



National Healthcare
Communication
Programme

Providing Information and Planning

A leaflet for healthcare staff



Making conversations easier

Providing Information and Planning

Clickable contents

1. Provide the correct amount and type of information
2. Aid patient recall and understanding
3. Incorporate the patient's perspective
4. Shared decision-making



Brings you back to contents

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Good communication does not mean that you have to speak in perfectly formed sentences and paragraphs. It isn't about slickness. Simple and clear go a long way.

John Kotter, Konosuke Matsushita Professor of Leadership, Emeritus, at the Harvard Business School



Providing Information and Planning

1. Provide the correct amount and type of information

Find out what the patient already knows or understands and what they want to know.

Assess the starting point

Just so I know where to begin, could you tell me what you know already about your heart condition?

When you have established what the patient already knows and wants to know, merge this agenda with the information you want to provide.



Communication skills

- ☐ Assess starting point
- ☐ Chunk and check
- ☐ Ask what other information would help the patient
- ☐ Avoid giving advice or reassurance prematurely



Providing Information and Planning

1. Provide the correct amount and type of information

Chunk and check

First I am going to tell you about the pains (pause), then we can talk about what we can do to help you (pause)...

Provide small chunks of information, slowly, pausing regularly to check understanding.

Ask what other information would help the patient

Many people also want to know...? Would that be helpful for you?



Providing Information and Planning

1. Provide the correct amount and type of information

Avoid giving advice or reassurance prematurely

It is better if patients understand their own situation and work out what would work best for themselves.

Before we talk about what we can do to help the chest pains, tell me more about...



TIP

You will know that the conversation is working well when it becomes more like a question-and-answer session with the patient asking the questions.



Providing Information and Planning

2. Aid patient recall & understanding

Giving information is often seen as the most important part of the consultation – the patient needs to understand the treatment plan to be able to adhere to it at home.

Use easy to understand language and avoid jargon

You need to take this tablet once a day and it has to be at the same time every day

Avoid giving too much information too early as this may overwhelm the patient.



Communication skills

- ☐ Use easy to understand language and avoid jargon
- ☐ Slow down
- ☐ Organise the explanation
- ☐ Provide structure (signpost)
- ☐ Use visual aids
- ☐ Repeat and summarise
- ☐ Check understanding



Providing Information and Planning

2. Aid patient recall & understanding

Slow down

Your son has asthma (pause), he is having problems with his breathing (pause)...

Pause often to give the patient time to process the information.

Organise the explanation

First I want to talk about the diagnosis, then I am going to talk about immediate treatment and then about the future. First, I think you have...

Divide the explanation into logical sections.



Providing Information and Planning

2. Aid patient recall & understanding

Provide structure (signpost)

Ok, now that I know what you are worried about, let's talk about what we can do to help you

Move from one part of the conversation to the next using signposting.

Use visual aids

Written information and diagrams are very helpful for patients.

Here is a diagram of...



Providing Information and Planning

2. Aid patient recall & understanding

Repeat and summarise

So the most important thing to remember is...



Highlight key points and reinforce key information.

Check understanding

I know this is a lot to take in Sean. To make sure that I have explained things clearly to you, can you tell me what you know about the next steps for you?



Checking understanding can be done by watching the patient's nonverbal responses (when they have had enough) or asking them to restate key messages in their own words.



Providing Information and Planning

2. Aid patient recall & understanding

TIP

Watch the person's nonverbals – do they look like they are understanding and participating in the conversation, or do they look confused or switched off? If they look confused, pause and say something like...

'I have shared a lot of information with you. I am going to stop now and hear what questions you have for me?'



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3. Incorporate the patient's perspective

Ask the patient what is important to them.

Relate explanation to patient's ideas, concerns and expectations

You said you were worried the pain was angina. I can see why you thought that. I think it is more likely to be...



Communication skills

- ☐ Relate the explanation to the patient's ideas, concerns and expectations
- ☐ Watch out for and respond to nonverbal cues
- ☐ Allow time and opportunity for patients to contribute



Providing Information and Planning

3. Incorporate the patient's perspective

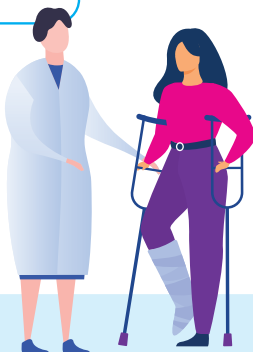
Watch for and respond to nonverbal cues

You look worried (pause), are you concerned about the surgery...?

Allow time and opportunity for the patient to contribute

What questions do you have for me now?

Reflect what you observe or hear with a statement. To explore the patient's thoughts further, use *tell me more...*



TIP

Acknowledge and validate how people feel, this builds connection and helps to make emotions less overwhelming so that people can participate in the conversation.



Providing Information and Planning

4. Shared decision-making

Engaging the patient in the decision-making process leads to the patient feeling more ownership for the decision and taking more responsibility for their own healthcare.

Share your thinking

At this stage it is not completely clear what the diagnosis is... what I am thinking is...

Explain your thinking to the patient and encourage them to contribute their own views.



Communication skills

- ☐ Share your thinking
- ☐ Explore options
- ☐ Negotiate the plan
- ☐ Check with the patient



Providing Information and Planning

4. Shared decision-making

Explore options

*What do you think?
Tell me about...?
What is important to you...?*

Instead of listing treatment options, use open questions to understand the patient's goals, views and wishes.

Negotiate the plan

I can see that you have some doubts about surgery so let's think again and see if we can come up with a plan that suits us both

Signpost your own preference and determine the patient's preference.



Providing Information and Planning

4. Shared decision-making

Check with the patient

*Can I check that you are happy with the plan?...
What questions do you have for me now?*



TIP

When patients or families ask for specific treatments, find out more by saying *'tell me more about that'*? **Decision aids** can provide patients with a clearer understanding of risks and benefits and make them more at ease with the decisions they make.

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This Skills Card is the work of the National Healthcare Communication Programme.

