



PATIENT INTERVIEWING GUIDE

Helping her verbalize her pain and feelings can create a clearer picture of her symptoms and improve patient-provider communication.

UNDERSTANDING HER

Patient-centered interview at the core
Ask about pain and impact at every visit¹⁻⁴
Inform her about her disease and treatment options
Negotiate an action plan that she is comfortable with

By using patient-centered interview skills, you can build a stronger patient-provider relationship and help her open up about her pain.⁵

To help her tell you
what's on her mind:

OPEN-ENDED SKILLS⁶

NON-FOCUSING:

- Silence
- Nonverbal cues
- Continuers

*Help her
speak freely*

FOCUSING:

- Echoing
- Open-ended requests
- Summarizing

*Help her
feel heard*

To build a strong
patient-provider relationship:

EMOTION-SEEKING SKILLS⁶

DIRECT INQUIRY:

- Open-ended
- Applied to an emotion

INDIRECT INQUIRY:

- Impact
- Beliefs
- Self-disclosure
- Triggers

EMPATHY SKILLS⁶

- Name
- Understand
- Respect
- Support

EXAMPLES OF PATIENT-CENTERED INTERVIEWING SKILLS

NON-FOCUSING SKILLS

Silence

Approximately five seconds, maintain eye contact

Nonverbal cues

Nodding, leaning forward

Neutral utterances or continuers

“I see,” “uh-huh,” “yes”

FOCUSING SKILLS

Echoing

Repeat a word or phrase that the patient just said to encourage her to proceed.

Open-ended requests

Simple

“Go on,” “tell me more”

Expanded

“Tell me more about staying in bed because of pain.”

Summarizing

“Last week, you missed class and had to stay in bed all day because the pain was severe.”

EMOTION-SEEKING SKILLS

Direct inquiry

“We have discussed the possibility of surgery today. How does this make you feel?”

Indirect inquiry

Inquire about impact

“How has your pain affected your family?”

“How has your pain changed the way you perform at work?”

“How has the time you’ve spent in bed because of pain affected your grades?”

Ask about beliefs

“What do you think is causing your pain?”

Self-disclosure

“If I were in pain every day, I would be frustrated, too.”

Determine triggers

“What made you decide to see me today about your pain?”

EMPATHY SKILLS

Name the emotion

“It made you angry.”

Understand the emotion

“You’ve missed so much work due to pain. I understand why you’re angry.”

Respect the patient

“Thank you for opening up about your anger.”

Support the patient

“I’d like to help you feel better. I’ll make sure we get you the proper care.”

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