

Coaching lower-activated patients: Medication adherence

Phreesia



Use this guide to coach lower-activated patients (PAM Levels 1 and 2) on the importance of taking medications as instructed and identify ways to improve their medication adherence.

Build knowledge:

Help the patient understand how each treatment works.

- Work with the patient to create a list of all treatments they are taking, including prescriptions, over-the-counter medications, vitamins and supplements. If they do not know, ask them to collect all their medications—including empty containers—and put them in a bag to bring to the next session.
- Once you've created the list together, ask the patient to write one sentence describing what each treatment does for their health. (If they are unsure on a medication's purpose, direct them to leave it blank.) Then, have them write an "X" next to all treatments that need refills.
- Discuss whether unpleasant side effects are preventing the patient from adhering to their treatment regimen. Encourage them to discuss any real or perceived medication side effects with their care team and to be specific about their reasons for not taking them. Talk about which side effects require immediate medical attention.
- Ask the patient to keep their treatment list in their wallet or on their smartphone to show their care team during upcoming visits. Providers can then use the list to spot contraindications, talk about side effects, address knowledge gaps or misconceptions with the patient and order refills as needed.

Build skills:

Discuss the importance of taking medications correctly and why.

- Ask the patient to read the directions on each container, including the timing, dosage and any special instructions (such as whether they should take their medications with food). Are they taking treatments as instructed? If not, ask why. Their reasons may include uncomfortable side effects, forgetfulness, high costs or other barriers.

- Show empathy by letting the patient know their reasons are valid or normal before discussing the health consequences of not following their treatment regimen as instructed. Support the patient in understanding that the purpose of their treatment plan is to protect their health or help them feel better.
- Empower the patient to share their concerns with their care team, as they may be able to resolve certain issues by switching brands or modalities, adjusting dosages or making other modifications.

Build confidence:
Work together to
improve medication
adherence.

- Invite the patient to think of something they did that made them feel successful with their treatment regimen. How would it feel to repeat this behavior more often?
- Ask the patient to think of one goal that will help them take their medications as instructed. Examples include using a pill organizer, setting recurring reminders on their smartphone or asking a loved one to help them stay on track.
- Make a list of healthy ways that patients can reward themselves for adhering to their treatment plan, such as engaging in a favorite relaxation activity. Encourage them to self-reward for fully adhering to their treatment plan for one week—and later, for one month—as they make following their plan a habit.

