

Teach-back: Confirm the Spoken Word

Teach-back Technique (Interactive Communication Loop)

- **Set a tone of partnership.** This could be saying “I want to make sure that you and I are on the same page.”
- **Assess recall and comprehension after introducing an important new concept, advice, or change in treatment plan.** You need not confirm everything – this could quickly get tiresome.
- **Ask open-ended questions.** Put your questions into context such as, “We talked about adding fiber to your diet. What will you look for the next time you buy cereal?”
- **Actively listen for discrepancies.** This includes paying attention to what people do and do not say. Then offer at least one more statement. This can reinforce key concepts, such as “That’s really good that you remember about ____.” Or clear up misunderstandings, with “It’s good to know _____. But also important to _____.”
- **Restate or tailor (adapt) the message if the patient does not understand or agree.** Do not just repeat the same message louder or in exactly the same way.
- **Assess patient’s comprehension again.**
- **Continue these steps until it is clear that the patient understands.** If you believe you have given an adequate explanation but the patient still does not understand then consider other factors such as learning disabilities, communication disorders, cognitive impairments, cultural differences, or limited literacy and language skills.

One way not to find this out is by asking, “Do you understand?” Most patients simply nod and smile regardless of whether or not they do.