

Dealing with
questions from
the public and
patients

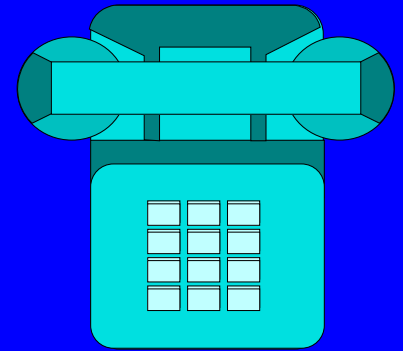
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Objectives

- **Be able to assess the nature of questions from the general public and patients**
- **Be able to address concerns about radiation exposure from medical sources**
- **Be able to address calls from individuals that may need referral to other medical specialists**



I Oh - Hi - I am going on a trip to Europe and I am worried about the radiation exposure

Response

- How do you respond to a question like this?
- How do you help the person?
- How do you meet your professional obligations?

Identify Yourself

Identify Self

- Who you are
- What you are
- Where you work

*Good Afternoon I am Dr Don Frey
I am a medical physicist
I work here in the radiology
department here at MUSC*

Source of Questions from the Public

- Technologists
- Radiation Safety Office
- Hospital Patient Information Line
- Person's Practitioner Suggested Call
- Radiologist and Residents
- Person Knows Who I Am

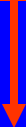
The person may not know who you are and they probably won't understand what a medical physicist is.

Medical Physicists

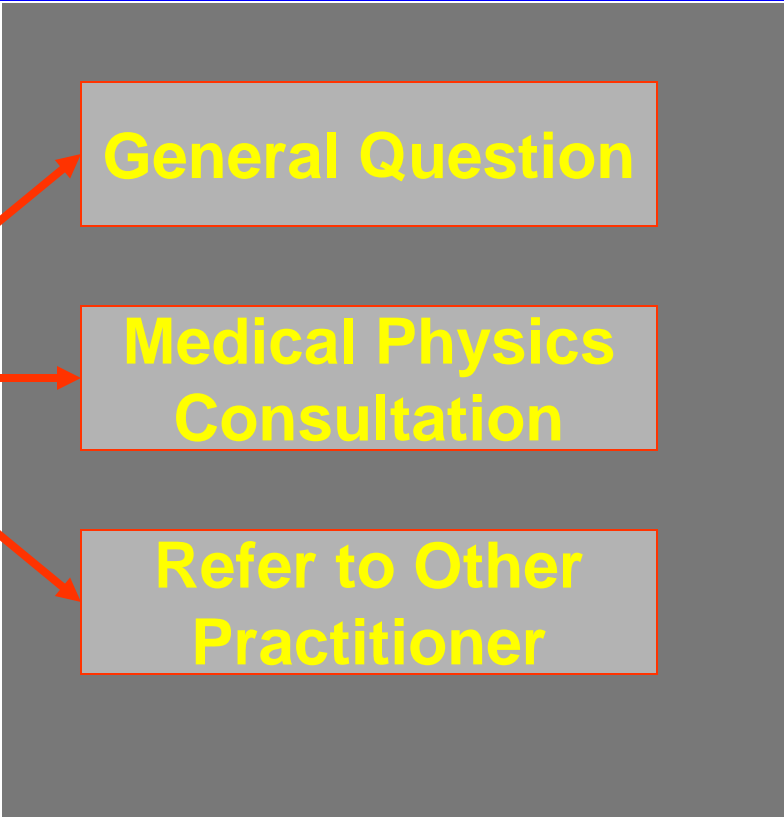
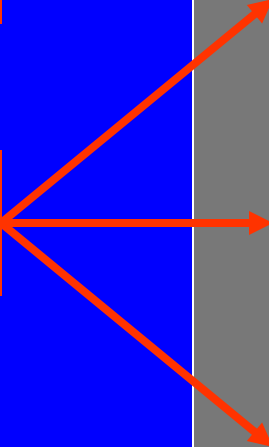
- Experts in radiation effects and image quality
- Cannot give medical advice

Direct people with medical issues to the physicians that care for them.

