

COMMUNICATION SKILLS FOR HEALTH COACHING

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Some Tidbits About Me



- Faculty, Health Care Homes Initiative, Australian General Practice Accreditation Limited (AGPAL)
- Former Manager of Practice Coaching and Training/Master Trainer, Center for Excellence in Primary Care, University of California, San Francisco, USA
- Former Master Trainer/Workshop Leader, Stanford University's Chronic Disease Self-Management Program
- Former Workshop Leader, National Diabetes Prevention Program Pilot in New York State

Health coaches help patients...

Obtain knowledge

Gain self-management skills

Increase confidence

Improve health status

Your Health Coach Toolbox

Open ended
questions

Closing the
loop

Agenda
setting

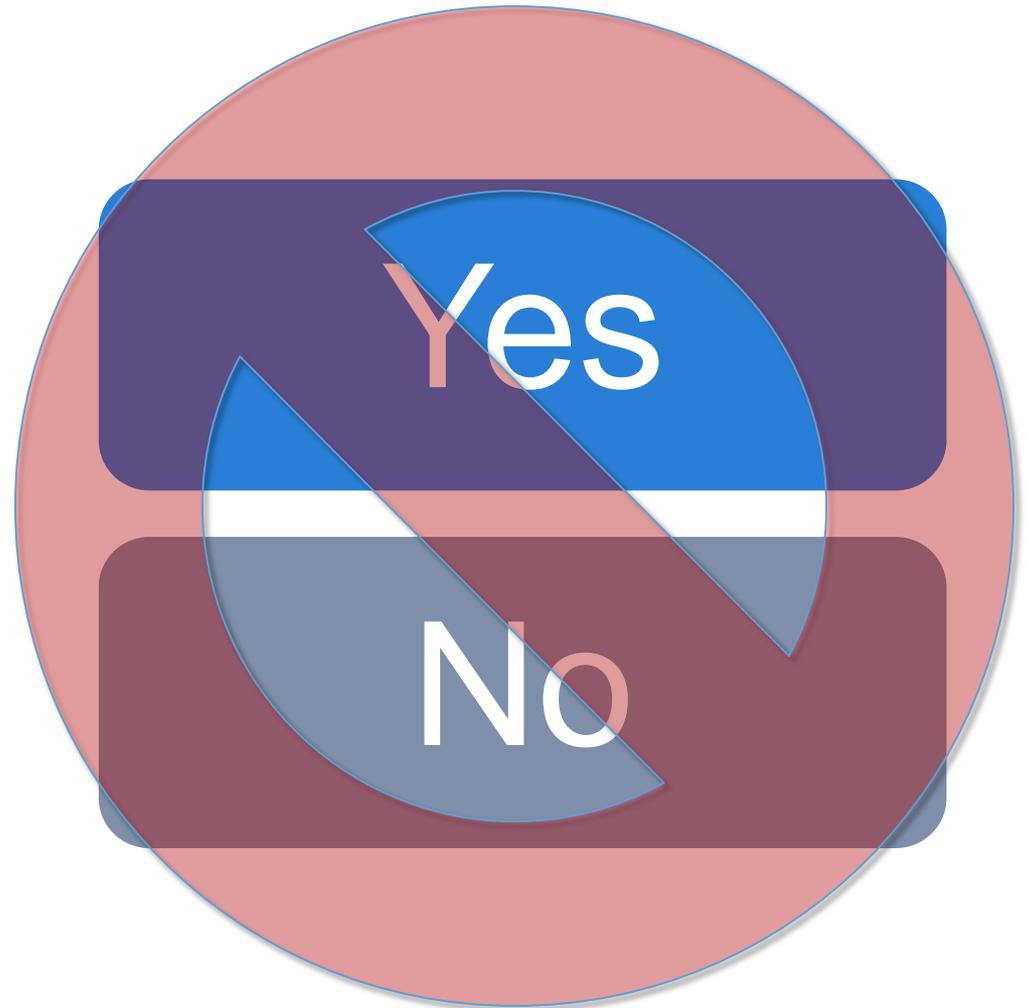
Action plans

OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS

Communication Skill #1 for Health Coaching

What are open ended questions?

- Questions that require a patient to respond *in more than one word answers*



Why use open ended questions?

Allows the health coach to learn about the patient perspective

Feelings
regarding
health

Knowledge
of health

Barriers

Successes

Past
experiences

Readiness
for change

How to Ask Open Ended Questions

- Begin your questions with...

- If you ask a close ended question, follow up with “***Tell me more about that...***” or an open ended question

How?

Who?

What?

Why?

Where?

When?

CLOSING THE LOOP

Communication Skill #2 for Health Coaching

What is closing the loop?

Asking patients to restate or summarize the information that has been provided *in their own words*

Why close the loop with patients?

- 40–80% of the medical information patients are told during office visits is forgotten immediately, and nearly half of the information retained is incorrect*



Steps to Closing the Loop*

1

- Start the conversation by asking the patient what they understood about the information

2

- Tell the information when the patient doesn't know

3

- Ask the patient to restate what you said in their own words

4

- Repeat asking and telling as needed until the patient restates the information correctly

When should you close the loop?

