

Patient self-management support is, at its core, a simple concept of engaging the patient to work together with you the provider to manage his/her healthcare. Small changes make a big difference in the ability of a patient to learn to live with and successfully manage a chronic disease. Encouraging patients to remain focused and collaborate with their providers strengthens a therapeutic relationship.

Ask the patient a new question during each visit that encourages thought about what is important for his/her health, and discuss what change you both would like him/her to make.

Examples:

- If you were going to make one change today to improve your health, what would it be?
- What is bothering you about your health that you want to work on? What would help you manage your condition?
- Is there something that your condition keeps you from doing that is important to you?

Choose a goal with the patient that he/she wants to achieve. The goal might not be the highest clinical priority, but it should be achievable and measurable, and important enough that it makes the patient feel like he or she is in control. Patients do well once they experience success; work with the patient to determine a goal and action plan that he/she is confident enough to carry out. Make sure the goal is documented in the patient's medical record.

Examples:

- Rather than "Exercise more," agree on the goal "Walk around the block twice per week."
- Instead of "Eat better," agree on the goal "Switch to skim milk and cut one unhealthy snack per day."

Encourage and evaluate. Set a time frame with the patient to discuss his/her progress, as well as successes and barriers. Include the clinician or another staff member if necessary. Build on the successes, and help the patient address the barriers that were noted. Evaluate the progress, and the overall goal for the patient's health, and continue to encourage the patient toward managing his/her own care.

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