Identify Yourself



**Define Nature
of Call**



General Question

**Medical Physics
Consultation**

**Refer to Other
Practitioner**

MP Consult vs General Question

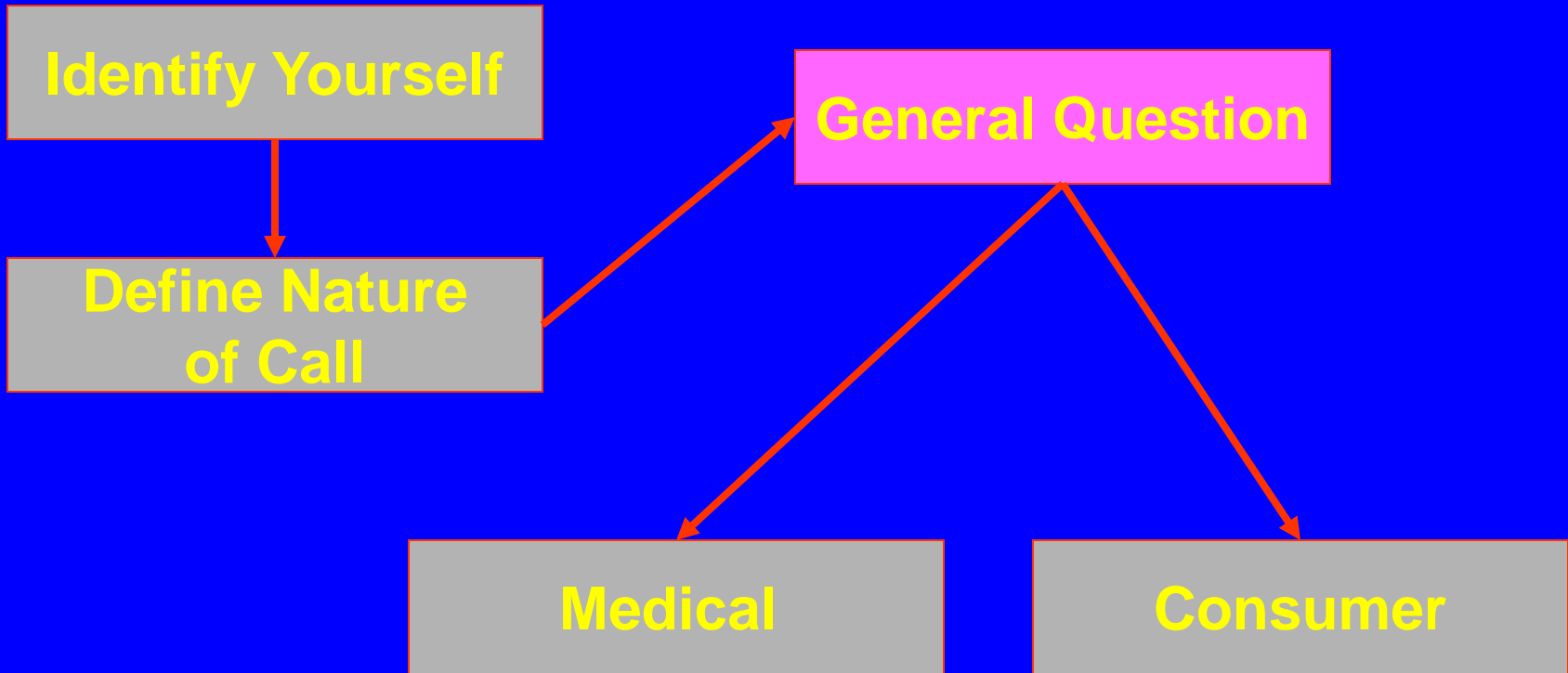
- Might results directly affect medical care of patient?
 - Pregnant patient
- Do measurements need to be made?

• Do
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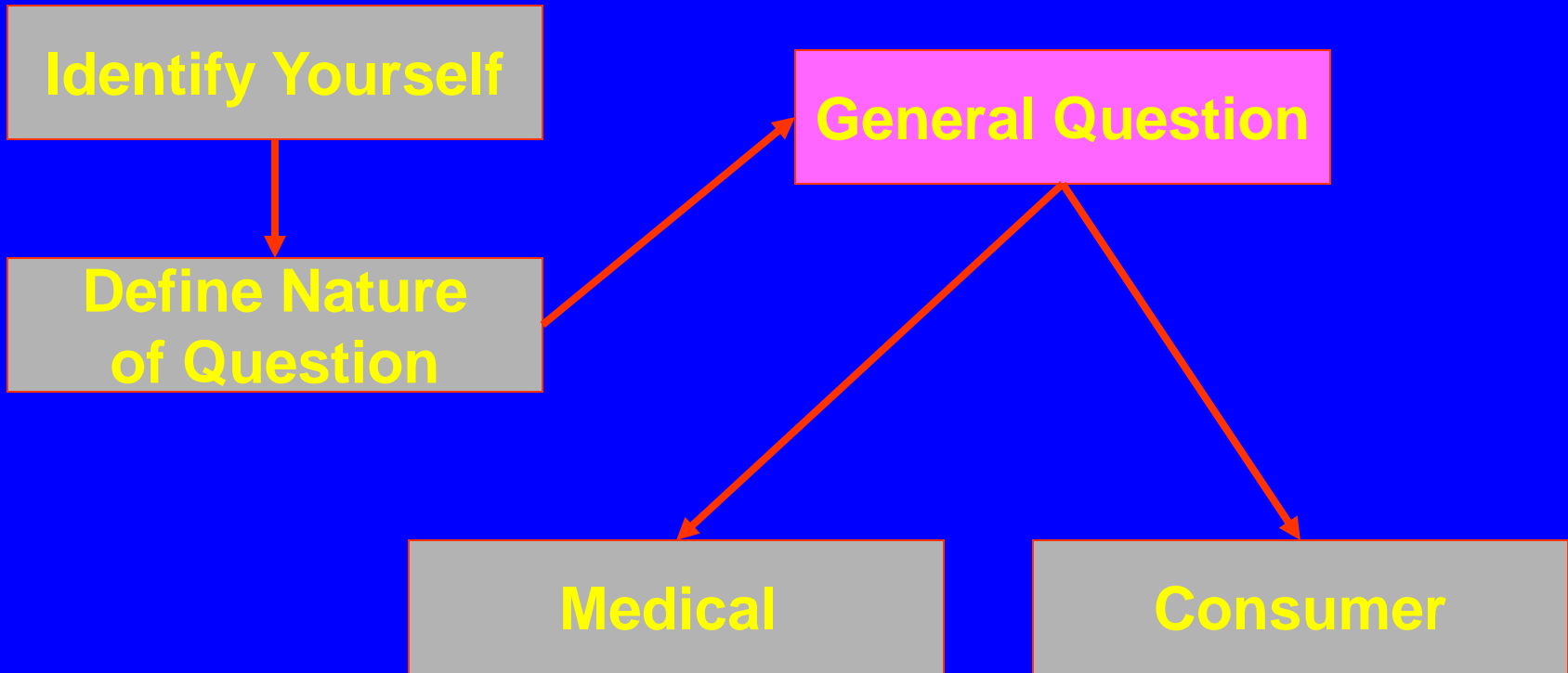
If it is a MP consult I suggest that their physician should have them contact the medical physicists at the hospital where they are being cared for.

Refer to Other Practitioner

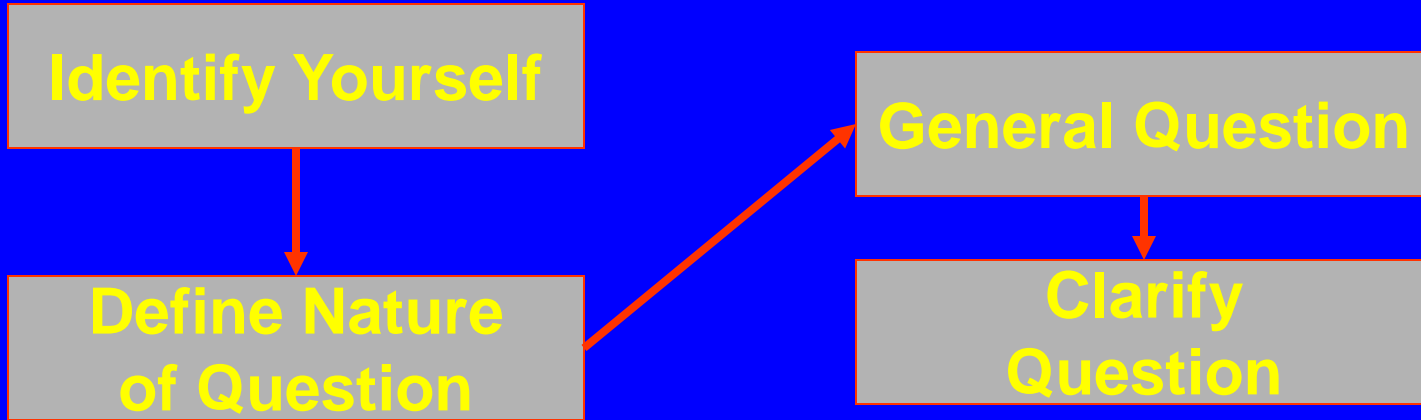
- General medical problems
- People needing mental health care
- People with possible radiation injury
- Is **Doctor I hope you can help me.
My neighbor is poisoning me
with radiation from my TV set.** sources



Ionizing radiation
E&M
Cancer clusters
etc.



Consumer products
Airtravel
Radioactive material
etc.



Clarify the Question

- Is this a routine question?
- Why is the person concerned enough to talk to you?
- What does the person know?
 - ‘ Specific background
 - ‘ General education level & intelligence



I Oh - Hi - I am going on a trip to Europe and I am worried about the radiation exposure

E-mail vs Direct Conversation

- I try to answer factual email questions by e-mail but if the question is “personal” I try to get a phone number and call the person

I recently had 3 CT scans following a near fatal automobile accident. I was wondering what the risk of developing cancer was?

Talking with callers

- Pay attention to what the individual is saying
- Ask yourself “Do I understand what the person is trying to ask me?”
 - There is frequently a subtext
- Summarize now and then
- Restate what the person is saying in your own words

Talking with people

- When talking with people use gestures to indicate you are following their discussion
- If the callers comments are lengthy make comments to indicate you are listening - “uh-huh”
- Ask questions to clarify your understanding

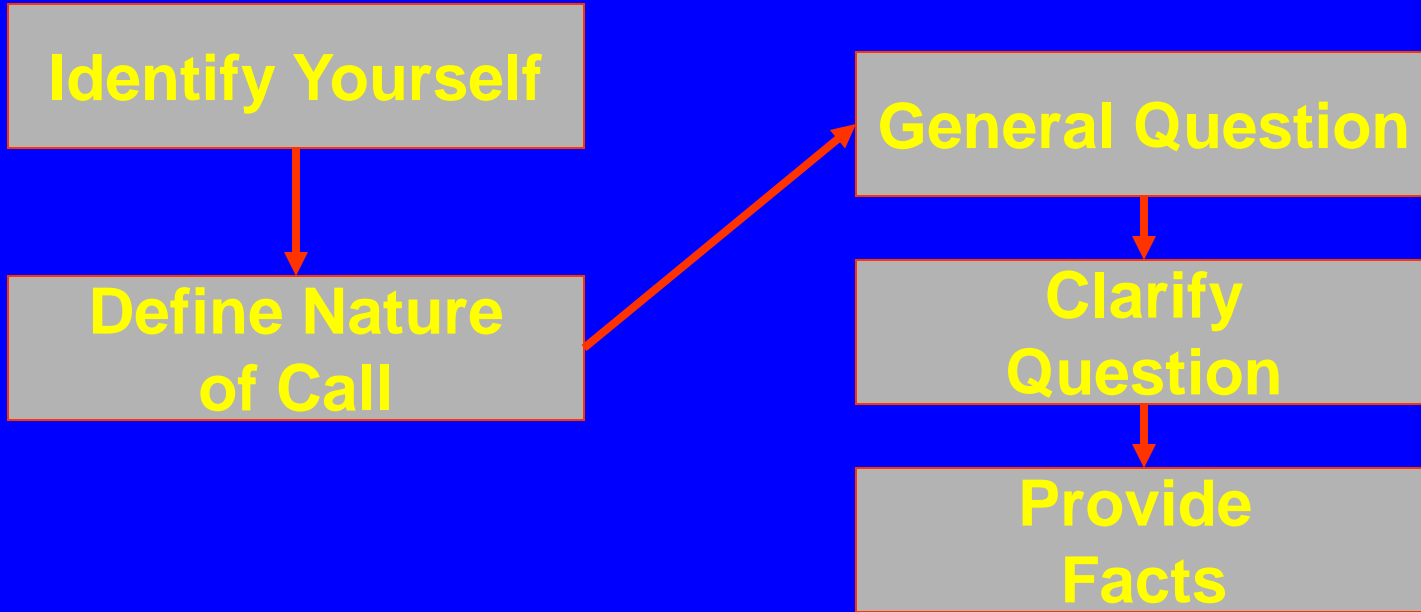
When are you going?