When patients have...

- Changes in care plans
- Changes in medications
- New diagnoses

When patients need to...

- Obtain labs (especially if offsite)
- Complete screening tests
- Follow-up with specialists

Starting the Conversation...

Just to make sure I was clear, what will you need to do to prepare for your labs?

We covered a lot of information today, how will you take the new dose of medication tomorrow?

I want to make sure we both remember your action plan, what is your plan for this week?

Phrases to Avoid When Closing the Loop

Do you understand what I said?

Repeat back what I just said

What did I just tell you?

AGENDA SETTING

Communication Skill #3 for Health Coaching

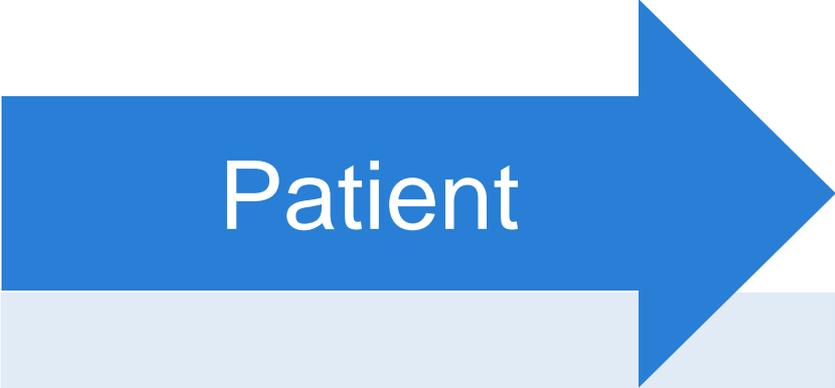
What is setting the agenda?

A collaborative negotiation of time for the patient visit

Communication of both patient and care team concerns

Allows for prioritization for the visit

Why set the agenda?



Patient

- Holdovers from last visit
- New symptoms
- New concerns
- Emergencies



Care Team

- Holdovers from last visit
- Chronic disease management
- Population health initiatives and monitoring

Steps to Setting the Agenda*

1

- Ask the patient what s/he wants to discuss.

2

- Confirm the patient's items and ask for other items.

3

- Share with the patient what you or the provider wants to discuss.

4

- Ask the patient if it is OK to talk about his/her concerns, your concerns and the provider's concerns (in that order).

5

- Briefly summarize what all of the agenda items will be.

ACTION PLANS

Communication Skill #4 for Health Coaching

What is an action plan?

An agreement between the patient and care team specifying a behavior change *the patient wants to make*

A short term activity that contributes to a longer-range goal

A plan that is always defined by the patient/team partnership

Why set action plans with patients?

Action plans break down overwhelming health goals

Action plans help build confidence—there is no failure

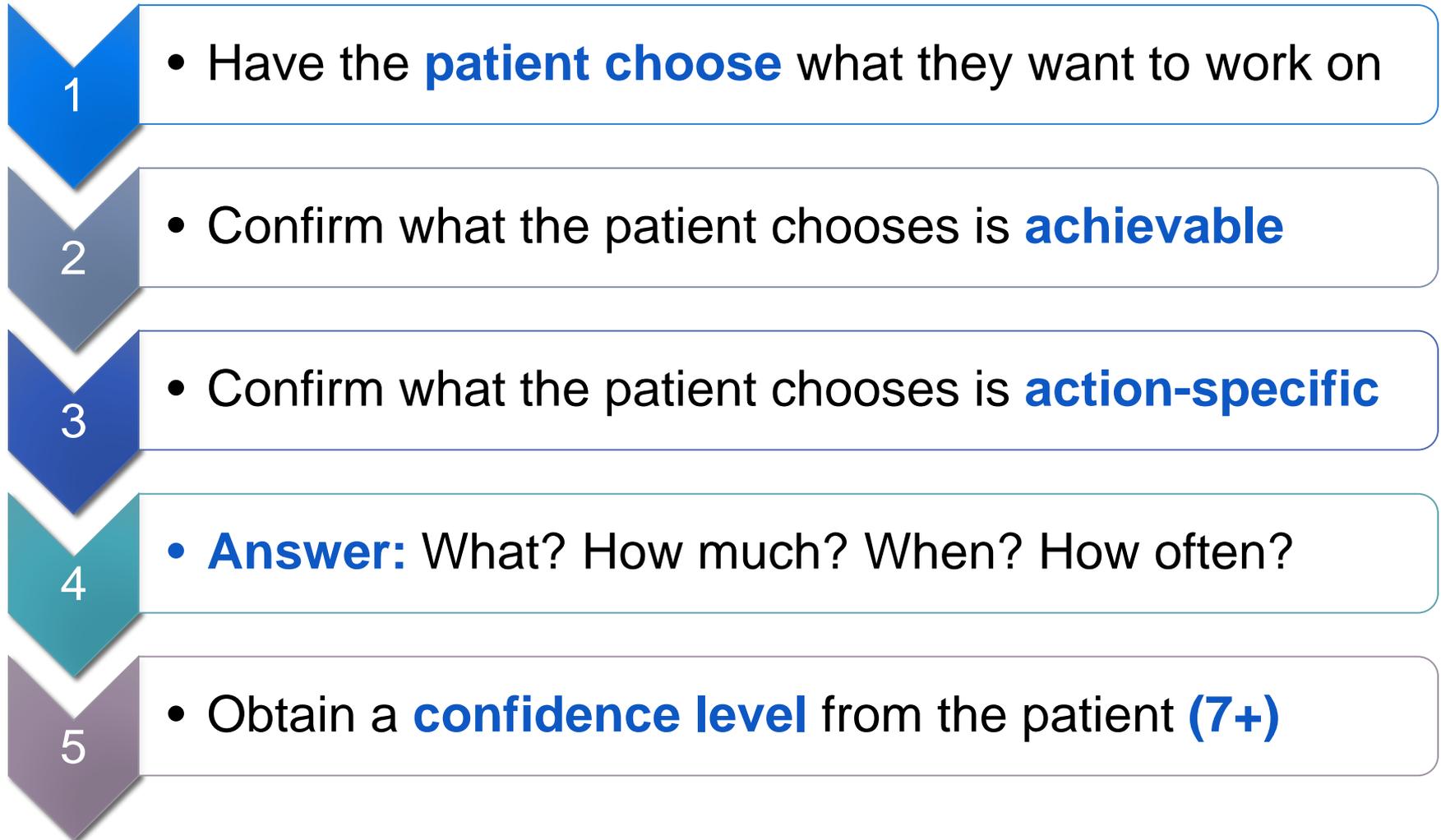
Action plans aid in identifying other needs (e.g., SDoH)

