

Coaching to lower-activated patients: Care team communications

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Use this guide to coach lower-activated patients (PAM levels 1 and 2) on the role they play on their care team and the importance of open and honest communications with their providers.

Build knowledge:

Educate the patient about the role they play on their care team and why their perspective is important.

- Ask the patient to list each member of their care team including their primary care providers, specialists, counselors, social workers, etc. Then have them write a sentence about what each care team member does. Clear up any confusion or misconceptions.
- Ask the patient to include their own name at the top of their care team roster. Discuss why it's important for patients to play an active role on their care team. Explain why patients are ultimately responsible for protecting their health and making informed decisions about their care.

Build skills:

Help the patient understand how to strengthen communications with their care team.

- Assess the patient's comfort level when communicating with their care team. Explain why it's necessary to be honest and direct about symptoms, concerns and needs. Discuss what might happen if the patient withholds information, doesn't ask questions or isn't entirely truthful.
- Ask the patient to draft a list of questions to discuss with their provider. If this feels overwhelming, start with their most pressing health concern and develop questions around that. Suggest bringing a notepad to take notes or having a loved one take notes on their behalf.
- Discuss what to do if a question or concern comes up between appointments. Identify the best way to contact care team members. Explain what constitutes an urgent medical need vs. a health concern that could be addressed over the phone or during their next visit.

Build confidence:

Motivate the patient by celebrating small wins and reflecting on past successes.

- Invite the patient to share a recent example of something they did (big or small) that made them feel successful with their health. Set a goal to repeat this behavior on a regular basis until it becomes an engrained habit. Identify a healthy way to self-reward for achieving this goal.
- Ask the patient to describe how things went during a recent medical visit. Did they actively participate in the conversation? Did the provider listen to the patient's needs? Once back home, was it easy to remember what was discussed? Encourage them to reflect on what went well before discussing how future visits could be improved.