Do you fly often?

Who is going with you?

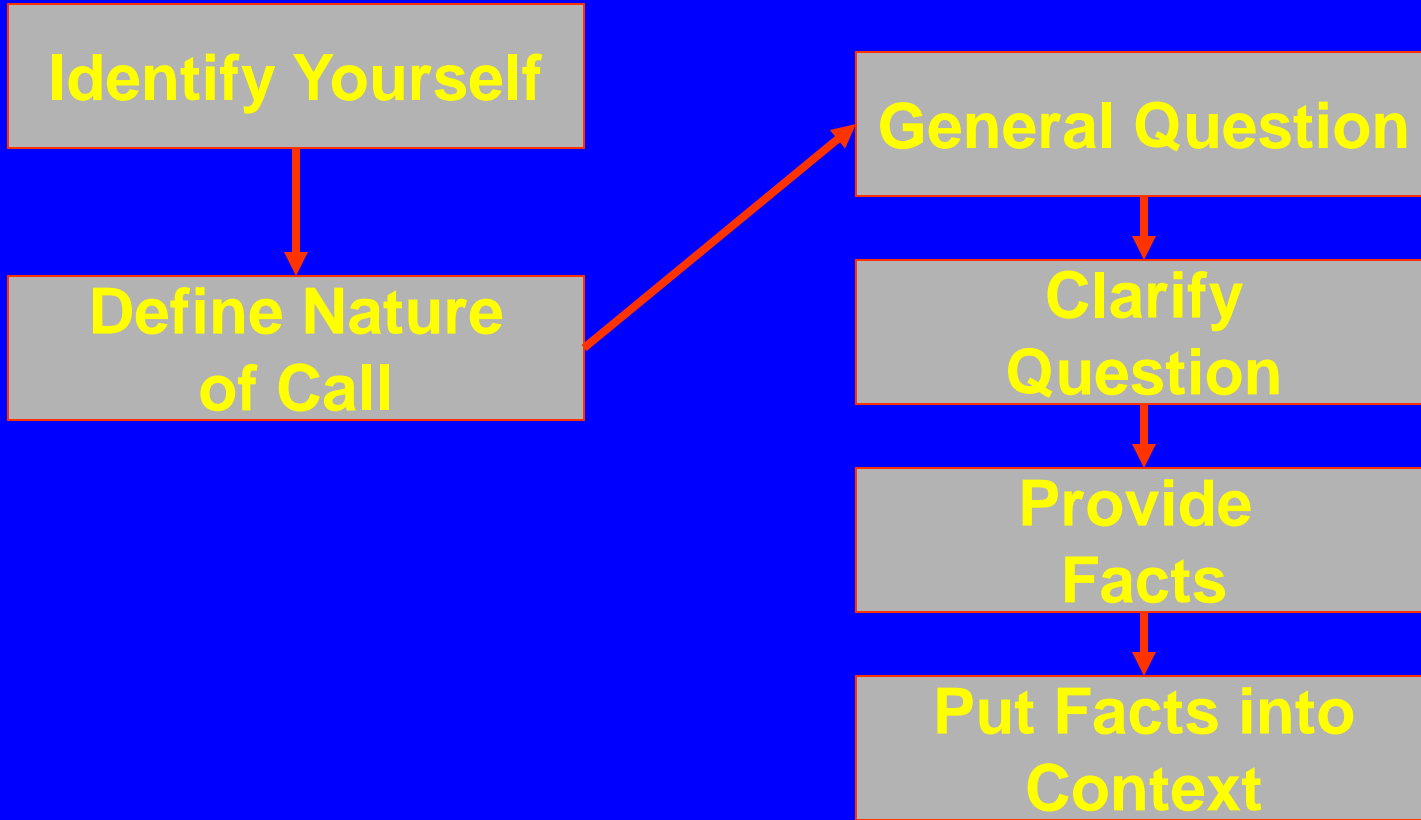
Why are you concerned about the radiation exposure?