When should you introduce action plans?

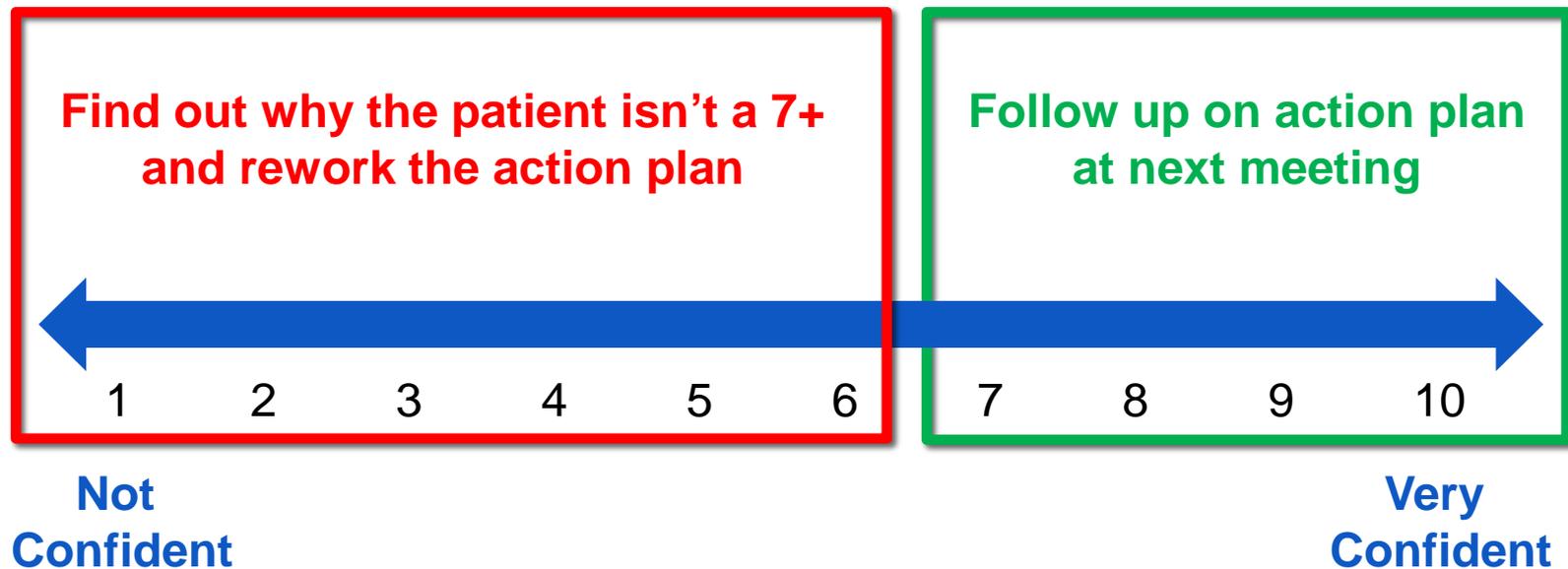
After long range goals are introduced by the care team

When patients are motivated to change

Steps to Action Planning*



Action Plan Confidence Scale



Tips for Action Planning

Ask questions during initial exploration

- Likes and dislikes
- What patient has tried in the past
- What patient would like to try

Don't judge

- It's the patient's action plan!

Have the patient choose

- Action plans may seem unrelated to the patient's health
- There is a reason the patient is action planning around it

Your Health Coach Toolbox

Open ended
questions

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loop

Agenda
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Action plans

QUESTIONS?
