

STRATEGY WORDS FOR MEDICAL SELF-ADVOCACY

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-Health care providers have tons of unearned power (you use your first name, they use their last name, they are clothed, you might be some variety of unclothed or weirdly clothed, etc)

-The world of healthcare is its own specific culture and language. Being able to move through that culture and speak that language can sometimes help you get what you want and need from providers.

-Providers can be beautiful people (I know many awesome providers and I'd like to think I am somewhat awesome myself) but we are also flawed humans and have soft spots and egos and areas of personal limitation.

-The system is inherently flawed, built as it is on capitalism and often provider convenience.

-You are never responsible for bad health care and you should not be in a place where you have to so strenuously strategize for your basic human dignity.

-However, since we had to receive health care FROM THE SYSTEM WE HAVE NOT THE SYSTEM WE WANT, it can be helpful to have some tools at our fingertips to use.

"I THINK WE ARE HAVE HAVING A MISUNDERSTANDING"

This is a useful phrase when you need to correct a provider but still wish to allow them to save face and/or you don't wish to challenge their ego which of course can have its own consequences.

"I THINK IT WILL WORK BETTER FOR BOTH OF US//I KNOW WE'RE IN A TIME CRUNCH"

If you need the provider to change their approach, use different words for your bits etc, it can help to acknowledge the fact that almost all healthcare is provided by folks who are constantly being harassed to provide it faster. Primary care providers often only have 12 minutes to address the specific problem you've walked in with (and who walks in with one problem). Referencing the time pressure and acknowledging the provider also has needs/wants in the interaction can help it feel like patient and provider are on the same side.

"MY GOAL IS/ MY PRIORITY IS..."

When you walk into a provider's office, they may see this as an opportunity to address your overall health. Sometimes that's about being a bossypants body colonizer and sometimes it comes from a place of "Oh shit this person never comes here. Let me help them with EVERYTHING." Either way, it means you are in the position of trying to deflect questions to get what you came for. Sometimes what you came for is really impacted by something the provider wants to address, in which case it makes sense to listen. But if they're clearly off on a tangent and because of your trauma history (or hell just being a vulnerable human) you're about to blow something, redirect them with the words "Yes, I understand but my priority is X." You might need to repeat it a few times.

"I WAS READING SOME STUDIES /THE MOST RECENT LITERATURE..."

This is a tricky one because you want the provider to think you're an informed patient, not a know it all. (cough egos- cough) Most modern health care providers embrace or at least expect their patients to have consulted Dr Google before they come in, but make it clear you've done your research looking at reputable/peer reviewed sources. Hint: Anything that involves Gwyneth Paltrow is not a reputable source.

"I FEEL LIKE YOU MIGHT BE JUST SEEING 'NONCOMPLIANT PATIENT' BUT LET ME EXPLAIN MY THOUGHT PROCESS/SITUATION"

If you haven't been doing something a health care provider told you to do, there's probably good reason for this. Explain to the provider what the reason/life situation is for the choice so that they can make a different, better or more nuanced recommendation that will work for you.

ABOUT THE PAIN SCALE

The 1-10 pain scale isn't perfect but it's what we're using right now. One of the drawbacks is that everyone literally has their own reference point ("the worst pain you can imagine") and this makes it not always useful for diagnostic purposes. So provide a number, and do make it between 1 and 10. Otherwise providers roll their eyes up into their heads. But also add a functional comment. For example, "The pain is a 7, I can still talk but it makes it hard to even stand up when it's at its worse"

I REFUSE

I REFUSE: This is the SAFE WORD of healthcare, essentially a sledgehammer of a word that means FULL STOP. Be specific about what you're saying full stop to. If you say I REFUSE CARE that will get out that particular situation but will also mean the health care interaction will come to an end.

You can use a variation like "I refuse this procedure" or some of the other words/phrases above to slow down the situation.