

Prepared by Dr Alison Beauchamp | October, 2018

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The importance of understanding

- The health system places a significant burden on clients to ‘access, understand and use’ information, e.g.
 - Participation in decision-making
 - Medication adherence
 - Self-management of chronic disease
 - Informed consent

The challenge of effective communication in healthcare

- Effective communication in healthcare remains a challenge:
 - Up to 80% of healthcare information is forgotten immediately
 - 50% of information recalled is incorrect
 - 78% of patients discharged from the Emergency Department did not understand the information they were given
 - Nearly all of these did not realise that they had not understood

Instructions



What can you remember?

What did you understand?

Healthcare information

- Healthcare professionals provide the majority of health information to people
- The way in which we communicate health information affects adherence and health outcomes
- Clients must be able to understand, remember and act on that information.

But whose responsibility is it to ensure someone understands?

How do we know that someone understands

Healthcare workers mostly think they are doing a good job of communicating. In one study:¹

- 77% of healthcare providers thought they had explained the patient's diagnosis clearly.
 - But only 57% of patients reported that they actually understood.
- 90% of patients said they were not told about medication side-effects
 - But 81% of doctors said they had explained

Teach-back

- Teach-back can help prevent gaps in understanding of health information
- Teach-back involves clients repeating back information *in their own words*
 - telling you what they are going to do
 - can be used at any time or in any context

Teach-back – what is the evidence?

- Improved knowledge and self-care ability in chronic disease.^{1,2,3,4}
- Reduced medication errors after hospital discharge.²
- Improvements in inhaler use in COPD.⁵
- Reduced readmissions by 39% in heart failure.^{6, 7, 8}
- Health care providers could more easily identify when people did not understand.⁹

1. Ha Dinh TT. JBI Database of Systematic Reviews. 2016;14(1):210-47; 2. Negarandeh R. Primary Care Diabetes. 7(2):111-8; 3. Orlow M. Am J Respir Crit Care Med 2005. 172(8):980-986; 4. Schillinger D. Arch Intern Med 2003;163:83–90; 5. Dantic DE. Health Educ J. 2013; 6. DeWalt DA. BMC Health Services Research. 2006;6:30; 7. Krumholz HM. Journal of the American College of Cardiology. 2002;39(1):83-9; 8. Peter D, Journal of Nursing Administration. 2015;45(1):35-52; 9. Kornburger C. Journal of Pediatric Nursing (2013) 28, 282–291

Benefits in healthcare

Benefits for clients

- Understand what they need to do and apply that information
- Become more engaged in self-managing their care
- Actively listen!

