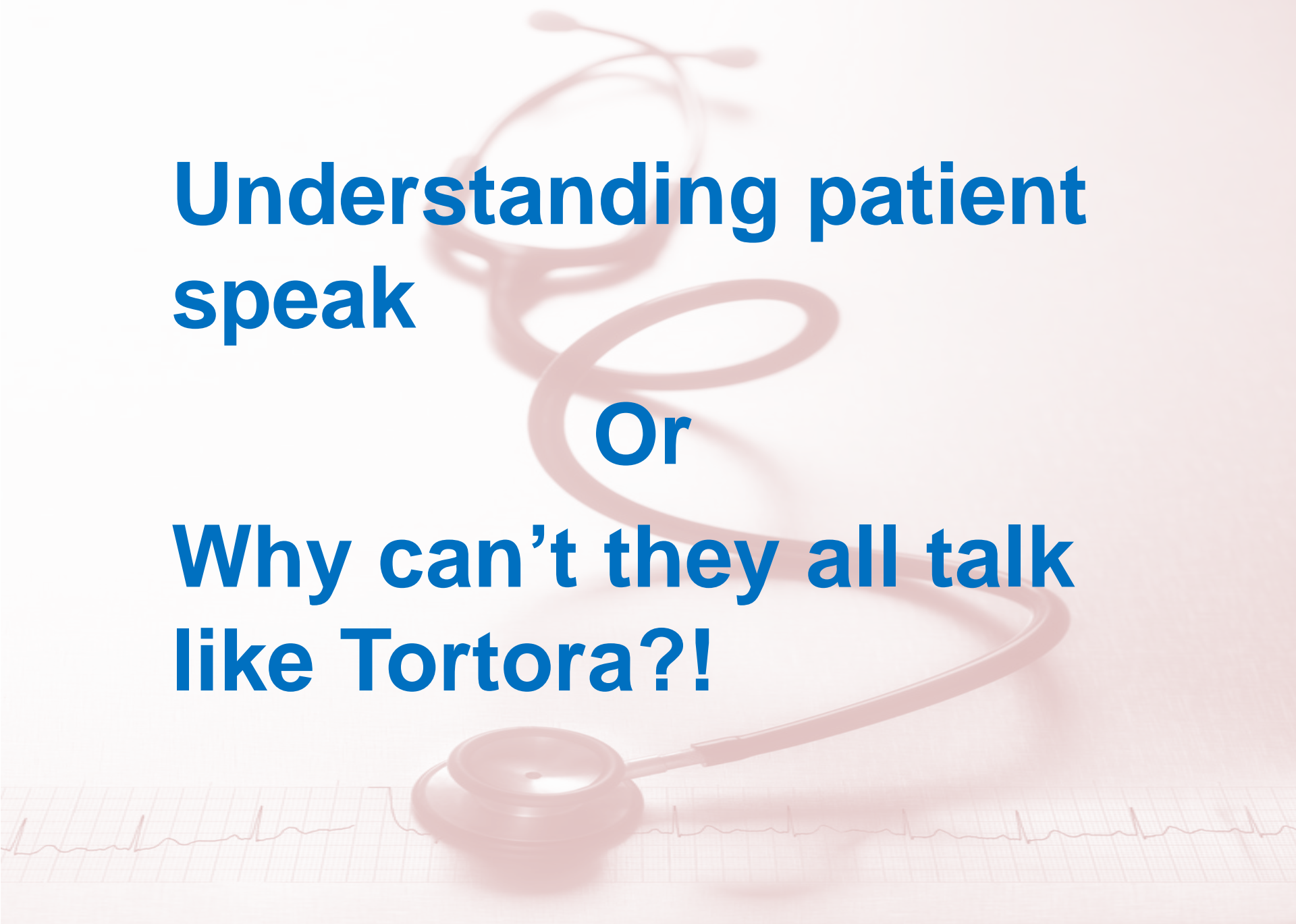




**Understanding patient
speak**

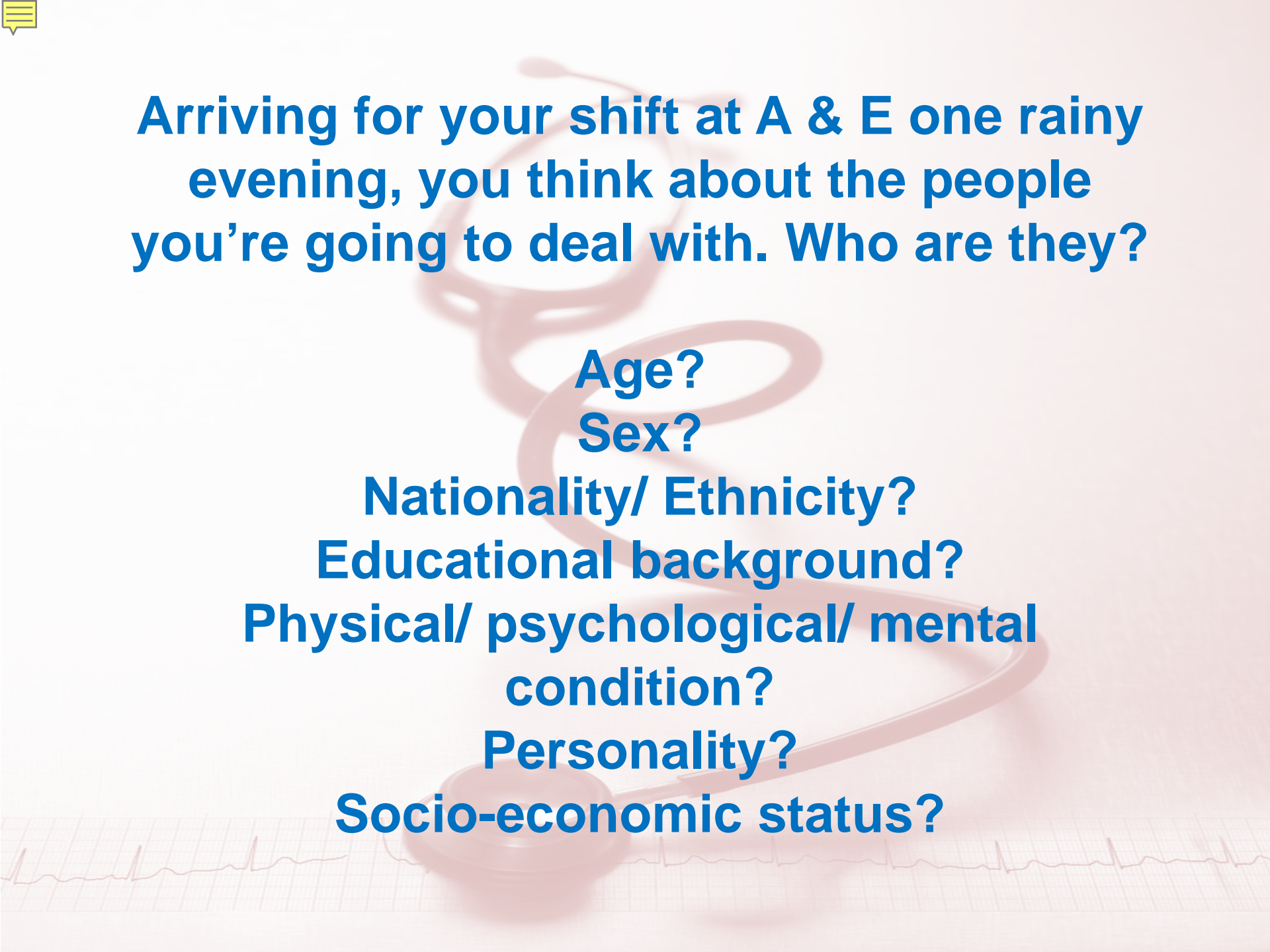
Or

**Why can't they all talk
like Tortora?!**



Objectives:

- **To identify problems when communicating with patients**
- **To identify the causes of these problems**
- **To suggest strategies to cope with these problems**
- **To focus on 2 specific areas of difficulty: expressions used to describe feeling ill and levels of pain**



Arriving for your shift at A & E one rainy evening, you think about the people you're going to deal with. Who are they?

Age?

Sex?

Nationality/ Ethnicity?

Educational background?

Physical/ psychological/ mental condition?

Personality?

Socio-economic status?



**What are the effects of these factors
(age, sex, educational background,
socio-economic status, physical/ mental
condition) on the language we speak in
terms of:**

Choice/ range of vocabulary

Grammatical mistakes

Accent/ dialect

Pronunciation/ speed/ clarity

**Fragments rather than complete
sentences**

False starts & hesitation



All of these factors determine how we speak – our ‘idiolect’.

The way each one of us uses language is unique, so just accept:

You won’t understand everyone 100% of the time!

