

Activity – Practicing PowerPhrases with Your Health Provider

For this activity, you will prepare for the doctor’s visit and practice PowerPhrases. You may want to practice with your older parent or you may role play with your spouse, relative, or friend.

1. Get a clear “picture” of the health problem.

- Have your older parent keep notes for a few days about the health problem.
- Ask them to be specific. “My leg hurts” should be focused on: When does it hurt? What are you doing when it begins to hurt? How would you describe the pain? What part of the leg hurts? What seems to relieve the pain?

Record your notes about the health problem:

2. Identify goals for the visit.

- Basically, what do you want to accomplish as a result of the visit? Your parent may say, “I want to be pain-free.” Based on their health condition, that may not be realistic. Perhaps your mother has severe bone and joint disease, such that the goal needs to reflect her capability.
- You can draw out some of those goals with CARE Coaching. Some questions to ask:
 - *When you talk about being “pain-free,” what does that look like for you?* (response might be, “Not suffering from my hip pain day and night.”)
 - *When you think about being “pain-free,” what’s most important to you?* (response might be, “Being able to get through my daily chores and responsibilities.”)
 - *Can you say more about that?* (response might be, “I enjoy cooking and so I want to be able to stand at the stove and counter and create a meal.”)
 - With a few simple coaching questions, you have learned what is most important to your parent and what a realistic goal may be.

Record some coaching questions you will use to identify goals:

3. Develop a list or notes on important information to take to the visit.

- Important information may include:
 - Current medications
 - Medical history/conditions (include dates when known)
 - Specialists recently seen and their recommendations
 - Recent tests with dates and locations
 - Changes in symptoms since your last visit
 - Refills needed
 - PowerPhrases and questions for today

Record important information you need to obtain:

4. At the doctor's office.

- Important things to keep in mind at the office:
 - Speak up during the visit. Many physicians appreciate the family involvement and concern about their older parents' health care.
 - Clarify information. Some questions to ask may be:
 - *When you say my mom needs to increase her activity, exactly what kind and how often?*
 - *How will this new medication help my mom? What happens if she does not take the medicine?*
 - Negotiate as appropriate. If a recommendation seems unrealistic based on your parent's functional abilities, say so. Often, there are alternatives that the doctor can suggest.

- *According to the schedule for this new medicine, my mom would need to take it every 6 hours. She would remember to take it if it could be scheduled with every meal. Would that work?*
- Streamline the visit. Studies have shown that you have 23 second to speak before the doctor interrupts! Avoid the irrelevant details, and let the doctor ask the questions.
- Before leaving, ask the doctor for written instructions. Summarize and clarify any final questions or information that you or your older parent may have.

Record key issues/questions you will ask at the office: