

Conversation Starters

Talking about culture and health in shared decision making

A person's cultural beliefs, values, and practices can play an important role in his or her decision making. The shared decision making process can provide opportunities to explore and discuss cultural aspects of health and healing. Provider awareness of these beliefs can help bridge differences that influence relationships and decision making. Here are conversation starters for addressing culture in shared decision making.

Content area for exploration	Sample conversation starters
1. Language preferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What language do you speak at home? • What language would you like to speak here? • Would you prefer to use a translator?
2. Decision making in a person's life and family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are decisions typically made in your family? In your community? • Are there particular family members that are consulted on important decisions? • Would you like to complete or share this tool with this person?
3. Beliefs about one's problem or situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you describe or understand your situation? • Is there a particular name or term used in your family or community to describe what you are experiencing?
4. Family or community beliefs associated with the decision the individual is trying to make	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are your family members aware of your situation? • What are their views about the decision you are weighing? • How about your community? Have you experienced pressure from your family or community to decide one way or another? • How have you responded?
5. Spiritual, religious, or family beliefs about the use of medication and other Western medicine treatments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is using medication viewed within your family? Within your faith community? • How is Western medicine viewed within your family? Your faith community? • What alternatives are used instead of medication?
6. Herbs, supplements, and other complementary or alternative medicine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there herbs, roots, or supplements that you use to promote healing? • Are these remedies associated with religious or spiritual beliefs? If so, how? • How have you felt using herbs or other alternative medicine practices? What benefits have you experienced? Any negative reactions?

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7. Customs or rituals the person is using or would like to use to promote health and healing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there customs or rituals that you use for health or healing? That your family or faith community uses? • Are these rituals rooted in religious or family tradition? Explain. • Are there customs, rituals, or remedies you would like to try?
8. Cultural relevance of shared decision making resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well has this decision making tool helped you address concerns that are important to you? • Are there other areas that you would like to explore?
9. Cross-cultural understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there other aspects of your culture or background that are important for me to understand in order to be helpful? • Are there areas of your culture or background I may have misunderstood?
10. Coping with stress related to decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What level of stress have you felt in trying to make this decision? • What things have helped in the past with relieving stress? • How have you coped with this stress? • What can you do to relieve some of this stress?