You Are A Partner In Your Child’s Healthcare

YOU KNOW YOUR CHILD BEST

Your experience and knowledge of your child + the experience and knowledge of the healthcare professionals = the best decisions about your child’s health

As a partner in your child’s healthcare, you are encouraged to participate in decisions about your child.

At times, this may involve differences of opinion and challenges in communication. The way you deal with these situations is important for building and maintaining a strong relationship with your healthcare team. The key pieces of a collaborative relationship are honesty, respect, trust and appreciation (see Tip Sheet 1).

Set The Tone

You can encourage positive communication by acknowledging any difference of opinion or conflict. State your desire to move forward.

We seem to have a difference of opinion. Can we clarify options and create a plan to move forward?

Keep an Open Mind

You may not have all the information. There may be possibilities you have not considered. Be willing to reconsider your position after you have gathered information and considered all the options.

“I try to remember that my body language can say as much as my words.”

ASK FOR HELP FROM OTHERS

You may be tired, emotional, or uncomfortable with conflict. Consider asking someone to help you work through a difference of opinion you have with a healthcare professional. You could ask a trusted family member, friend, Elder, or another professional such as a social worker or chaplain.

“When my child was in ICU, I was overwhelmed and exhausted. I found it difficult to participate in decision making. I talked with a social worker and she was able to support me and help me express my concerns.”
Working Towards a Shared Understanding

When you have a difference of opinion, the following steps will help you work together to come up with a solution:

1. Plan ahead. Consider what you will say and what questions you need to ask. Set up a time to talk.
2. Start the conversation by indicating your desire to understand the other person’s point of view and to work together in the best interests of your child.
3. Listen to the other person without interrupting. Allow them to explain their position.
4. Ask open ended, probing questions to clarify and get the information you need.
5. If necessary, explore the reasons behind each of your positions. Ask “why” questions to get a better understanding.
6. State your understanding of each position.
7. Discuss possible solutions and form an agreement on next steps.
8. Restate the agreement you have made.

"Making important decisions for your child can be very emotional; especially when the whole team does not agree! I have found that when I have an emotional reaction, it is often because of my fear and worry. Taking a moment to breathe deeply and calm myself helps to turn my focus back to the needs of my child. I know that my healthcare team has the best interests of my child in mind and that together, we can create a plan that everyone can agree on.”

If you can’t reach a shared understanding...

- Ask to speak with a manager to help resolve the difference.
- Get a second opinion.
- Seek out a different professional for your child’s care.
- Express your concern to the AHS Patient Relations Department.
- Consult a Clinical Ethicist at your hospital if it is a medical ethics decision.

“When I have lost control I apologize for any inappropriate words or actions and acknowledge my emotional response – “I’m sorry, it is difficult for me to separate my emotions from this situation.”

Respectful Ways To Ask For Clarity:

Help me to understand why...

So if I understand you correctly, you are saying...

Created by parents who have years of experience partnering with their child’s healthcare team. For more information visit the website of the Family and Community Resource Centre at the Alberta Children’s Hospital.

http:\\fcrc.albertahealthservices.ca

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