The caller had a young daughter that she wanted to take to Europe to see her grandparents. The daughter had had meconium aspiration and had had several chest films right after she was born.



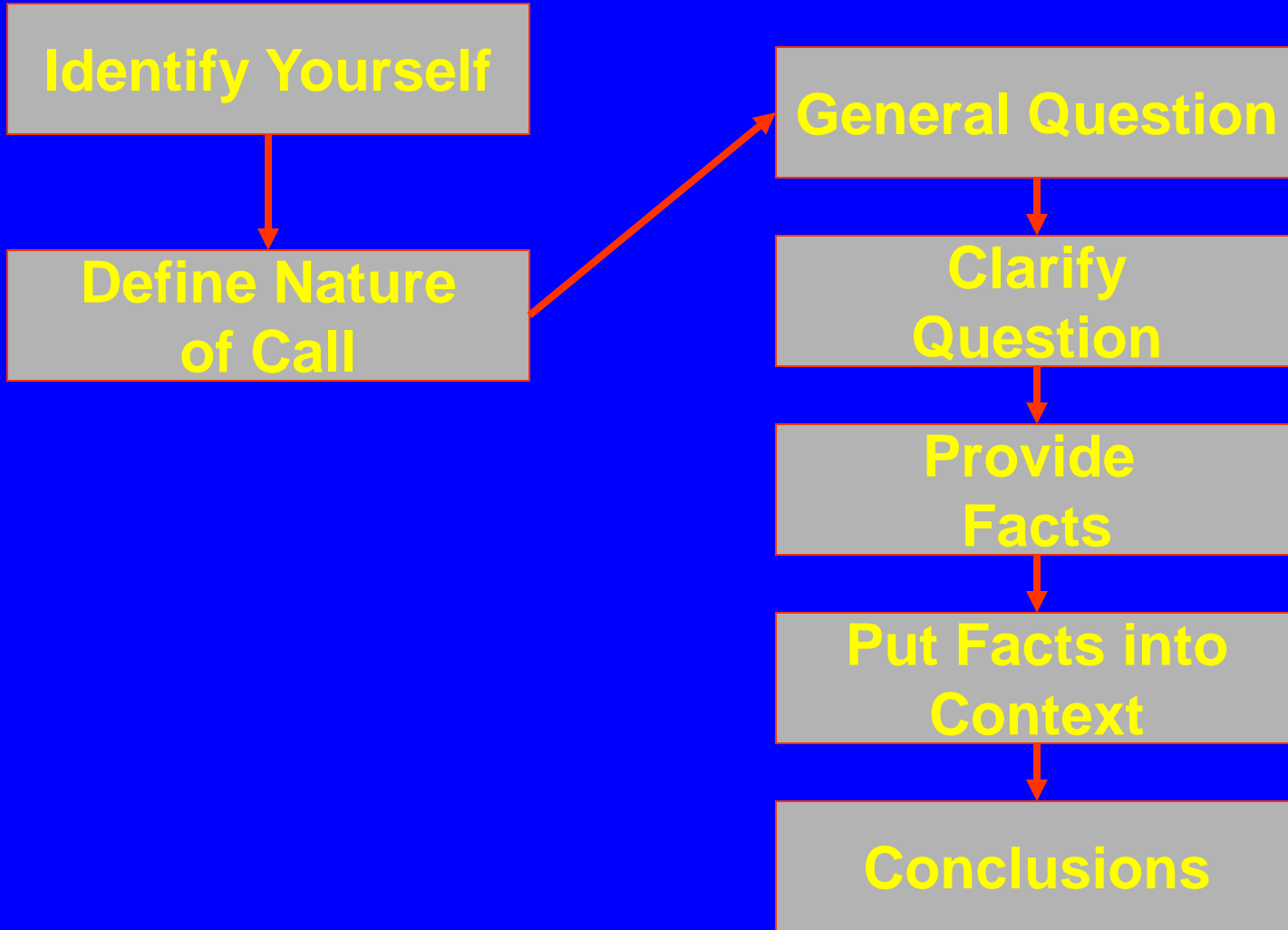
Provide Factual Information

- Factual information
- Appropriate detail based on your perception of caller's ability to understand



