with emotionally intelligent behaviours and practical communication strategies. Each section of the Crosswalk includes:

- Reflective Questions to help guide conversations with patients, families, or team members.
- EI Course Connections that link emotional intelligence abilities with the situation.
- Actions you can apply to both clinical and relational aspects of care.

Whether you're a nurse, personal support worker, or other healthcare provider, the Crosswalk can help you deliver care that is not only competent—but also compassionate, connected, and aligned with what matters most to those you serve.



How to use the Crosswalk

This tool is intended to support:



- Self-reflection – Identify your strengths and areas for growth.
- Team discussions – Use questions and case examples to deepen group learning.
- Practice improvement – Apply the questions and actions in real-time to improve communication, planning, and emotional engagement.

Palliative Care Competencies Domains of Practice	The Seven Keys Hope for the Best, Plan for the Rest ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS	eiCOMPASS Project Emotional Intelligence Abilities TAKING THE RIGHT ACTIONS
<p>Competency = Skills + Knowledge + Attitude</p> <p>The competencies required to provide people with palliative care whenever and wherever they need it.</p> <p>Domain 1–Principles of a Palliative Approach to Care</p> <p>Domain 2–Cultural Safety and Humility</p> <p>Domain 3–Communications</p> <p>Domain 4–Optimizing Comfort and Quality of Life</p> <p>Domain 5–Care Planning and Collaborative Practice</p> <p>Domain 6–Last Days and Hours</p> <p>Domain 7–Loss, Grief and Bereavement</p> <p>Domain 8–Self-Care</p> <p>Domain 9–Professional and Ethical Practice</p> <p>Domain 10–Education, Evaluation, Quality Improvement and Research</p> <p>Domain 11–Advocacy</p> <p>Domain 12–Virtual Care</p>	<p>From “In the Dark” to “In the Know”</p> <p>Understanding your illness journey and how you feel.</p> <p>Understanding and Preparing for What’s Ahead</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How important is it for you to have information about the reality of your illness?</i> • <i>How ready are you to learn more about your illness?</i> • <i>How much is it in your nature to seek information?</i> • <i>Is your illness chronic, progressive, and/or life-limiting?</i> • <i>What different emotions have you felt along your illness journey so far?</i> • <i>What are you most worried about?</i> 	<p>Recognizing, understanding, managing and using emotions to navigate the journey (as a caregiver, care provider or patient).</p> <p>Course 1: Emotional Self-Awareness and Mindfulness</p> <p>Course 2: Acceptance and Recognizing Biases</p> <p>Course 3: Social Skills and Adapting</p> <p>Course 4: Decision-Making and Reality Testing</p> <p>Course 5: Interpersonal Relationships and Valuing Voices</p> <p>Course 6: Empathy and Reframing</p> <p>Course 7: Emotional Expression and Setting Boundaries</p> <p>Course 8: Stress Tolerance and Shifting Perspective</p> <p>Course 9: Conflict Management and Inner/Outer Listening</p> <p>Course 10: Self-Actualization and Practicing with Intent</p> <p>Course 11: Motivation and Priority Setting</p> <p>Course 12: Maintaining Focus and Self-Regulation</p>





Common threads – What are the skills, knowledge/understanding, attitudes and behaviours you bring with you on the journey? (without judgement and with kindness: assessing where you are starting from and what you might need education, practice or support with)

Using the head (what they think), heart (what they feel) and hands (what they do) lens to understanding patients and caregivers’ experiences.

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<p>Questions and actions to support competencies in:</p> <p>Domain 1–Principles of a Palliative Approach to Care</p> <p>Domain 3–Communication</p> <p>Domain 4–Optimizing Comfort and Quality of Life</p>	<p>Key #1: Walk Two Roads</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Sharing preferences · “Getting real” about your illness · Identifying things you are hoping for at this and different stages of the illness · Identify ‘what if’ scenarios and a potential response <p>QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · <i>Do you feel pressure to be constantly positive?</i> · <i>Is there anything you wish you could talk about?</i> · <i>At this stage of your illness journey, what are you hoping for?</i> · <i>Which what-if scenarios are you worried about, or might you prepare for should things not go exactly as planned?</i> 	<p>EI Course #1: Emotional Self Awareness and Mindfulness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Role of emotions when someone is diagnosed with a life-limiting illness · Recognizing and understanding how your emotions, and those of patients and their families, influence thoughts and actions · Assumption “You stay positive or you give up” / Reality “Hope is grounded in realistic information” <p>ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Take a mindful moment for yourself before you visit your next client · When giving clients new information: check if they understand, ask how they feel and what they want to do · Encourage patients and families to take a moment to reflect on what they are learning





