

# Engaging Patients as Partners: Six Must-Do Strategies

Strategy	How Does This Sound?
<b>1. Encourage the patient to speak.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I want you to feel free to ask me questions, even challenging questions. I welcome that!”</li> <li>• Listen with respect to the patient's point of view.</li> <li>• Focus on the potential value of what the patient is saying.</li> <li>• Encourage the patient: Find something to validate.</li> <li>• Sound positive and nonjudgmental.</li> <li>• Ask the patient to tell/share their success stories when they accomplish a health goal.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Share control.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “How would you like to participate in your care?”</li> <li>• “It's your body and your health. How can we partner so you get the best results possible?”</li> <li>• “How might you and I work together to solve this?”</li> <li>• “Ms. Harris, thank you so much for coming with your dad and helping ensure I have a good history. I need to examine your dad now. Mr. Harris, would you like your daughter to stay with you or would you prefer she step out while you are undressed?”</li> <li>• “I see you've been downloading information from the Internet. Tell me what you've come up with so far, and I'll share my thoughts with you.”</li> </ul>
<b>3. Inquire and listen. Help the patient tell their story.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I'm sorry about the wait and I appreciate your patience. Now, I want to give YOU my full attention.”</li> <li>• “Please take your time and explain what brings you here today.”</li> <li>• “Please let me know your questions. I want to give you the help you need.”</li> <li>• “Tell me. I want to understand.”</li> </ul> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">                     What happened?                      What were the results?                      What did you think?                  What do you want now?                      What did you feel?                    What was the outcome?                      What did you do?                 </p>

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<p><b>4. Use partnership language—“we”, “us”, and “together”.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“Let's look at this together.”</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Physician:</b> “So, what brings you here today?”</p> <p><b>Patient:</b> “I'm nauseated all day long. I can't do my work. I can't concentrate on anything. I've tried Ginger Ale, Tums and Pepcid and eating next to nothing and getting a lot of rest. NOTHING helps! I just feel like I'm going to throw up all the time.”</p> <p><b>Physician:</b> “I'm so sorry. You must feel miserable! Let's figure out what's wrong so we can get you feeling better as soon as possible. First, I need to ask some questions. Do you need a basin while we talk?”</p>
<p><b>5. Set goals together.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't tell patients what to do: Ask patient for suggestions and make suggestions to them.</li> <li>• “I think you should take _____. This is why and these are the side effects. What do you think?”</li> <li>• “On 0-10 scale, how confident are you that you can _____ (take your meds every day). If patient says “5”, ask “Why not a 10?”</li> <li>• Then ask, “What would it take to move your confidence from a 5 to an 8?”</li> <li>• Work on an action plan together.</li> </ul>
<p><b>6. If the patient resists engagement , empathize and push—for the sake of optimal outcomes.</b></p>	<p><b>Patient:</b> “Can you PLEASE just TELL me what to do?”</p> <p><b>Physician:</b> “I realize this is a lot of information and it might be overwhelming (acknowledging feelings). I'll help by giving you information and recommendations based on what I know about you personally and about your condition. And I'll try to help you figure out what's best for you. So, we'll do this together.”</p>