



# Practical Health Literacy Tools for Healing Communities

## Building Trust, Changing Behaviors

Nov 4<sup>rd</sup> 2025

Carlsbad, CA

# My Journey To You Here Today



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“B.B.”



AnetaEd.com

By the end of this session, you'll:

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- 1 Recognize the power of health literacy to advance health and healing in Native communities
- 2 See evidence of how health literacy enhancing techniques significantly improves health outcomes
- 3 Learn a tool, the **TAP-CV** framework, to help you apply health literacy best practices every day



# Agenda

- Health Literacy: Definition and Importance
- Why Health Literacy Breakdowns Happen
- TAP-CV Framework: Health Literacy Best-Practice Techniques





# Health Literacy: Definition and Importance



# What Is Health Literacy?

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An individual's capacity to:



## Find

*Credible information,  
appropriate healthcare*



## Understand

*Medical instructions,  
Medical information*



## Use

*Engage in health-  
related decision-making*

## Health Information



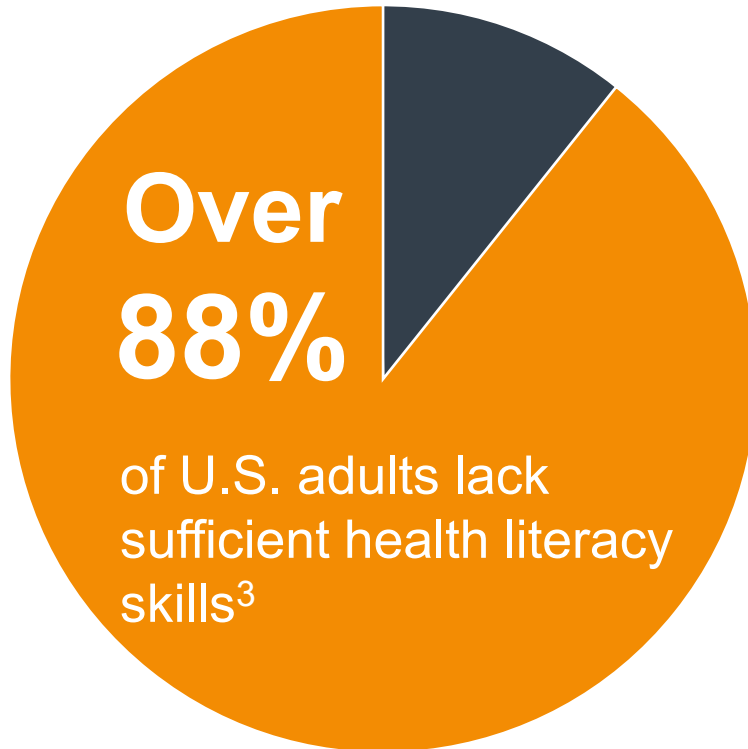
**Make informed  
decisions**



**Take actions for  
their well-being**

# Health Literacy Is A Universal Challenge In The US

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Low health literacy is an especially urgent concern in Indigenous communities working to overcome health inequities

# Low Health Literacy Has Serious Consequences



**Lower Rates of  
Preventive Care**



**Poor Chronic  
Disease  
Management**



**Increased ER Visits  
& Hospitalizations**



**Increased Medical  
Errors & Non-  
Adherence**



**Widening Health  
Disparities**

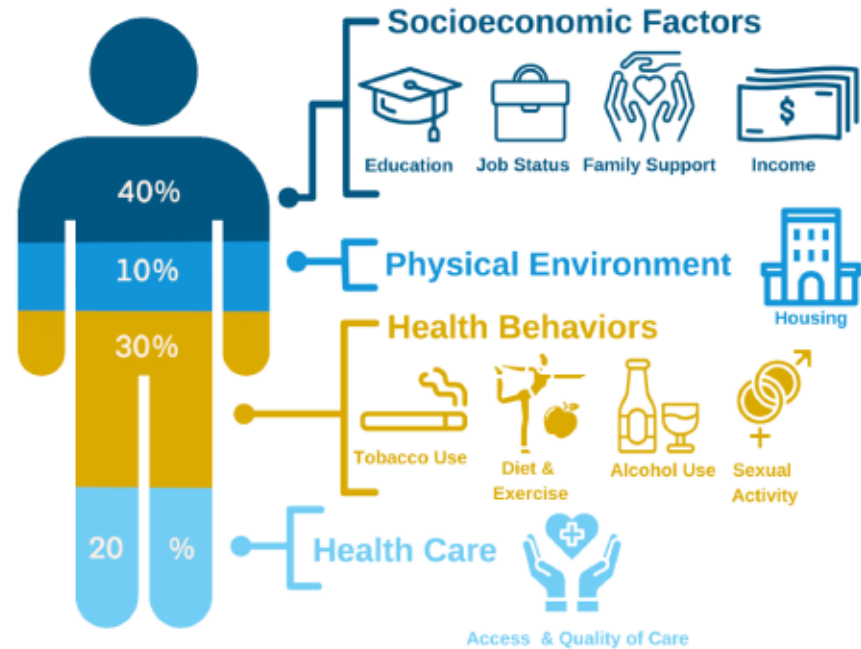
# Building Health Literacy: The Power in Our Hands

# 30%

of health outcomes are shaped by health behaviors...