Benefits for health workers

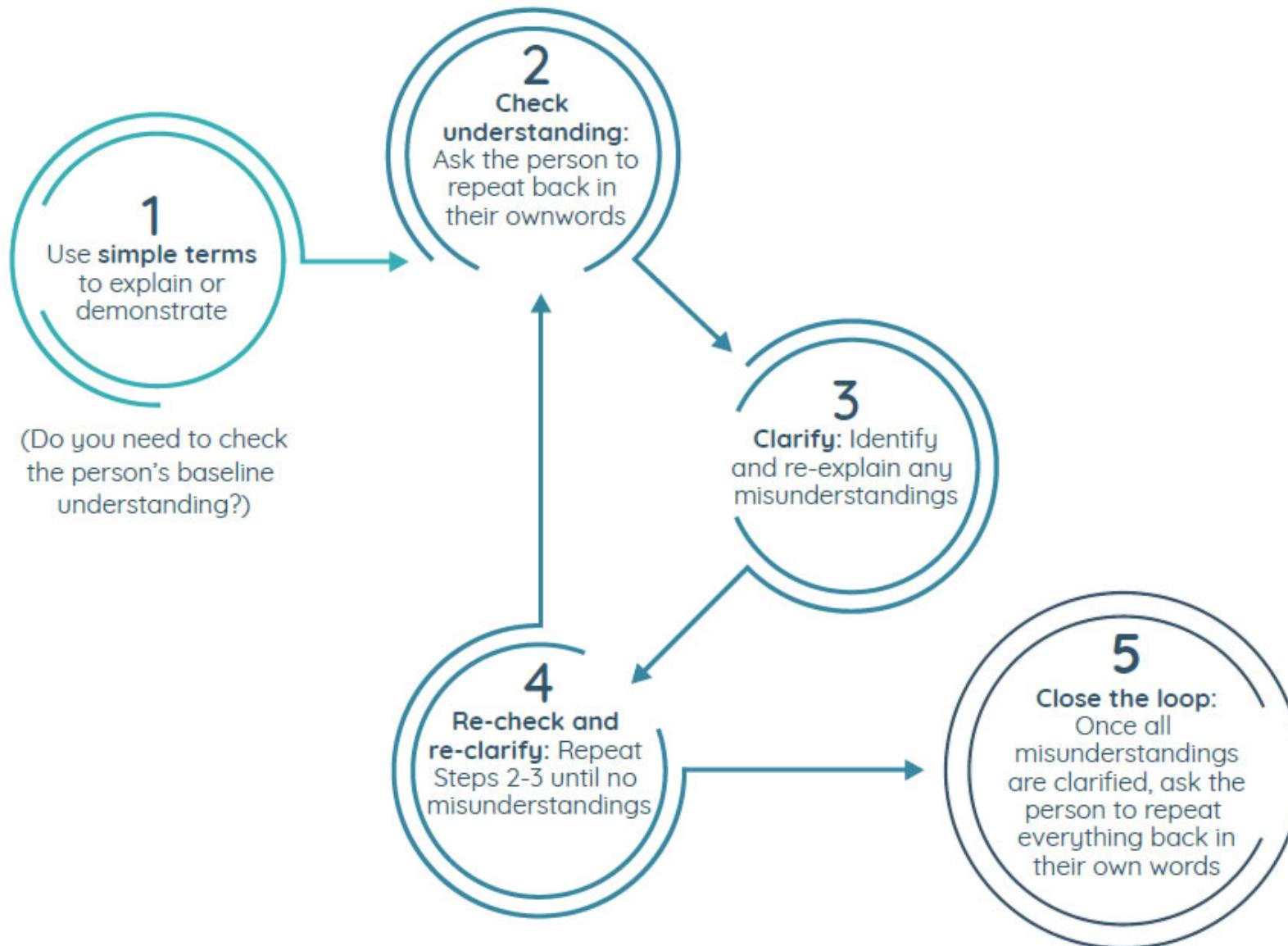
- Insight into how client understands and applies information
- Feedback on communication skills and assumptions

Benefits for the relationship

- Promotes conversation with the client....leads to greater rapport and trust

Teach-back steps in detail

The five steps of teach-back



Before using teach-back

Check the person's baseline understanding

- Do they already know this information
- Are you assuming they have more 'baseline' knowledge than they do?

Example questions:

- Can you tell me your understanding of why you're here today?
- Could you show me what you do?
- Has anyone been through this with you before....can you tell me what they talked about?

Step 1. Use simple terms to explain and/or demonstrate

Minimise medical or other jargon

- Clarify the meaning of words
- Avoid acronyms

Avoid words with multiple meanings

- dressing, needle-stick, negative, diet or stool

Break things down into short statements

Be specific and concrete, not abstract

Using simple terms

Medical Jargon	Simple Term
Benign	Not harmful
Chronic	Long term, ongoing
Hypertension	High blood pressure
Incision	Cut
Inflammation	Sore, swelling

Step 2: Ask the person to demonstrate understanding *in their own words*

- Avoid ‘yes/no’ questions like “Do you understand?”
- Instead, ask specific questions about how they will put this information into practice
 - "I want to make sure I was clear about the side effects of this medicine. Can you explain back to me the things you need to watch out for?"
 - "People often have trouble remembering how to do this. Could you just go through how you will make it work for you?"

Try to avoid making it feel like a test

Step 3: Identify and address any misunderstandings

- Actively listen to what the person is ‘teaching-back’ to you
 - Have they misunderstood anything?
- Provide feedback, focusing on what is not understood
 - e.g. I haven't been clear in regard to the part about....
- Don’t just repeat word for word what you said the first time. Try a different approach
 - e.g. a simple drawing, use a model, or demonstrate
- It might be helpful to assess the client’s preferred learning style

Identify your client's learning style

Talk to the client about how they would prefer their information to be provided, e.g. audio instead of written, using diagrams etc.

This can highlight that education is occurring and also that it is important to you that they understand.

How do you like to learn?

How do you prefer to learn? Please circle YES (I prefer this style) or NO (I do not prefer this style) for each learning style below.

Which do you prefer most? If you choose YES for more than one style, please rank those styles by writing a number in the boxes.

