

Getting the Conversation Started



Congratulations on Completing Your Training and Becoming a *Peer Mentor!*

Using effective communication and listening skills that you have learned in the training modules will help you build a relationship with your mentee. You will receive positive and negative responses when talking to your mentees about how living with end-stage renal disease has affected their lives. Inside are some helpful scenarios to help keep the conversation going whether you receive a positive or negative response to your questions.

Remember, always refer your mentees to members of the care planning team for more information about different treatment modalities and healthcare options.

1. What concerns you most about your illness?

- ☺ **Positive:** I'm concerned if I may need to be on dialysis the rest of my life, but I am learning to cope with my condition.
 - ▶ *Pointers:* Reinforce positive response; try to understand more about what coping skills they are using.
 - ▶ *Example:* I am glad to hear that you are learning to cope, what are you finding is the biggest challenge about being on dialysis for the rest of your life?
- ☹ **Negative:** I have so many concerns; you can't help me so why should I tell you?
 - ▶ *Pointers:* Engage the patient to open up, use an empathetic tone.
 - ▶ *Example:* I understand you are going through so much right now and have a lot on your mind. Would you like for me to have someone (i.e. the social worker) speak with you?

2. How are things at home with you and your family?

- ☺ **Positive:** My family is very supportive.
 - ▶ *Pointers:* Reinforce positive response. Listen for coping skills they are using. (continue to support the patient and identify opportunities for staff to provide support)
 - ▶ *Example:* I am so happy to hear you have a supportive system. In what ways do they support you?
- ☹ **Negative:** My family doesn't get it! They don't care about me and I don't want to talk anymore!
 - ▶ *Pointers:* Engage with the patient to continue to get them to open up by acknowledging their statement in an empathetic way.
 - ▶ *Example:* I can just imagine how that would make you feel. How can we be supportive? Would you feel more comfortable talking about this in private with someone (i.e. the social worker)?

3. As you think about your illness, what are the best and worst things that can happen?

- ☺ **Positive:** Well, you know the best is I would be able to stop dialysis. I don't think about the worst things about my disease. I focus on the positives.
 - ▶ *Pointers:* Acknowledge the positive coping skills by utilizing positive feedback.
 - ▶ *Example:* I think you are amazing. You're always so positive.
- ☹ **Negative:** There's nothing good about my illness and we all know I'm going to die soon so what's the difference?
 - ▶ *Pointers:* Engage with the patient by using compassion and understanding.
 - ▶ *Example:* I know going through this must be overwhelming. Is there anything I can do to help you cope at this time? We have a wonderful social worker who is a very good listener. Would you like to speak with her/him?

4. What has been most difficult for you about your illness?

- ☺ **Positive:** ESRD makes my life a little more complicated. But, I'm working through it.
 - ▶ *Pointers:* Acknowledge the patient's positive attitude and coping ability.
 - ▶ *Example:* I understand going through dialysis is difficult. Tell me some ways you are working through it?
- ☹ **Negative:** My entire life is terrible. There are many things that have been difficult.
 - ▶ *Pointers:* Pay attention to any depressive indicators/behavior (sadness, anger, non-responsiveness etc.) Utilize active listening by listening to the complete message (verbal and nonverbal) being sent.
 - ▶ *Example:* I understand dealing with ESRD is very difficult and can make life complicated. Ask patient in a non-offensive tone if they would like to speak with someone privately.

5. What are your hopes, (expectations, fears) as you live with this disease?

- ☺ **Positive:** My hopes are that I will be able to stop dialysis someday.
 - ▶ *Pointers:* Acknowledge the patient's positive attitude by showing compassion and understanding.
 - ▶ *Example:* I think it would be wonderful if you were able to stop dialysis one day.
- ☹ **Negative:** I don't have anything to be hopeful about, my life is over.
 - ▶ *Pointers:* Pay attention to any sadness, anger, or not responding Engage with the patient in a non-threatening way by listening to what the patient is saying, verbal and nonverbally.
 - ▶ *Example:* I understand fighting this disease can be very frightening and overwhelming. Is there anything I can do to lessen these feelings? Would you like to speak with someone in private about you feelings?