... and **Health Behaviors** are shaped by **Health Literacy**

## Social Drivers of Health (SDoH)<sup>1</sup>



**Building Health Literacy** is a power we have **drive our mission**

*To raise the physical, mental, social, and spiritual health of American Indians and Alaska Natives to the highest level*

# Building Health Literacy Is A Shared Responsibility

## HEALTH WORKERS

Use health literacy enhancing techniques in every interaction



## CARE SEEKERS

Build health literacy by asking, confirming, and advocating

Clinicians



Patients

Healthcare Staff



**Health Literacy**



Family & Caregivers

Health Promoters



Patient Advocates



# Why Health Literacy Breakdowns Happen



# Health Literacy Barriers Exist Even With The Best-Intentions



**Medical Jargon**



**Short Consultation Times**



**Complex Healthcare & Insurance Systems**



**High Emotions & Stress**



**Cultural &  
Language Barriers**

# We Have the Power to Overcome Health Literacy Barriers



## The Good News



Research shows the actions of healthcare workers can increase patient and community health literacy



Every healthcare worker role can make a difference



## The Caveats



Health literacy enhancing skills must be learned - good intentions are not enough



Building ease and consistency takes practice and reflection



Every encounter is an opportunity to strengthen health literacy



# TAP CV: Best Practice Techniques to Improve Health Literacy

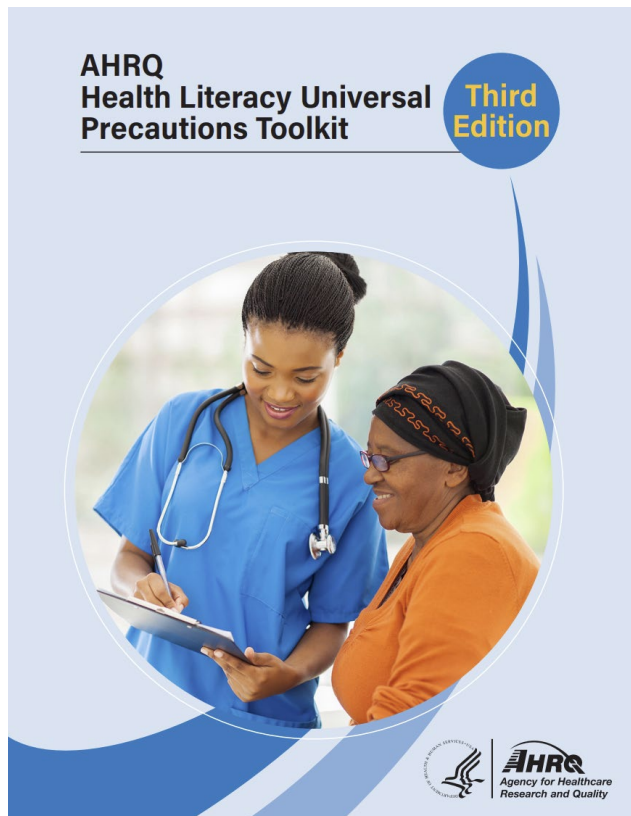


# Research-Backed Practice For Enhancing Health Literacy

216 PAGES



1 PAGE



## TAP-CV: Tap Into Better Health Communication!

- T Teach-Back**  
 Ask for explanation back to you in their own words
- A Adapt Language**  
 Use plain, simple and everyday words
- P Pictures & Multimodal Communication**  
 Use visuals and demonstrations to support words
- C Culture & Trauma-Informed Care**  
 Create a welcoming environment and respect for cultures
- V Validate Patient Navigation & Support Needs**  
 Encourage questions and connect patients directly to resources