A faint, light-colored background image featuring a stethoscope and an ECG (heart rate) line on a grid. The stethoscope is positioned diagonally across the frame, with its chest piece at the bottom center and its earpieces at the top. The ECG line is visible at the bottom of the image.

A faint background image of a stethoscope and an ECG (heart rate) line on a grid.

Strategies for reducing communication problems

Strategy 1: The direct approach!

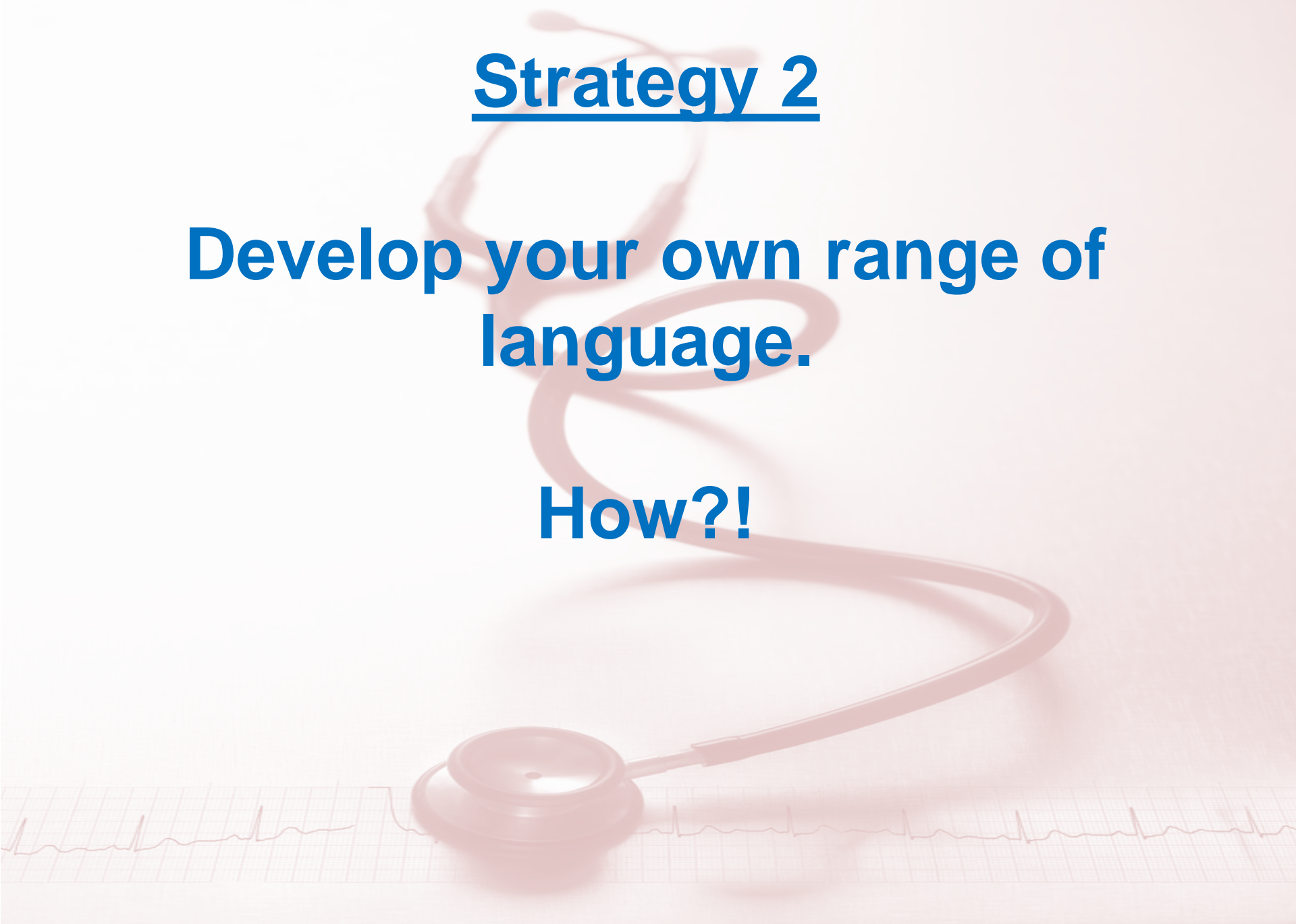
“I’m Dr Lyubowski. As you have probably noticed, I’m Polish, so I apologise if I have to ask you to repeat anything. And please stop me if there’s anything *you* don’t understand.”



Strategy 2

Develop your own range of language.

How?!