Common threads – Being present to ‘what is,’ meeting people where they are at, and collaborative communication. Emotional intelligence helps you understand and validate emotions, enabling patient-centered care. Mindfulness means you fully engage in the current moment and pay attention to your thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment without reacting.

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Common threads – Getting clear on what to expect/expectations and sharing information to help make informed decisions/recommendations.

When you have strong emotional intelligence skills, you can communicate effectively, make rational decisions, and provide holistic care.

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<p>Questions and actions to support competencies in:</p> <p>Domain 2–Cultural Safety and Humility Domain 3–Communication Domain 8–Self-Care</p>	<p>Key #3: Know Your Style</p> <p>Everyone has unique styles of emotional, behavioural, coping and decision-making patterns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information Seeking • Conversation Style • Planning • Assertiveness <p>QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How do you typically deal with challenges? < 1 2 3 4 ></i> • <i>Information Seeking: Wait to be told Super Seeker</i> • <i>Conversations: Sugar-coated Straight Up</i> • <i>Planning: Day to Day Super Planner</i> • <i>Assertiveness: Passive Assertive</i> • <i>Decisiveness: Indecisive Decisive</i> • <i>Coping: Unhealthy Patterns Healthy</i> • <i>Need for Privacy: Private Open</i> • <i>Organization Style: Disorganized Organized</i> 	<p>EI Course #3: Social Skills and Adapting Communication Styles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizing how emotions influence trust and relationships • Adapting your approach to accommodate different ways patients, their families, and healthcare team members hear and share information • Assumption “The disease is the whole story” / Reality “Your style and approach greatly influences your story” <p>ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use active listening - ask open-ended/clarifying questions. “Can you tell me more about that?” • Look for non-verbal cues - facial expressions and body language • Be aware of how different people like to communicate. Observe how they express themselves and try to match your style with theirs





Common threads – The ways we perceive and express ourselves influences our interactions and the care that is offered and received. Using your social skills and adapting your communication styles enables you to connect deeply, address emotions, reduce stress, and create a supportive environment.

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Common threads – Care planning integrates peoples' wishes, values, beliefs and preferences for care, care that is relational and not transactional/getting off the 'conveyor belt'.
 Use your emotional intelligence skills when you interact with others, to truly listen and deeply honour their perspectives.

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Common threads – How are you showing up for yourself and others?
 What would support you to show up in the way that you want?
 What can you ask for help with?

Think of building your stress tolerance as navigating a river. Avoid the rough waters of stress and the stillness of disconnection. Aim for balance, and remember, you control your path.



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<p>Questions and actions to support competencies in:</p> <p>Domain 1–Principles of a Palliative Approach to Care Domain 3–Communication Domain 5–Care Planning and Collaborative Practice Domain 10–Education, Evaluation, Quality Improvement and Research</p>	<p>Key #6: Connect the Dots</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinating between your inner crew and healthcare providers • Identify your ‘illness manager’ (who communicates well, is organized, can keep track of important information, capable of making decisions under stress...) and key healthcare providers • Collect contact information and know what to do in an emergency/who to contact after hours • Put a system in place for tracking important health care information • Share information (don’t assume healthcare team knows, especially at transition points) 	<p>EI Course #6: Empathy and Reframing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledging emotional intensity patients and families are feeling and tailoring your responses. • Helping others see multiple perspectives during emotionally charged situations. • Assumption “The system will lead coordination” / Reality “Someone must manage your illness journey” <p>ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be curious and seek to understand others’ perspectives. Ask an open-ended questions that start with “what,” “how,” or “why”. • Give your full attention to others when talking with them, don’t interrupt and summarize what you heard. • Think about your emotions and how they influence your interactions. • Watch body language. Make eye contact, nod, smile, and frown to express empathy • Try the “catch it, check it, change it” approach to help you pinpoint and transform negative or unproductive thoughts



Common threads –Managing transitions in a proactive way, helping to navigate emotions as well as the ‘system’, noticing assumptions and needs and addressing them.

