

# HOW TO FIND YOUR PATIENT'S TRUE GOALS

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# How to uncover your patient's **true** goals

Finding out your patient's real underlying goals for coming to see you is an essential component of effective care. Showing that you both want the same thing instantly improves trust and rapport. It also avoids the need to explain, justify or defend your care plan and recommendations.

It's vital to realise that their real objective is never about symptom relief. It's about what's missing from their life because of their symptoms. However, patients often don't know this themselves when they come to see you. This means you need to do some detective work! Also, it might be a process of discovery for the patient too - oftentimes, they only realise what they want after the right conversation!

It takes skill and practice to do this well, but this approach will fast-track your learning and help you to rapidly build trust.



Questions can be broken down into two types - general “overview” and specific questions. It’s best to start with some of the overview questions first, before choosing some specific areas to investigate. Start with a couple of general questions, and then delve into specific areas if needed.

## Overview Questions

“Tell me about when this problem bothers you the most”

“What does this problem get in the way of most?”

“Is there anything you used to do and now can’t, because of this?”

“Is there anything you’d like to do, but are afraid to try because of this?”

“If our work together is successful beyond your wildest dreams, what difference would that make for your life?”

“If I had a magic wand and could cure this instantly, and you knew it would never come back, what would be the first thing you’d want to start doing tomorrow?”

Note that for specific questions, you need to ask “How does...”. Never just ask “Does...” questions. These are closed, yes/no questions that won’t give you much information. Adding “how” makes it a far more powerful question, and prevents them from answering “no” when they might otherwise have revealed something key. Remember, they often don’t know the answers until you ask the right questions!

## Specific Questions

These ask about specific aspects of their life. Choose a few that seem most relevant to them (you might get clues from their intake form!).

**How does this affect your...**

Work?

Sleep?

Exercise Routine?

Day-to-day activities?

Family life / relationships?

Social life?

Hobbies?

Mood?

## Don't be afraid to "dance"!

Sometimes you may have to ask a few different questions to get to the real answer. Some patients will respond better to certain questions. This is why it's important to have several at hand, and not just rely on the same question for everyone.

It's not uncommon to have to "dance" with the patient when it comes to exploring their goals. If you just keep asking goal-related questions one after another, they might think you're not listening! Learning to dance back and forth between clinical, overview, and specific questions lets you avoid this.

Early on in the history, you might ask one overview question, but not quite get the answer you were after. You then ask another couple of clinical questions, before coming back with another overview question. Then you might ask one or two specific questions, perhaps with another clinical question in between.

## What next?

So now you know how to discover your patient's true goals! Learning what's missing from their life because of their symptoms is vital to explaining care. This allows you to frame your care as the route to achieving their deepest desires. It's the key to unlocking their hidden potential and motivation, and to a successful career full of happy patients!

Want to learn more about mastering the art of patient communication? Join my exclusive Facebook group for free! Scan the QR code below, or just search for "Patient Centred Chiropractors" on Facebook. I look forward to meeting you there!