# TAP-CV: Tap Into Better Health Communication!

**T**

## **Teach-Back**

Ask for explanation back to you in their own words

**A**

## **Adapt Language**

Use plain, simple and everyday words

**P**

## **Pictures & Multimodal Communication**

Use visuals and demonstrations to support words



**C**

## **Culture & Trauma-Informed Care**

Create a welcoming environment and respect culture

**V**

## **Validate Patient Navigation & Support Needs**

Encourage questions and connect patients directly to resources



# TAP-CV: Tap Into better Health Communication!

## **T**each-Back



## **T is for Teach-Back**

### **A**dapt Language

### **P**ictures & Multimodal Communication

### **C**ulture & Trauma- Informed Care

### **V**alidate Patient Support Needs

**What it is:** Ask the patient, caregiver or community member to repeat information you deliver in their own words

**Why it matters:** It helps make sure the person understands the information the way you intended

## **T**each-Back

**A**dapt Language

**P**ictures & Multimodal  
Communication

**C**ulture & Trauma-  
Informed Care

**V**alidate Patient  
Support Needs



## **Key Steps for Teach-Back**

- 1** Acknowledge that health information can be difficult to understand
- 2** Normalize the Teach-Back process
- 3** Share responsibility for clear communication
- 4** Break information up into small parts
- 5** Ask specific focused questions

# TAP-CV – Tap Into better Health Communication!

**T**each-Back

**A**dapt Language

**P**ictures & Multimodal  
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## A is for Adapt Language

**What it is:** Use everyday words in written and spoken health communication

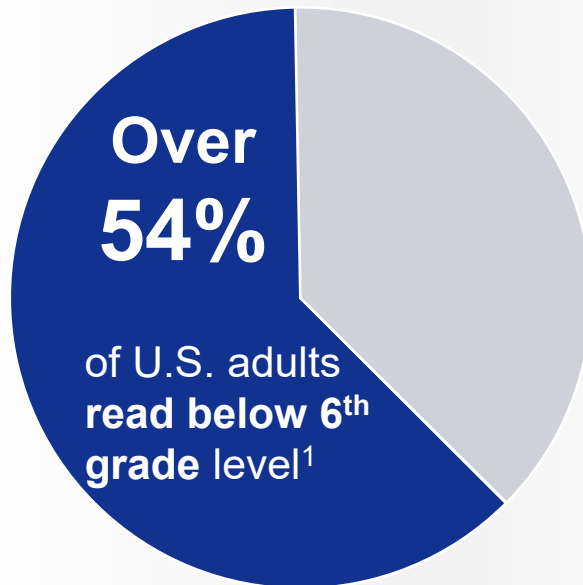
**Why It matters:** Health communication is typically too complex for most especially when people are under stress

# Most U.S. Adults Struggle With Typical Health Information



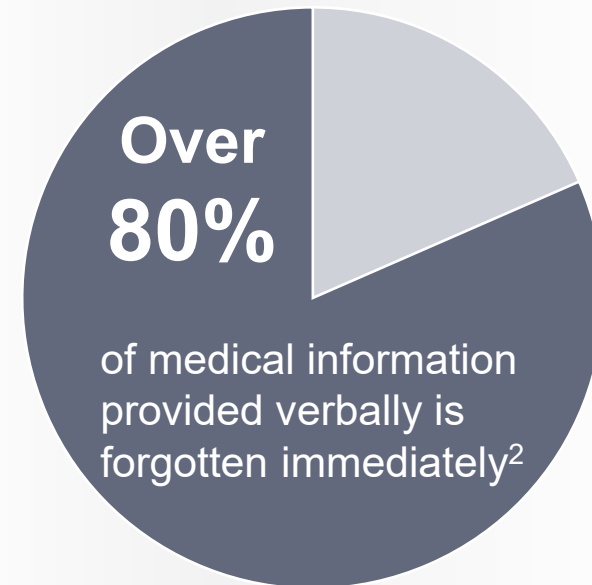
**Written information is often too complex**

Over half of U.S. adults read below a 6th-grade level



**Verbal information fades fast**

Over 80% of what's said in medical visits is forgotten



# In Serving AI/AN Populations, Plain Language Is Critical



## Historical mistrust makes clarity essential

**Respectful, plain language is key to restoring trust**



Broken Promises



Forced Assimilation



Systemic Discrimination



**Complex language worsens existing barriers to care for Native Peoples**

**Hard-to-understand health information compounds challenges**



Geographic Isolation



Limited Resources



Lower Literacy

## Guiding Principles to Adapt Language

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A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide shows a winding, light gray path that starts at the top and ends at the bottom. Along the path, there are five numbered circles: 1 (dark teal), 2 (orange), 3 (pink), 4 (red), and 5 (blue). The path is adorned with small, simple line drawings of rocks, flowers, and grass tufts.

