1. **Knowing your patient** is the key to successful teaching.
   - What does your patient want to know, need to know, already know?
   - How willing and able is your patient to learn?
   - How does your patient prefer to learn (learning style)?

2. Teach "need to know" or **survival learning**, not "nice to know" information.

3. **Prioritize learning needs** and set realistic goals with the patient.
   - Which behaviors are the most important for survival?
   - Which behaviors are the easiest to do or change? Start there.
   - Which behaviors have resources available for the change?

4. Seize the **teachable moment** when your patient shows a need to learn by asking questions or showing interest.

5. **Link new learning** to real-life examples and past experiences.

6. Make information **practical and relevant** to the patient by focusing on how the behavior change fits into their life-style.

7. Help the patient **problem-solve** anticipated problems that may occur and apply the learning to their situation. This increases the level of confidence in providing self-care.

8. Divide teaching into small blocks of time and **teach only 1 to 3 key points** at a time. Avoid too much detail, but give specific, not general instructions.

9. **Avoid jargon and technical words** and use terms familiar to patient. Give simple written and visual aids to help comprehension. Have the patient review these materials to gain a basic understanding before you teach and individualize the information.

10. **Ask for and give feedback** frequently so the patient knows what they have learned. Give praise for desired learning and reinforce the positives.

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AHEC Health Literacy Initiative
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