The Mended Hearts, Inc.

Contact Us
International Headquarters and Resource Center
1500 Dawson Road
Albany, GA 31707

1-888-HEART99
www.mendedhearts.org
www.mendedlittlehearts.org

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Shared Decision Making
Patients & families as part of the healthcare team
1 Be informed
The first step for shared decision making is to be informed. Ask questions and get the information you need. Make sure you fully understand your condition, your options, your role, and your responsibilities. Ask for reliable resources that you can refer to in print and online.

Informed Consent
Informed consent means you have all the information you need to make a decision, you fully understand the information, and you have the freedom to make a choice that is right for you.

Many procedures and clinical trials involve signing an informed consent form. Be sure a healthcare professional has reviewed the form with you in detail so you fully understand what you are agreeing to and why. In a clinical trial, you can withdraw consent at any time, and you do not need to provide a reason.

2 Know yourself
For true shared decision making, the decisions you make have to be right for YOU. Know your values, preferences and what is important to you. You are the one who will live with the decision you make—not your healthcare team or others who might want to give advice.

3 Know your rights
Too often, patients are not aware of their rights. Know your rights.
- You have the right to be treated as part of the team
- You have the right to ask questions and get answers
- You have the right to be heard
- You have the right to access to notes and medical records.
- You have the right to a second opinion (and third and fourth)
- You have the right to suggest alternatives
- You have the right to feel confident in the team
- You have the right to appeal decisions if you don’t agree
- You have the right to change your mind

4 Know your options
Only when you know all your options, can you participate in shared decision making. Ask:
- What are all my options?
- What are the risks and benefits of each option?
- What changes will I have to make with each option?
- Will insurance cover each option?
- Who is the best person to provide this treatment?
- Where is the best place for me to get this treatment?
Ask follow-up questions as needed until you feel confident.

5 Use your voice
Gone are the days where patients silently follow doctor's orders. Today, patients can play an active role in the healthcare team and their input is valued. Speak up and speak out so your needs, preferences, questions and concerns are heard and addressed. Don't be afraid you will be seen as a "problem patient." Your healthcare providers want to hear from you and for you to feel confident about your decisions.

6 Take responsibility
Your health is ultimately your responsibility. It is up to you to be part of the healthcare team, to educate yourself, to share your thoughts and opinions, to know your needs and preferences, and to make decision with your healthcare team that work for you. If you make a bad decision, as we all do, it is up to you to make the changes needed to make better decisions going forward. Also, new information becomes available all the time, and keeping yourself informed will improve your health too.

"It's your road, and yours alone. Others may walk it with you, but no one can walk it for you." - Rumi