Approach conversations with an open mind, pick up on silent cues, tap into your emotions, and let your actions show you care.

Reframing, the art of seeing situations from fresh angles, amplifies empathy. This mindset promotes positivity even when faced with adversity, ensuring emotional stability for everyone involved in palliative care.

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<p>Questions and actions to support competencies in:</p> <p>Domain 3– Communication Domain 4–Optimizing Comfort and Quality of Life Domain 11–Advocacy</p>	<p>Key #7 Invite Yourself</p> <p>Being respectfully assertive in your illness story Reflecting on your typical style: passive, respectfully assertive or aggressive If this is a challenge for you, then identify someone from your inner crew who can join you at appointments to be your advocate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare for appointments • Prioritize your questions • Indicate that you have questions at the beginning of the appointment • Bring a support person to take notes or ask permission to record <p>QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“We have been sharing a lot of information with you and I know it can feel overwhelming. Today we want to focus on... is there anything that you want to make sure we cover?”</i> • <i>Are there any questions or concerns that have come up that you want to make sure we cover?</i> 	<p>EI Course # 11: Motivation and Priority Setting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowing how to prioritize and evaluate actions that will influence patient and family well-being • Staying purpose driven and balancing wants, needs and essentials when advocating for patients and families • Assumption “The Doctors will tell me what I need to know, when I need to know it” / Reality “ Doctors often wait for you to initiate questions” <p>ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define goals by starting with what the patient wants to achieve • Stay positive and foster an attitude of optimism, focusing on opportunities rather than hurdles • Be realistic and don't procrastinate, keep your attention on the task you're working on • Look for new information and options that may be appropriate • Celebrate achievements, even if they are small



Common threads –Attention, Intention, Attitude (what am I noticing, what do I want to help achieve and how can I do this with mutual respect, understanding and compassion?)

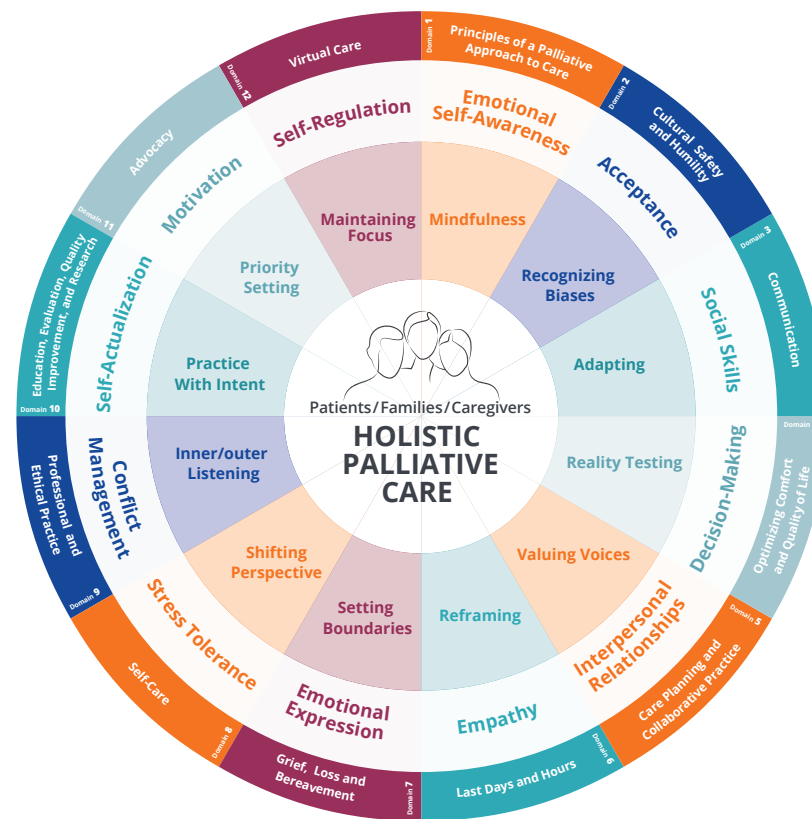
To be a good patient advocate you have to consistently work on priority setting and nurture your emotional intelligence and motivation.