By interacting with:

- **People from a wider age range (children/ the elderly)**
- **Different ethnic groups**
- **Different socio-economic groups**
- **Real people in clinical settings**

By watching:

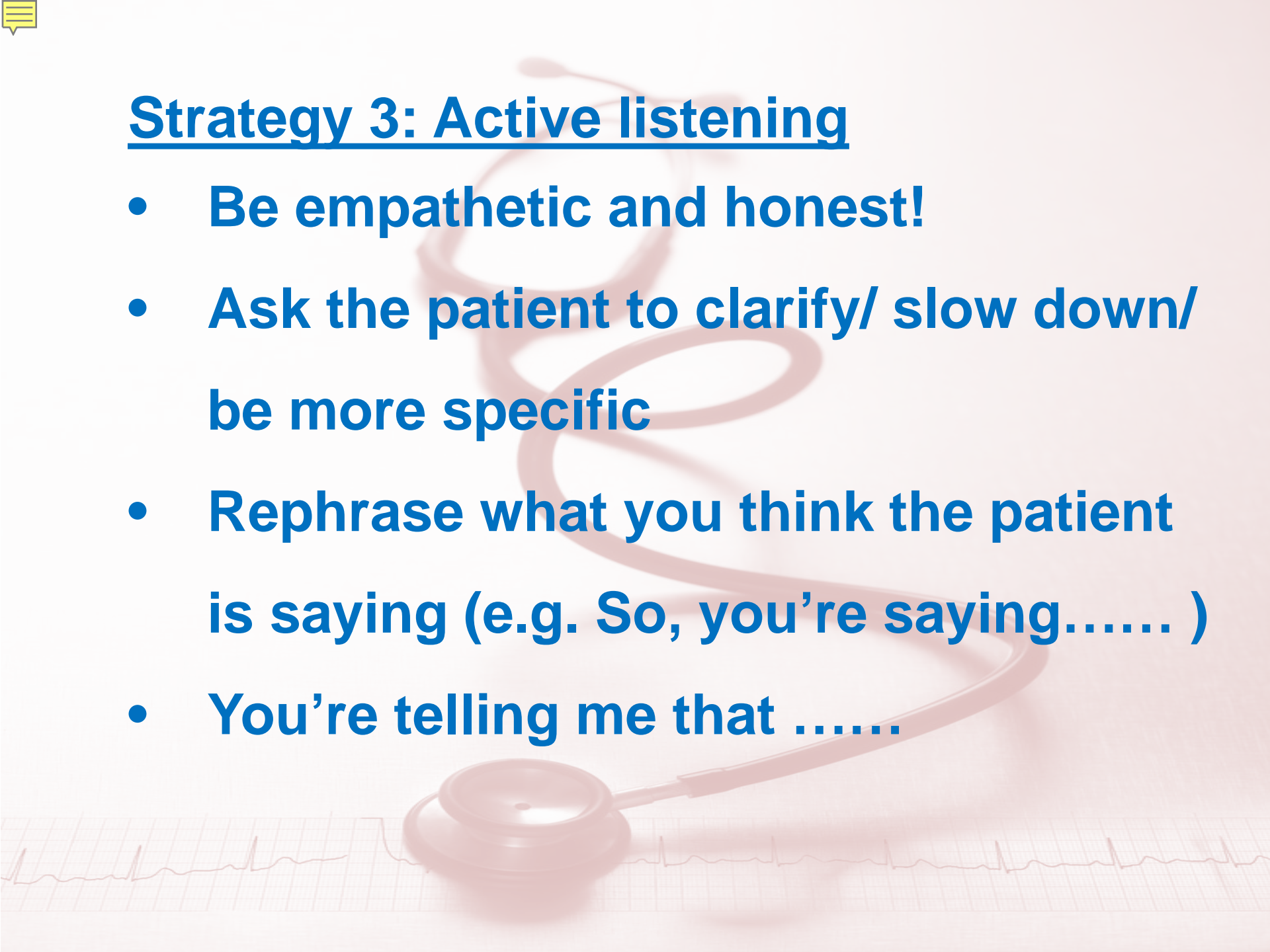
**Holby City/ ER/ Bones/ Scrubs/ Casualty/
Embarrassing Bodies**

By reading:

**Health columns in magazines aimed at
different age groups**

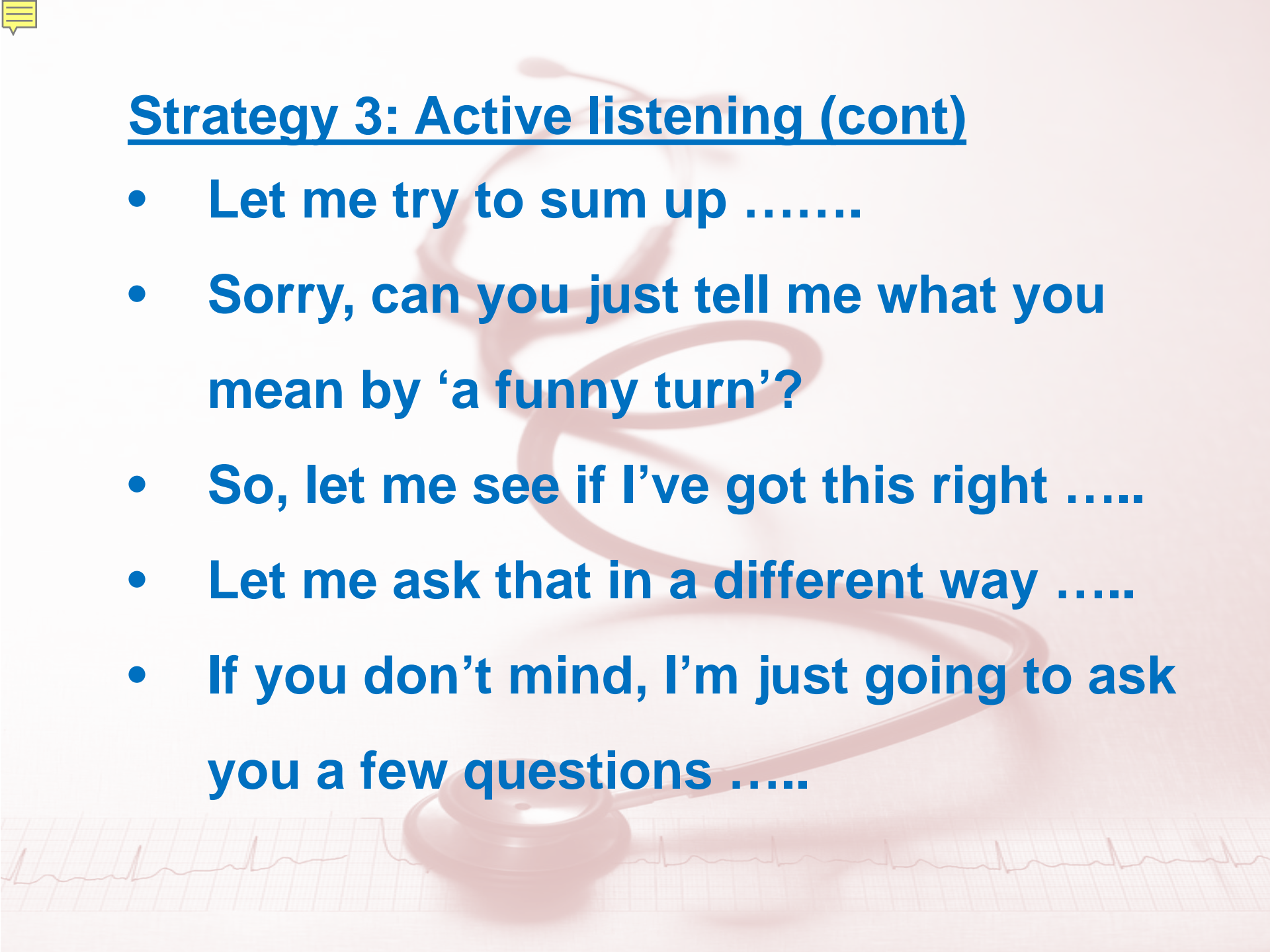


Strategy 3: Active listening

- **Be empathetic and honest!**
 - **Ask the patient to clarify/ slow down/ be more specific**
 - **Rephrase what you think the patient is saying (e.g. So, you're saying.....)**
 - **You're telling me that**
- 



Strategy 3: Active listening (cont)