1 I prefer this most... 2 followed by this... 3 followed by this...

Learning Style	Yes	No
Someone talks with you	Yes	No
Someone writes the information for you	Yes	No
Getting printed brochures	Yes	No
The internet or online learning apps	Yes	No
Listening to podcasts or audio-recordings	Yes	No
Pictures and diagrams	Yes	No
Someone shows you how to do something	Yes	No
Sharing stories and ideas with others	Yes	No
Writing your own notes	Yes	No

Teach back Learning Preferences Tool for Health Communication
Authors: Pauline Heath, Alison Beauchamps, Stacey Gordon, Joanne Byrnes, and Michelle Wilson
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Step 4: Repeat steps 2-3 until misunderstandings are clarified

- Once you have re-explained the information, ask the person to explain back to you in their own words again.
 - Then address any misunderstandings
- Teach-back is not a ‘one size fits all’ approach. You will need to be flexible.
 - Some people will need you to use teach-back just once
 - Others will require a much gentler, tailored approach
- Repeat the process of re-checking and re-clarifying up to three times
 - If you have taken learning styles into account and teach-back doesn’t seem to be working, consider other approaches (see next slide)

Step 4: Approaches to support teach-back

What about if the person is still not able to understand?

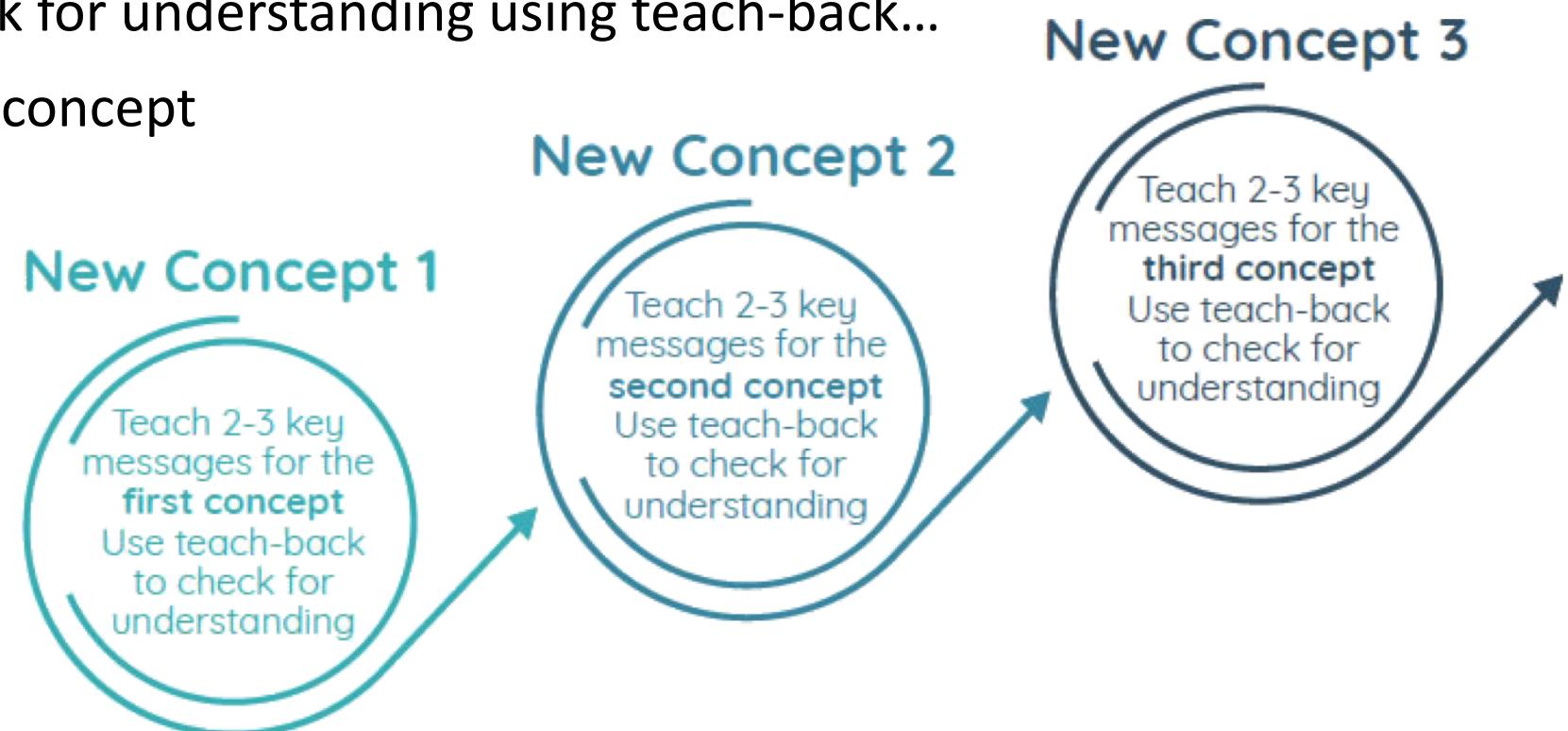
- Are other factors impacting on the exchange? For example, cultural expectations, health status or cognitive state.
- Does another health worker/ family member need to do the teaching?
- Do they really need to know **all** the information you are providing?
- Do they really need all the information **now**?
- What resources does the person already have to help them manage their health? e.g. family, reliable websites, medication aids

