

This is an example of a list of things not to say to a patient, on order to create a more productive conversation for a consultation appointment. The column on the left is what would not be recommended and the right side are suggestions of alternative questions and responses.

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What not to say	What should be said
"Your symptoms are normal, lots of people have headaches."	"I'm glad you are seeking care to address your headaches"
"Don't worry, most patients we see have more severe headaches than yours"	"I see you are concerned about your headaches. I recognize that even if uncommon, these headaches are disabling for you and are a cause of concern."
"Your headaches are caused by your mood"	"Your mood can contribute to worsening of your headaches, but we should investigate other causes"
"Why are you wearing sunglasses"	"Is the light bothering you? Do you want me to dim the lights?"
"I've already answered this question. If we don't move on, we can't complete the visit on time"	"Is there a better way I can address your question. What are you having a tough time with?"
"You didn't keep a headache diary?"	"I know it can be difficult to keep track of your headaches. What seems to be the hardest part of doing this?"
"You keep repeating yourself, we need to move on. We can't address all that right now."	"I can see you are very concerned about this topic. Would you like to solely focus on this topic for today's visit?"
"We've already discussed that taking Excedrin is causing worsening headaches. Why are you still using Excedrin everyday?"	"What is the biggest reason you take Excedrin regularly? Is this something you would like to address at this visit?"
"I'm not sure how I can help you if you're not willing to try treatment options."	"How are you hoping to address your symptoms and how can I support you in doing so?"
"I see you are having a headache. Can you just push through it?"	"I'm sorry to see you are struggling. Is there anything I can do to help? Would you like to bring someone in to help answer questions during the visit?"