

# Four Principles for Effective Patient Education

## 1. The goal of education is not education; it's action.

Understand that most health care is *self-care*. Patient activation means giving patient the knowledge, skills and confidence to successfully manage a devastating disease with a complicated, burdensome treatment plan.

We care for our patients for about 12 hours a week in the center; they care for themselves for the other 156 hours. When you teach, the behavioral goal needs to be clear to the patient; what's the next step? For each topic, the materials should answer these questions:

*What is the issue?*  
*Why is it important (to me)*  
*What do I do about it?*

## 2. Patient-centered approach.

You don't teach information, you teach patients. Adults are not blank slates. They come with a wealth of real life experiences, ideas and preconceptions, as well as plans and goals that play into how they accept and process information.

Assess and engage patients, and explain the rationale for action in a way that is personally relevant for that patient.

## 3. Evidence-based content.

We clearly know through research that certain patient behaviors are associated with better health and survival, and NKC patient educational materials emphasize what we know will improve survival outcomes. The focus is on these issues that can lower risk of death and improve quality of life; permanent access, fluid management, transplant, etc..

## 4. Health literacy.

Health literacy, defined as the ability to understand and act on health information, is a significant barrier to learning. Research shows low health literacy is strongly associated with increased mortality. NKC patient educational materials are written using Medicare guidelines for making materials clear and understandable (bullet points, two column format, headers, 5-6th grade reading level, etc.). We use words that patients understand, and ensure understanding by using teach-back; suggested teach back questions have been included.