Step 5. Close the loop: Ask the person to repeat everything back in their own words again

- To finalise the process of teach-back, ask the person to tell you everything from the beginning again.
 - This helps people to remember the sequence
 - Successful completion of this step can be referred to as **closing the loop** because it is closing off the gap in communication.
 - Remember that even if someone ‘gets it’, this doesn’t mean they will remember it. So re-checking next time you see them is a good idea.

Deliver information in bite-sized pieces. Use ‘Chunk and Check’

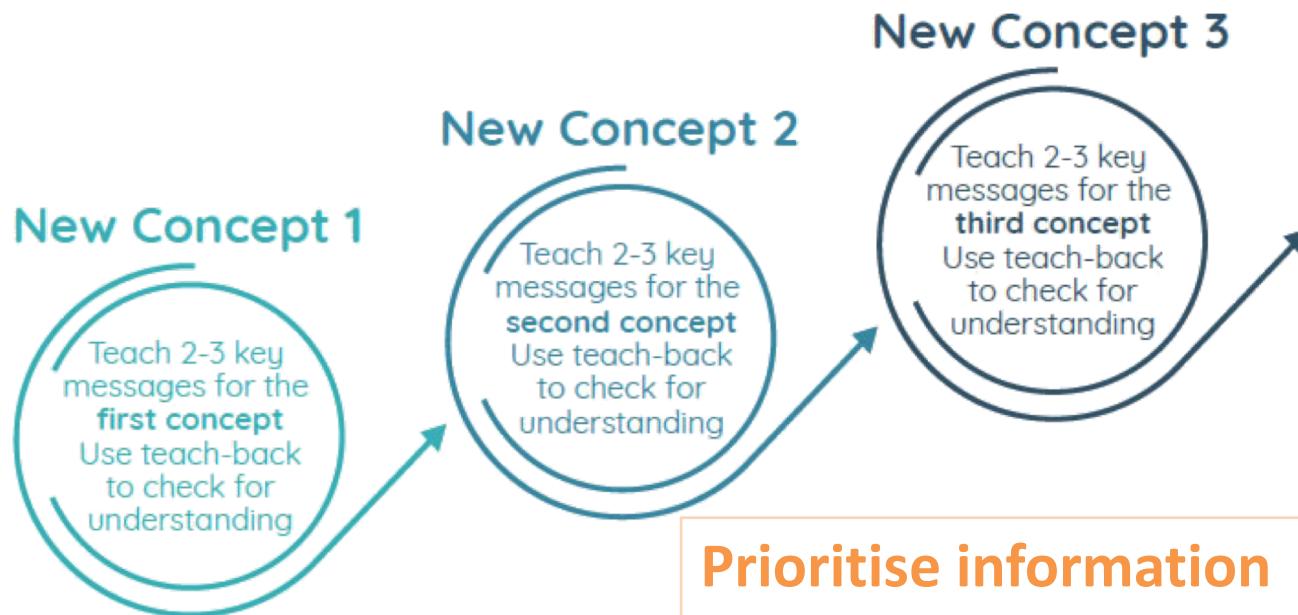
- Often, we try to teach too much at one time.
- Simplify your education by teaching 2-3 main points for the first concept & check for understanding using teach-back...
- Then go to the next concept



Tips when using Chunk and Check

- Think about what people **really need or want to know**. Most people only remember about three things at any one time.
- Move from points that are the most important for people to know to the least important.
- Be specific and concrete

Putting it all together



Effective client education:

- Don't assume baseline understanding
- Don't use jargon
- Consider learning styles

Prioritise information

- Focus on key concepts
- Most important information first
- Be specific and concrete

Teach-back practice

Find a partner to teach something to and practice ‘teach-back’.

You should teach something you know well, but that they have little knowledge of. For example,

- How to get to your house from here
- A favourite recipe

Swap roles so that everyone is able to practice teach-back

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