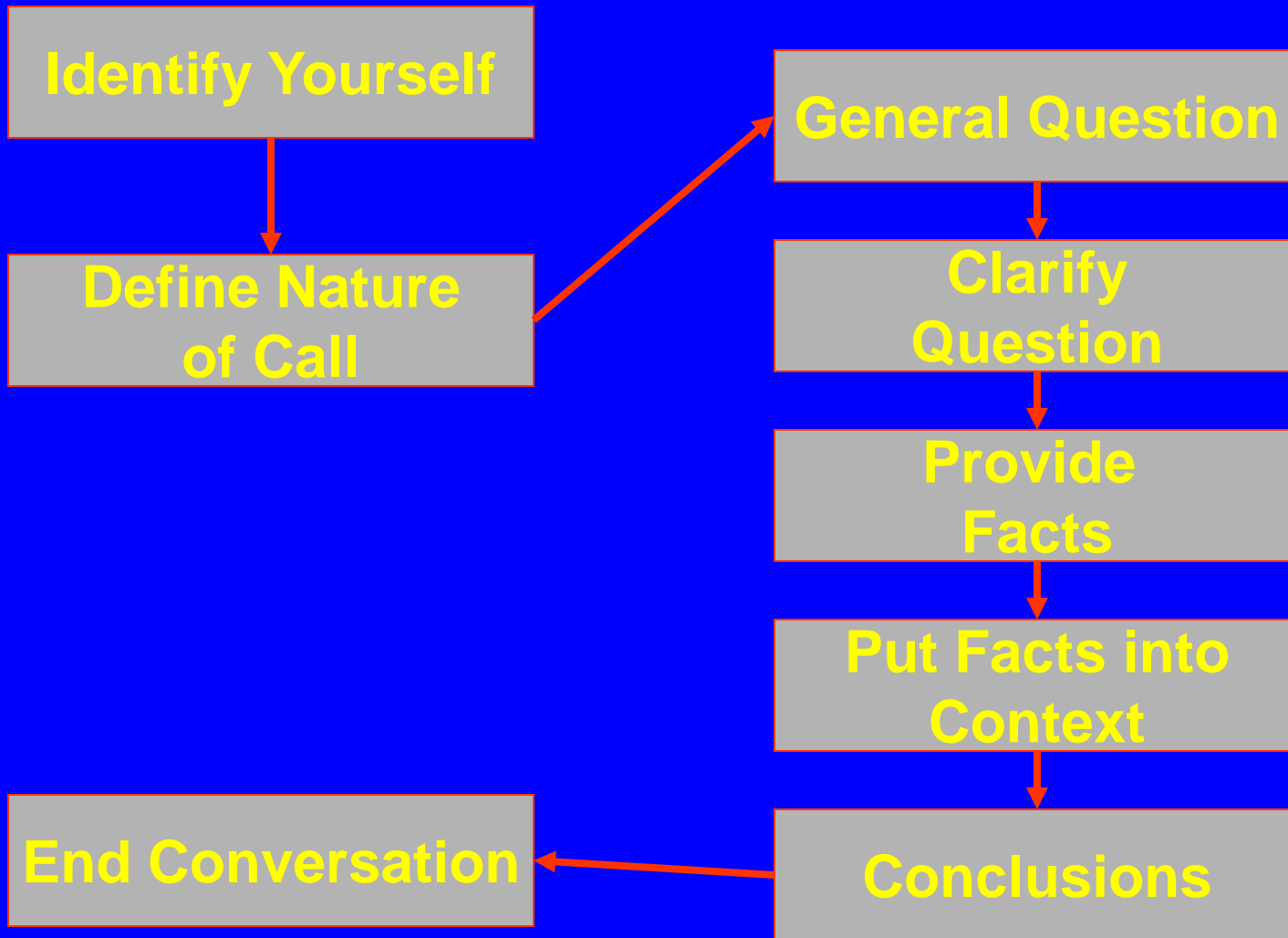
Put the Facts into Context

- Compare to background radiation
- Compare to exposure of radiation workers
- Compare to pregnant radiation workers



Draw Conclusions

- **If possible let caller draw conclusions**
 - ‘ More likely to get long term buy in
 - ‘ More likely to really understand
 - ‘ Caller’s conclusions don’t have to be the “correct” ones
- If caller can’t draw conclusions provide tentative conclusions



End Conversation

- Provide a brief summary
- Try to insure that the person is comfortable
- Provide a mechanism for the person to contact you in the future