PATIENT INTERVIEWING GUIDE

Understanding Her Pain

Patient-centered interview at the core
- Ask about pain and impact at every visit
- 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.

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

**OPEN-ENDED SKILLS**

- Non-Focusing:
  - Silence
  - Nonverbal cues
  - Continuers

- Focusing:
  - Echoing
  - Open-ended requests
  - Summarizing

Help her speak freely

Help her feel heard

To build a strong patient-provider relationship:

**EMOTION-SEEKING SKILLS**

- Direct Inquiry:
  - Open-ended
  - Applied to an emotion

- Indirect Inquiry:
  - Impact
  - Beliefs
  - Self-disclosure
  - Triggers

**EMPATHY SKILLS**

- 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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**References:**


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