

Health Priorities Facilitator: Supporting patients to communicate and work with their clinicians on their health priorities

Patients should feel confident in bringing up their health priorities with their clinicians and ask clinicians to use these priorities in suggesting treatments, testing, medications, referrals and other care. Because patients are not used to doing this and may feel intimidated, one of your tasks will be preparing and encouraging patients to bring up the health outcome goals and healthcare preferences you helped them identify and how their healthcare can better help them with these goals and preferences.

Starting the discussion: Communicating health priorities with your clinicians

“Your clinicians wanted you to identify what mattered most to you, so they can work with you to help you do more of the things that matter.”

“We know it may be hard at first, but we want you feel comfortable bringing up your health goals and share how your current care is helping or not helping you work towards them. When speaking to your clinicians try to be as direct as possible. I will be letting them know also so it will be easier for you.”

“To make sure I get it right, let’s review what you have identified as your health priorities: Health goals, Care Preferences and One Thing.” Is that right?

Suggest starting with the One Thing:

“When you visit with your healthcare team there are likely many things that you plan to discuss, we suggest starting with the One Thing.” You said that (mention the most bothersome symptom or health problem patient identified for the ONE THING) is most concerning to you that you want your clinicians to focus on, so you can do those things you want such as (mention patient’s health outcome goals).” Tell your clinician that on your next visit.

Starting with the One Thing can help focus the conversation on how the patient perceives their care is affecting their doing more of what matters and allows the clinician to consider a patient’s goals in care and treatment decisions.

Practice with the patient to get them more comfortable and give them example phrases such as those below. The phrases are likely more direct and explicit than patients may have used in the past. Let them know that you understand this may be new and a bit uncomfortable. When you encourage patients to be candid in conversations with their clinicians, you are helping them feel this type of conversation is welcomed and gets them stated on being a more active partner in conversations and decisions about their care and treatment.

Try example phrases. Having them connect these phrases with identifying their priorities may make it easier to start:

- **I worked with your colleague to help identify what matters most to me about my health and healthcare.**
 - **What concerns me most is _____**
 - **Now that we both understand what is important to me, can we work on _____**
 - **I really don’t like _____**
 - **My main priority is making sure I can _____**
 - **Even if its uncomfortable, I’m willing to _____ if it helps me _____**
 - **I’m willing to _____ if it helps me meet my goals**