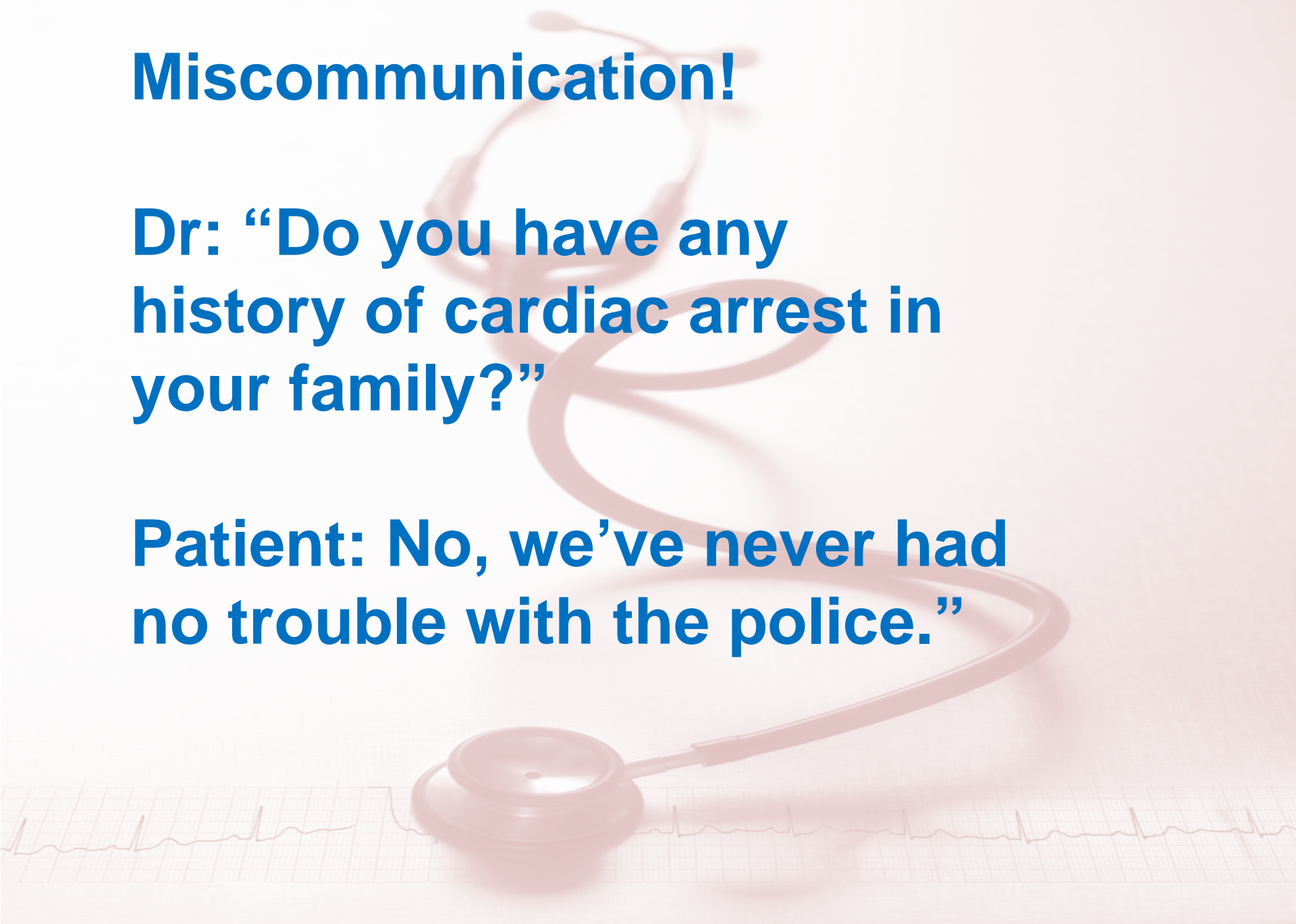
- **Let me try to sum up**
 - **Sorry, can you just tell me what you mean by ‘a funny turn’?**
 - **So, let me see if I’ve got this right**
 - **Let me ask that in a different way**
 - **If you don’t mind, I’m just going to ask you a few questions**
- 



Miscommunication!

Dr: “Do you have any history of cardiac arrest in your family?”

Patient: No, we’ve never had no trouble with the police.”





Phrases used by patients to talk about their current general health:



A faint background image of a stethoscope and an ECG (heart rate) line. The stethoscope is positioned diagonally across the frame, and the ECG line runs horizontally at the bottom. The overall color scheme is light pink and white.

Phrases used by patients to talk about their health:

To be / feel off colour

To feel off / low / peaky

To feel poorly / run down

To be under the weather

To be/ feel out of sorts

To be/ feel below par

A faint background image of a stethoscope and an ECG (heart rate) line on a grid.

“I’ve been feeling out of sorts for a while now.”