Think about the ABCs of Emotional Intelligence at least once a day, and before you know it, you'll have a stronger grasp of Emotional Intelligence.

Awareness–Recognize your emotions and those of others. By understanding and managing these feelings, you can respond thoughtfully, avoiding impulsive reactions.

Balance– Reflect on and keep your emotions balanced. Don't let a single feeling, good or bad, dominate. Balance helps you react better in situations.

Compassion–Understand and acknowledge emotions. By showing empathy and compassion, you build stronger, more empathetic relationships.





Developing emotionally intuitive
competency-based
palliative care skills

About the eiCOMPASS Project

Over the past two and a half years, the eiCOMPASS Project has supported frontline care providers in adopting the Canadian Interdisciplinary Palliative Care Competency Framework by integrating Emotional Intelligence (EI) tools to enhance the delivery of emotionally intuitive, competency-based palliative care. Led by the Canadian Home Care Association (CHCA), the project brought together organizations providing home-based palliative care across Canada to strengthen nurses' and personal care workers' skills. The CHCA raised awareness of the Competency Framework and developed EI training and tools to reinforce these essential skills.

Through the SPRINT™ Implementation Collaborative, care teams across Canada were supported in adopting and practicing these competencies.

Throughout the project, eiCOMPASS delivered valuable knowledge products, including:

- **Information briefs and expert testimonials** highlighting the Competency Framework's content and significance.
- **National awareness campaigns** emphasizing key palliative care skills.
- The **SPRINT™ Implementation Collaborative**, which enabled organizations to test and implement the Competency Framework, EI microlearning, and other advanced tools.
- **Comprehensive toolkits** to help organizations integrate the Competency Framework and enhance frontline providers' palliative care expertise.

This initiative was made possible through a Health Canada Health Care Policy Contribution Program grant and has contributed to the ongoing improvement of palliative care delivery across Canada.



The Waiting Room Revolution

Drs. Seow and Winemaker have developed a public-oriented program of resources aimed at empowering patients and families to initiate a palliative care approach earlier in their illness journey. This program is packaged in a social movement called **"The Waiting Room Revolution"** (WRR). The WRR is intended to help people feel more in control, confident, and prepared throughout their illness journey.

This program is based on insights gathered from thousands of patients and families, and features seven key actions to empower people to think ahead, have more choices, and customize their care plan to their wishes and preferences. The WRR program uses shared language and metaphors that are acceptable to patients and families, that can support an earlier palliative care approach – that they can initiate.

Through support from a Health Canada contribution grant, Drs. Seow and Winemaker have been able to develop and evaluate additional patient facing tools and resources including three disease specific illness roadmaps co-designed with patients and families. The tools and resources together can help move palliative care upstream and increase patient and family access to a palliative care approach, which can ultimately improve the patient and family experience.

The Canadian Home Care Association (CHCA) is a national membership organization committed to fostering integrated, person-centred care in home and community settings. Representing a diverse membership of public and private organizations that fund, manage, and deliver services and products, the CHCA provides a unified voice to advance the integration of health care. Through advocacy, collaboration, and knowledge sharing, the CHCA champions a vision of a seamless, accessible, accountable, and evidence-informed health care system that prioritizes patients and their families while ensuring long-term sustainability. <https://cdnhomecare.ca>

McMaster University's Drs. Hsien Seow and Sammy Winemaker are collaborating on a transformative initiative called the Waiting Room Revolution to empower patients and families facing life-changing diagnoses. This social movement co-designs education, resources, and tools to promote early palliative care—without labels— and aims to enhance the patient and family experience, ensuring they have the knowledge and support needed throughout their journey. <https://www.waitingroomrevolution.com/aboutus>



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