

Ask “What Matters”

It is times like this that compassionate connections matter more than ever for our patients, families, and staff. Asking “What Matters to You?” puts the patient voice at the center of care by focusing on what matters to them and ensuring that our care aligns with what matters most to the patient.

The first step in beginning a conversation is to ask “What matters to you?” but sometimes this question may not be the right fit. Here are some suggestions for different ways that you can ask the question:

- What is important to you at the moment?
- For your care, what’s the best scenario?
- What would you like to achieve as a result of our work together?
- Is there anything else you want to tell me that I haven’t asked about?
- What can I do to best support you in your care today?
- What are your goals and how can I help you achieve them?

Finding time to ask these questions may feel overwhelming. Here are some creative ways to embed the question into your practice:

- Include in the pre-admission process
- Ask at admission
- Make it part of your evaluation
- Start your care with the question
- Create visual reminders such as on the patients’ whiteboard
- Integrate in plans of care and team conference
- Embed in discharge planning

Also, it is important for you to understand the patient in the context of their life. No patient wants to be seen as a disease or a list of symptoms, but rather as a whole person. The following questions will help you explore the patient’s life context and priorities:

- What is important to you today
- What brings you joy
- What makes life worth living
- What do you worry about
- How do you learn best? For example, listening to someone, watching someone or a video, or reading

For our patients with cognitive impairment or dementia, they are often capable of expressing their goals and preferences and should participate in “What Matters” conversations to the degree possible. It is the care team’s responsibility to get to know the patient and engage with him or her directly. Careful consideration should be given to:

- The timing of “What Matters” conversations. There may be times of the day when the older adult is more lucid (e.g., earlier in the day)
- If there is significant cognitive impairment, the most important aspect of “What Matters” may be finding out who the older adult relies most on to help make decisions.

The following video can provide more information about “ask what matters”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sTyOT89UQjI>