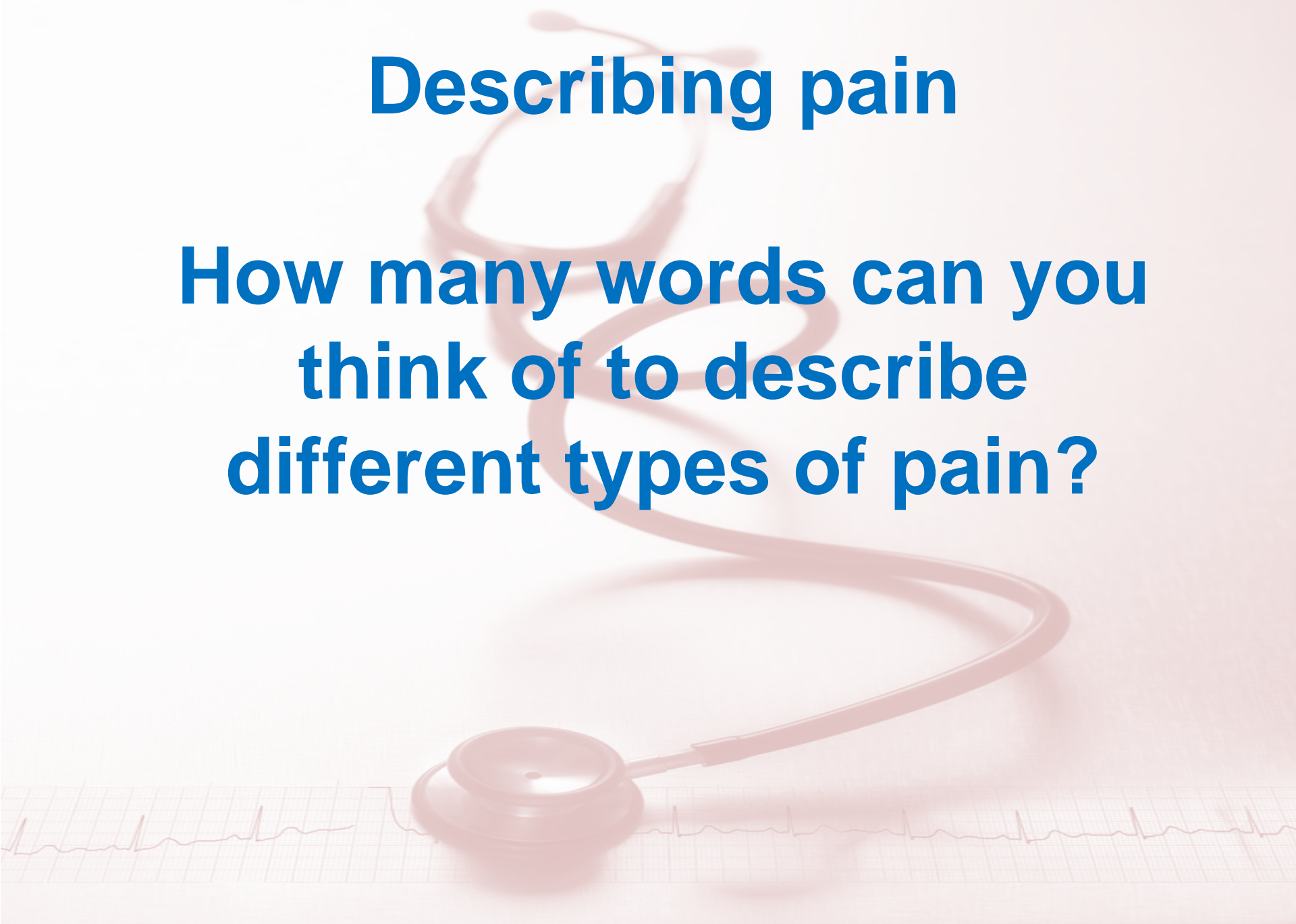
“I’ve not been feeling too great lately.” (not too/ not that + positive adjective: fantastic/ clever/ hot/ brilliant)

“He’s not been too good these last few days.”



Describing pain

How many words can you think of to describe different types of pain?





Adjectives to describe pain:

blinding

pounding

burning

shooting

cramping

stabbing

crushing

tingling

gripping

throbbing



Common collocations

blinding headache (migraine)

burning sensation (urinary infection)

cramping pain (period pain)

crushing sensation (chest pain)

gripping pain (angina/ heart attack)

pounding feeling (headache)

shooting pain (sciatica/ toothache)

stabbing pain (indigestion)

tingling sensation (pins and needles)

throbbing pain (tension headache)

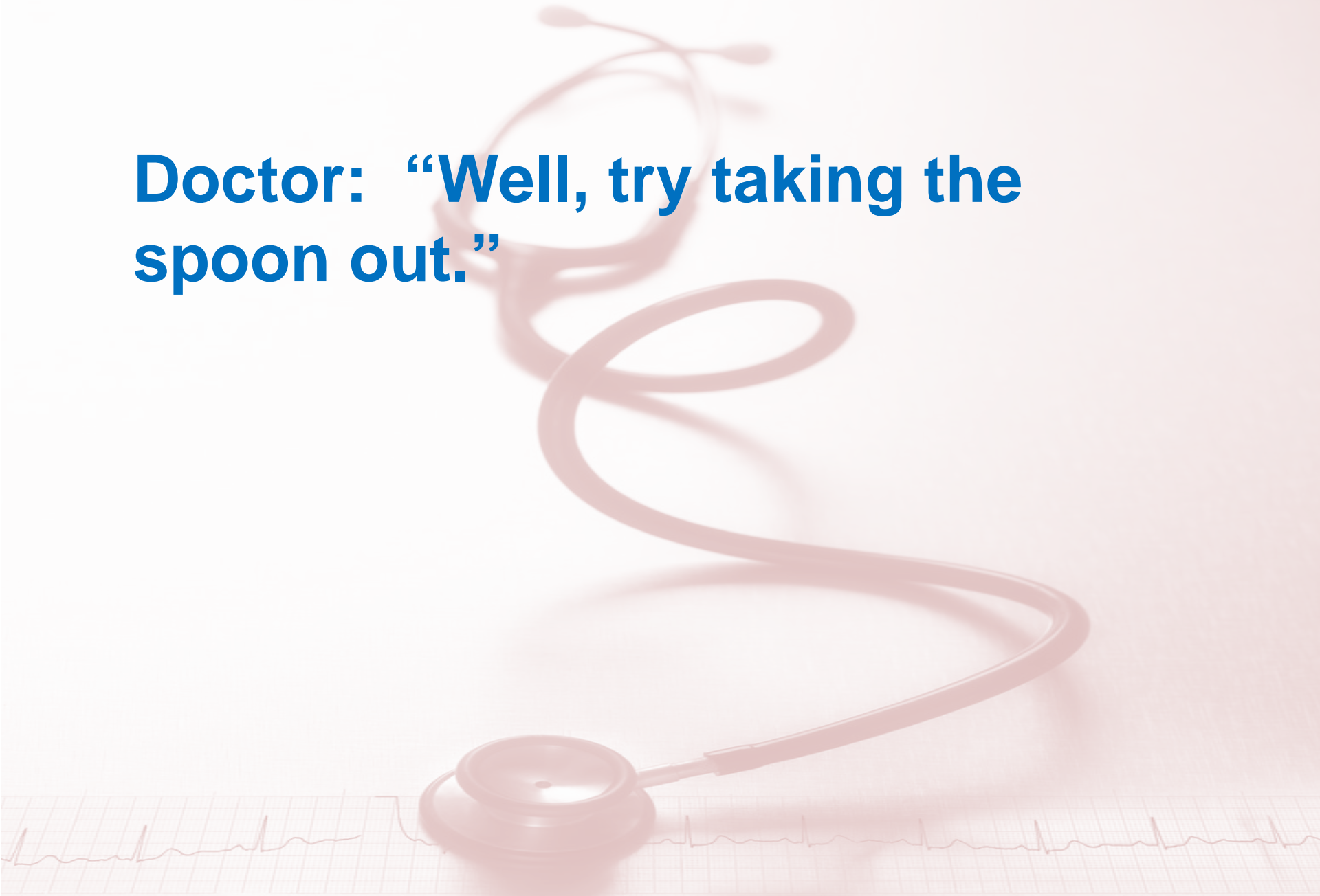


A stethoscope is positioned in the upper half of the frame, with its chest piece resting on a heart rate monitor line that runs horizontally across the bottom. The background is a light, warm-toned gradient.

Time for a joke!

Patient: “Doctor, every time I have a cup of tea, I get a stabbing pain in my eye.”

Doctor: “Well, try taking the spoon out.”





Imagery used to describe pain:

“It’s like an electric shock.”

“It feels like a pin prick.”

**“It’s as if a heavy weight were
(was) pressing on me.”**

**“I felt like I’d been hit over the
head with a hammer.”**



What phrases can you think of to describe:

Feeling tired

Anorexia (no appetite)

Being constipated

Vomiting

Urinating

