

# C.L.E.A.N. Model – Quick Reference Sheet

Use this model to confidently manage patient objections during consultation.

The C.L.E.A.N. model provides healthcare professionals with a structured approach to address patient concerns and objections effectively while maintaining a positive therapeutic relationship.

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## A New Conversation About Clinical Communication



# The C.L.E.A.N. Model Steps

Step	What to Do
Connect	Regulate yourself before responding. Breathe, listen fully, stay present.
Label	Name the emotion you sense. Use phrases like 'It seems like...,' 'It sounds like...,' 'It feels like...,' 'It looks like...'. The aim is to have the person feel understood
Echo	Use simple or complex reflections. The aim is to help the patient feel heard
Ask	Use the A.W.E. question: 'And what else?' and open-ended or no-oriented questions.
Negotiate	Explore a collaborative path forward. Link your plan to their values and concerns.

## Understanding Common Objections

Objection	Possible Meaning
It's too expensive	Value not clear or priorities are in conflict.
I don't have time	Overwhelm or low perceived benefit.
I've tried this before	Discouraged or believes it won't work.
I need to ask my partner	Seeking support or validation or uncertainty.
I want to think about it	Uncertainty or emotional hesitation.
I don't believe I need this	Lack of awareness about condition or benefits.
I'm afraid of side effects	Fear or previous negative experience.
I'll do it on my own	Independence valued or trust issues.
I just don't do exercises?	Looking for quick fix or avoiding lifestyle change.
My doctor didn't recommend this	Authority conflict or comparing approaches.

# Connect and Label Techniques

## Connect

The first step in managing patient objections is to regulate yourself. Before responding to any objection, take a moment to:

- Take a deep breath
- Listen fully to the patient's concerns
- Stay present in the moment
- Avoid formulating your response while they're speaking
- Minimise any distractions
- Manage your ego. The objection isn't about the other person aiming to set you up for failure. It's about them thinking about their own safety and security

## Label

Once you've connected, name the emotion you sense from the patient:

- Use phrases like "It seems like you're concerned about..."
- Try "It sounds like you're feeling frustrated with..."
- Acknowledge their emotions without judgement
- Create a safe space for them to express concerns
- Label the emotion only, not them nor the objection
- Keep the label short, focused on the emotion and avoid leading the other person with your own assumptions

# Echo and Ask Strategies



## Echo

Use reflections to demonstrate understanding:

- Simple reflection: repeat up to the last 3 words they said with an upward inflection.
- Complex reflection: restate meaning that you have understood from what they have said and allow them to correct you if you are wrong



## Ask

Deepen the conversation with:

- A.W.E. question: "And what else?"
- Open-ended questions to explore
- No-oriented questions to reduce pressure



## Negotiate

Work together on solutions:

- Link your plan to their values
- Address specific concerns directly
- Find common ground for moving forward

# Self-Reflection Worksheet - Part 1

## Recall a Recent Objection

1. Recall a recent patient conversation where you faced resistance or an objection.
2. What was the objection?
3. What do you think was behind that objection? (e.g. fear, cost, lack of trust)

## Evaluate Your Response

1. How did you respond at the time?
2. Which part of the C.L.E.A.N. model could you have used more effectively?

## Plan Your Improved Approach

1. Write out how you might approach the conversation differently using the C.L.E.A.N. model.

## Make a Commitment

1. What is one commitment you can make to apply this model in your next patient conversation?

Taking time to reflect on past interactions and plan for future ones is a crucial part of improving your patient communication skills.

By consciously applying the C.L.E.A.N. model you can transform challenging conversations into opportunities for deeper connection and better patient outcomes.

# Putting the C.L.E.A.N. Model into Practice

## Daily Practice

Begin by practicing one element of the C.L.E.A.N. model each day until the entire approach becomes second nature.

Start with Connect by focusing on your breathing and presence before each patient interaction.

## Peer Feedback

Consider role-playing difficult conversations with colleagues and asking for feedback on your use of the model.

This can provide valuable insights into areas where you excel and opportunities for improvement.

## Continuous Improvement

Return to the self-reflection worksheet regularly to assess your progress and identify patterns in the types of objections you encounter most frequently.

This will help you develop specialised approaches for common scenarios.

Feel free to share this resource to help more clinicians master the art of managing objections.

Wanting some one-on-one support to improve your skills? [Book a free call here](#)

For more useful resources:

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