How I passed CSA having failed it

* My biggest challenge was learning to genuinely enter negotiation with patients and centre on their needs
* I changed from long detailed but accurate sentences to short sentences with gaps between. ( patients found this easier to understand and could ask if they did not understand)
* I realised that the feedback statements were linked and interdependent, I could not just revise my behaviour to one bit but needed to make overall changes so that I linked well to patients, I gathered the data well and offered some appropriate management options
* When I was under pressure I had reverted to an unhelpful older (hospital based ) approach to consulting
* Changing to a different learning group where I got frank up front “tell it as it is” feedback with suggestions was really helpful. (My friends had been too nice)
* I started to use much, much more video which gave me insight into other areas
* When I used video I began to look at the same encounter several times as I saw different things each time. Sometimes looked at the same video more than 3 times on my own.
* My practice stopped non English language speakers from seeing me so that I could practice consulting in English. (Before that I had had a lot of patients who consulted me in their mother tongue)
* I practiced giving explanations of new diagnoses etc. to lay people not medics. They could assess much better if I was saying useful things.
* I stopped using patient. co.uk for leaflets and started to use the relevant specialist charity / organisation, who produce better leaflets normally, which patients and I learnt from.
* I spent more time really seeing what happens in the specialist nurse led clinics so that I understood these areas better.
* I found the feedback from specialist trainers/ examiners when I had access to this very helpful because the feedback was detailed and expert.
* I found asking about ICE was really helpful once I really believed what the patient said at this point was interesting and important and not just an RCGP expectation that this is asked about.
* I got used to having other people in the room observing me by doing this lots, with familiar and other trainers.
* I did a set of 6 mock cases in a row, practicing dealing with this pressure. Reflecting on how to manage the case after the one I’d messed up helped.
* I learnt that the exam (and GP) is often about being inquisitive and interested in the other person all the time.
* I did not find some of the courses I went on very useful at all, the feedback in the round in front of so many people shattered me
* The best feedback from courses was when they wrote down the feedback so I could look at it later and it was personal.

Adapted from several IMG’s who failed and then passed. The views expressed are those of the IMGs

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