Effective Use of Teaching Methods

Explanations
Verbal messages and answers to questions help patients and caregivers learn meaningful information that meets their specific interest and needs.

- Rephrase the question to make sure you understand it and what it means to the person.
- Why questions usually ask the purpose or reason for the action and may have a high emotional component. Start with what and how answers.
- Don’t give more information than was asked for so as not to overwhelm the person.
- End the explanation with information or a question to stimulate the person to think about something or provide a basis for more questions.
- Ask for feedback before changing the subject by asking if the explanation answered the question.
- Look for non-verbal cues that indicate understanding or lack of understanding.

Demonstration and Practice
Demonstration and practice is primarily used for teaching skills and procedures; however, they can also be used to teach personal and social skills. Reinforcement through practice is essential when learning a motor skill.

- The task or skill is broken into specific behaviors or steps that are sequential.
- Slowly demonstrate each part of the skill, describing what is being done and why and when.
- The patient then describes each step and “coaches” you on what to do.
- The patient handles the equipment, practices the skill under guidance and is coached through the steps of the procedure.
- The patient completes the skill, explaining what is being done and why.
- The patient is also taught what to do if something goes wrong during the procedure. Learning how to troubleshoot problems increases his confidence level that he can handle problems when necessary.

Problem –Solving
This method helps patients anticipate problems and develop or enhance their ability to solve problems related to their health or illness. The patient is taught to:

- Confirm the problem
- Identify strategies or ways to solve the problem
- Determine potential consequences of using various solutions
- Select the best solution
- Develop a specific action plan

Behavioral Rehearsal
Rehearsal promotes learning and memory and should be encouraged for both skills and knowledge acquisition. A problem, situation, or the need for a decision is presented to the patient to help him or her experience a situation as near like reality as possible and to practice how to cope with the situation.
Choose a situation or experience that is relevant and immediate to the patient. Create real world situations and ask the question “what would you do if (such and such happens)?”

Make sure the experience is safe.

Have the patient explore various behaviors, help the patient see the consequences, and practice what actions they would take. This helps them anticipate what could happen in the future as they attempt to change their health-related behaviors.

Have the person develop an action plan. Parts of an action plan include (Lorig):

- Something the person wants to do, not what someone else thinks should be done.
- Something reasonable that can be expected to be accomplished in the time frame.
- Determine the specific behavior in terms that are measurable (eg. Exercise is not a behavior, but walking around the block every day is a behavior). Answer the questions about the behavior in terms of:
  - What? (walking)
  - How much? (walking a block)
  - When? (first thing in the morning)
  - How often? (3 times a week on Monday, Wednesday, Friday)
- Ask person how confident they are on a scale of 0 (not at all confident) to 10 (very confident) that they will be able to complete the entire action plan. If confidence level is 7 or less, problem-solve around the barriers causing the low confidence level, and help them make adjustments to the action plan so they are more confident.

References:


© 2006, AHEC Clear Health Communication Program
The Ohio State University