

The **SHARE** Approach Using the Teach-Back Technique

Workshop Curriculum: Tool 6

The SHARE Approach is a five-step model, curriculum, and toolkit for shared decision making developed by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. The SHARE Approach aims to help healthcare professionals work with patients to explore and compare healthcare options through meaningful dialogue about what matters most to the patient and to make the best possible healthcare decisions.

Teach-Back: A Useful Technique

Every clinician wants to know the most effective way to communicate with patients and their families. It's the first step to helping someone with a health problem. The teach-back technique ensures effective clinician-patient communication, because patients are asked to "teach back" what they have learned during their visit. Patients use their own words to explain what they need to know about their health or what they need to do to get better.

The teach-back technique also:

- Helps your patients remember and understand more information.
- Raises patient satisfaction and helps patients feel more relaxed.
- Helps you gain your patients' trust.
- Is not time consuming to implement. Teach-back can take as little as 1 to 2 minutes.

How To Use the Teach-Back Technique With Your Patients

Check off the strategies you will try.

What To Say⁴

- Explain things clearly using plain language. Avoid using medical jargon and giving vague directions.
- Make sure your patients know your goal is to check how well you explained the health information, not to test their knowledge.



- Encourage your patients to use their own words, rather than copying you or others on your clinical team.
- Ask open-ended questions that start with “what” or “how” and avoid questions that result in “yes” or “no” answers.
- When appropriate, ask your patients to show you how to do something, such as how to check their blood pressure or use their inhaler.

How To Say It⁴

- Speak slowly and make eye contact.
- Allow your voice and facial expressions to show genuine interest.
- Use relaxed body language.

When To Use Teach-Back⁴

- Use teach-back whenever you explain an important concept, such as treatment options, participation in a clinical trial, benefits and risk, or adherence to a treatment plan.
- Check for comprehension after main points and repeat those points throughout the visit.

Teach-Back Questions for Shared Decision Making

Try these examples with your patients.

“We talked about two treatment options today, watchful waiting and starting radiation in a few weeks. I want to make sure I explained each option clearly. Would you please tell me how you would explain watchful waiting to your family member?”

“I want to make sure I was clear about the pros and cons of taking this medicine. Could you tell me about the possible side effects of the medicine and how it could lower your chance of a heart attack?”

“I want to check how well I explained the treatment options, benefits, and possible harms outlined in this decision aid on osteoporosis. Please tell me, in your own words, about the options we discussed that could help lower your chance of breaking a bone.”

If a patient does NOT understand

At times, teach-back may reveal that patients do not understand what they need to know or what they need to do.

Take these steps:

1. Say, “I must not have done a good job explaining. Let me try again.”

2. Explain the health information a second time using a different approach. Create a simple drawing, show a model, or demonstrate the behavior (such as showing how to empty a Foley catheter urine bag).
3. Use teach-back again to check for comprehension.

How To Promote a Teach-Back Environment

Try these tips:

- Give patients the time and opportunity to talk to you.
- Make sure all the staff in your office are trained on the technique and are using teach-back correctly.
- Post signs that explain teach-back and encourage patients to use it.

Help your patients to understand.

Teach-back allows you to see how well you explained or taught health information to your patients. According to a patient preferences and assessment study,⁵ patients do not mind being asked about their understanding.

Use of Teach-Back With Decision Aids

Teach-back is especially important to use with decision aids, such as written materials, videos, and interactive tools. These aids help your patients learn about and evaluate their options so they can make informed choices. After you offer decision aids to your patients, be sure to follow up at the next visit. Use the teach-back technique to make sure your patients used and understood the decision aids.

Start slowly.

Remember, adopting new behaviors can take a little time to master. Be patient with yourself. At first, start out slowly with one or two patients a day. Soon you will find teach-back is second nature for you.

References

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This tool is to be used in conjunction with the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality’s SHARE Approach workshop. To learn more about this workshop, visit www.ahrq.gov/shareddecisionmaking.



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