6. How would you describe your quality of life?

- ☺ **Positive:** I feel my life is good in most ways. I would like to be off dialysis, but maybe someday.
 - ▶ *Pointers:* Acknowledge positive response and look for coping skills they are using.
 - ▶ *Example:* I think your positive attitude is terrific. Can you tell me how you keep such a positive attitude?
- ☹ **Negative:** What are you talking about? I don't have any quality of life left.
 - ▶ *Pointers:* Engage with the patient by using compassion and understanding.
 - ▶ *Example:* ESRD places a lot of demands on your life. I understand how overwhelming and challenging this process can be. Is there anything I can do to help? Would you like to speak with our social worker?

7. How has your illness changed your relationship with your spouse and children?

- ☺ **Positive:** My spouse and children are very supportive to me during my dialysis treatment and at home.
 - ▶ *Pointers:* Reinforce positive statement by looking for coping skills the patient may be using.
 - ▶ *Example:* I'm so happy your family is supportive. Can you tell me some of the ways they offer support to you?
- ☹ **Negative:** My spouse and children are never around to help me when I need it.
 - ▶ *Pointers:* Utilize active listening by trying to understand the complete message without being distracted.
 - ▶ *Example:* I understand. Sometimes family members have a difficult time coping with ESRD and don't understand the best ways to support you through this difficult time. Would you like for me to speak with our social worker and ask her to schedule a meeting with you and your family to answer any questions and to provide additional support?

8. How are you feeling about yourself?

- ☺ **Positive:** I'm feeling really good about myself. I think my treatment is going smoothly and I'm adjusting to my new lifestyle.
 - ▶ *Pointers:* Acknowledge the positive coping skills by utilizing positive feedback.
 - ▶ *Example:* I am glad to hear that you are learning to cope and treatment is going well. What are some of the challenges you are seeing relating to your self-esteem?
- ☹ **Negative:** I hate how ESRD makes me feel. I hate everything about it including the treatments.
 - ▶ *Pointers:* Engage with the patient to continue to get them to open up by acknowledging their statement in an empathetic way.
 - ▶ *Example:* I understand living with ESRD can be so overwhelming and frightening at times. Is there anything I can do to help you with these feelings? Would you like to speak with someone about your feelings in private?

9. What is your understanding of your responsibilities relating to your dialysis care?

- ☺ **Positive:** I feel like I'm adjusting well because I'm taking part in decisions about my treatment.
 - ▶ *Pointers:* Acknowledge the positive coping skills by providing positive feedback.
 - ▶ *Example:* Great! I think it's very important for each patient to take part in decisions about their treatment. Your input is critical to a positive outcome for you.
- ☹ **Negative:** I feel like I have lost all control of my body and treatment decisions.

- ▶ *Pointers:* Engage with the patient to continue to get them to open up by acknowledging their statement in an empathetic way.
- ▶ *Example:* I understand learning that dialysis or a transplant will be needed can be overwhelming at first. But, understanding your own needs and taking charge of your health related responsibilities can help you to feel more in control of your life.

10. How are you feeling about beginning treatment?

- ☺ **Positive:** I'm very scared, but I've been reading and working to understand what is going to happen to me and my body.
 - ▶ *Pointers:* Engage with the patient using understanding and compassion.
 - ▶ *Example:* It is normal to have questions, fears and concerns relating to beginning treatment. But, you are correct; fear will dissipate with knowledge and understanding of what is happening to you and your body.
- ☹ **Negative:** I don't want to talk about it! This is not my choice and I am very scared.
 - ▶ *Pointers:* Acknowledge patient's fears by showing empathy and compassion.
 - ▶ *Example:* It is very normal to have fears about the unknown. Sometimes it really helps to speak with your health care team about your concerns and fears. Would you like to speak with someone in private to work on decreasing your fears and anxieties?



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