

Self-management: ACE it in three easy steps today!!

Patient self-management support is, at its core, a simple concept of engaging the patient to work together with you to manage their health care. Small changes make a big difference in the ability of a patient to learn to live with and successfully manage a chronic disease. Getting patients to focus and be on the same page with their provider really strengthens a therapeutic relationship.

Ask the patient a new question at their visit that encourages them to think about what is important in their health, and discuss what change they would like to make:

For example:

“If you were going to make one change today to improve your health, what would it be?”

-or-

“What is bothering about your health that you want to work on to help you manage your condition (e.g., diabetes, heart failure?)”

-or-

“Is there something that your [diabetes, heart failure...] keeps you from doing that is important to you?”

Choose a goal with the patient that they want to achieve. The goal should be achievable and measurable, and while it may not be the highest clinical priority, it is still important to allow patients to feel in control. Patients do well once they experience success; work with the patient to determine a goal and action plan that they are confident that they can carry out. Make sure the goal is documented in the patient’s medical record.

For example:

Instead of “exercise more”; make the goal “walk around the block twice per week.”

-or-

Instead of “eat better” a goal would be to “switch to skim milk and cut one snack per day.”

Encourage and evaluate. You and the patient set a time frame to discuss their progress (with the clinician, or another staff member), and any successes or barriers. Build on the successes, and/or help the patient address the barriers that they noted. Evaluate the progress, and the overall goal for the patient’s health, and continue to engage the patient in managing their care.