

Ask the Person to Explain Back in Their Own Words

Teach-back involves asking the person, in a caring way, to explain back (or show back), using their own words. Using their own words helps reveal what they understand or remember. If they are asked to repeat back, they may parrot what they heard and you won't know if they truly understood.

In using teach-back, the health team member invites the person into the conversation by asking them to explain back the information, actions, or plans discussed, using their own words. Based on the person's response, the team member can add, clarify, correct, or affirm the information. (Morony, 2018)

There is evidence showing that increased patient engagement and involvement may improve retention and integration of key information discussed in health encounters. (Schillinger, 2003) Evidence also shows that when patients repeat information in their own words and demonstrate health care skills before hospital discharge, learning and retention are increased. (Kornburger, 2013) A cultural liaison trained in health literacy best practices, including teach-back, and working to connect culturally- and linguistically-diverse populations with community and public health agencies' programs and services shared that for neighboring community members, being able to respond, to have an answer, can be empowering. (Upreti, 2023)

Listen to an adult learner describe the importance of explaining in their own words.

Norma – Inadvertent Overdose