1 Use **Common, Everyday Words**

2 **Echo** the Conversation Partner's **Words**

3 Use **Active Voice**

4 Keep **Sentences Simple**; 4<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> grade level

5 Use **Visuals and Body Language**

# TAP-CV – Tap Into better Health Communication!

**T**each-Back

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**P**ictures & Multimodal  
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**C**ulture & Trauma-  
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**V**alidate Patient  
Support Needs



## **P is for Pictures & Multimodal Communication**

**What it is:** Use a visuals along written and spoken words

**Why It matters:** Using visuals is research proven to improve health communication

# Pictures Are Powerful Tools for Health Communication

**1 Pictures Attract Attention**



**2 Pictures Increase Comprehension**



**3 Pictures Improve Recall**

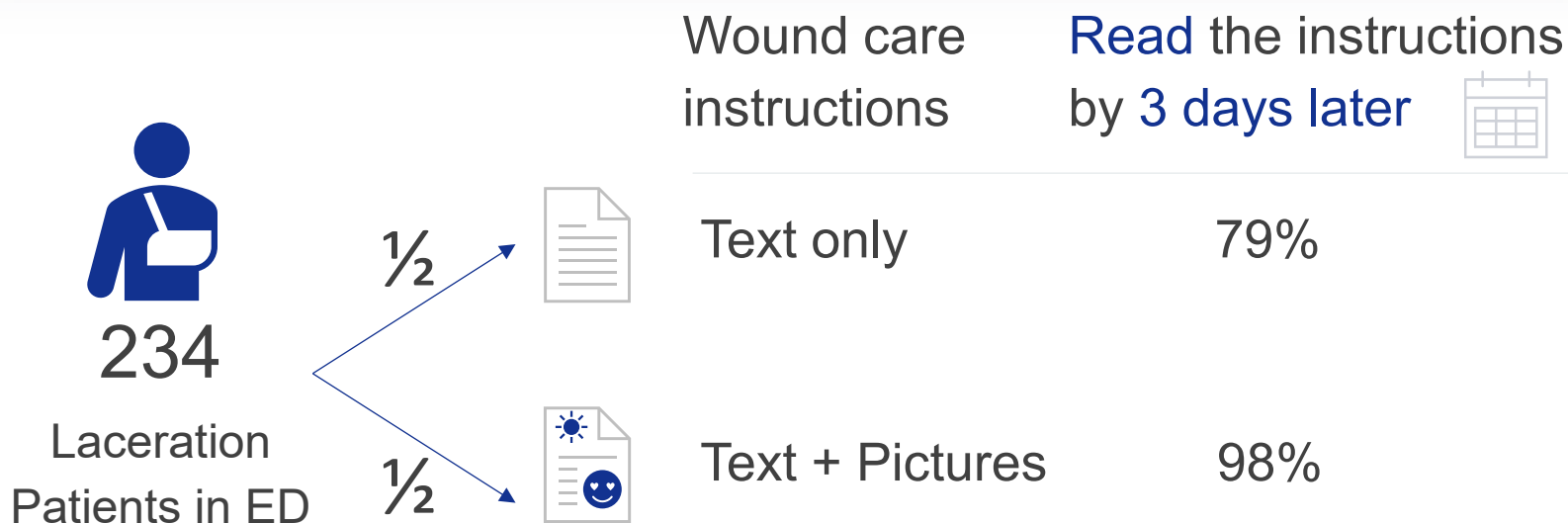


**4 Pictures Increase Adherence**



# 1 Pictures Capture Attention

**Research Evidence** Pictures grab attention and increase the likelihood that patients look at and consume health information



19%



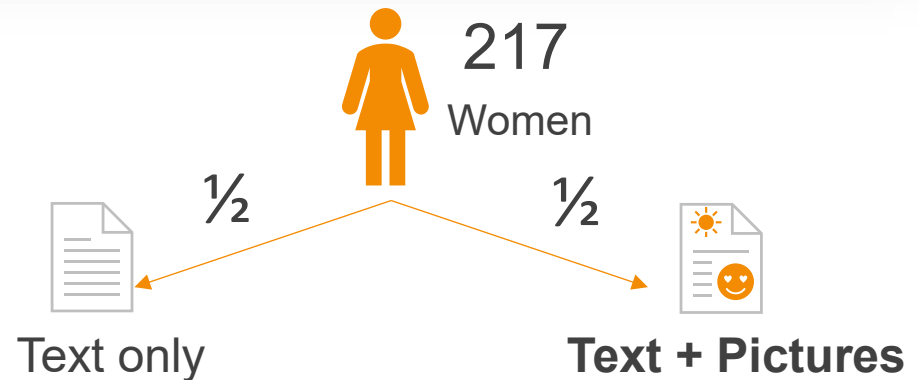
**Engagement with illustrated instructions is significantly higher**

## 2 Pictures Increase Comprehension

**Research Evidence** Pictures increase comprehension of health information; especially so for people with low literacy


Cervical cancer prevention pamphlet

High score on comprehension test



All	53%	65%
Women w low literacy	35%	61%

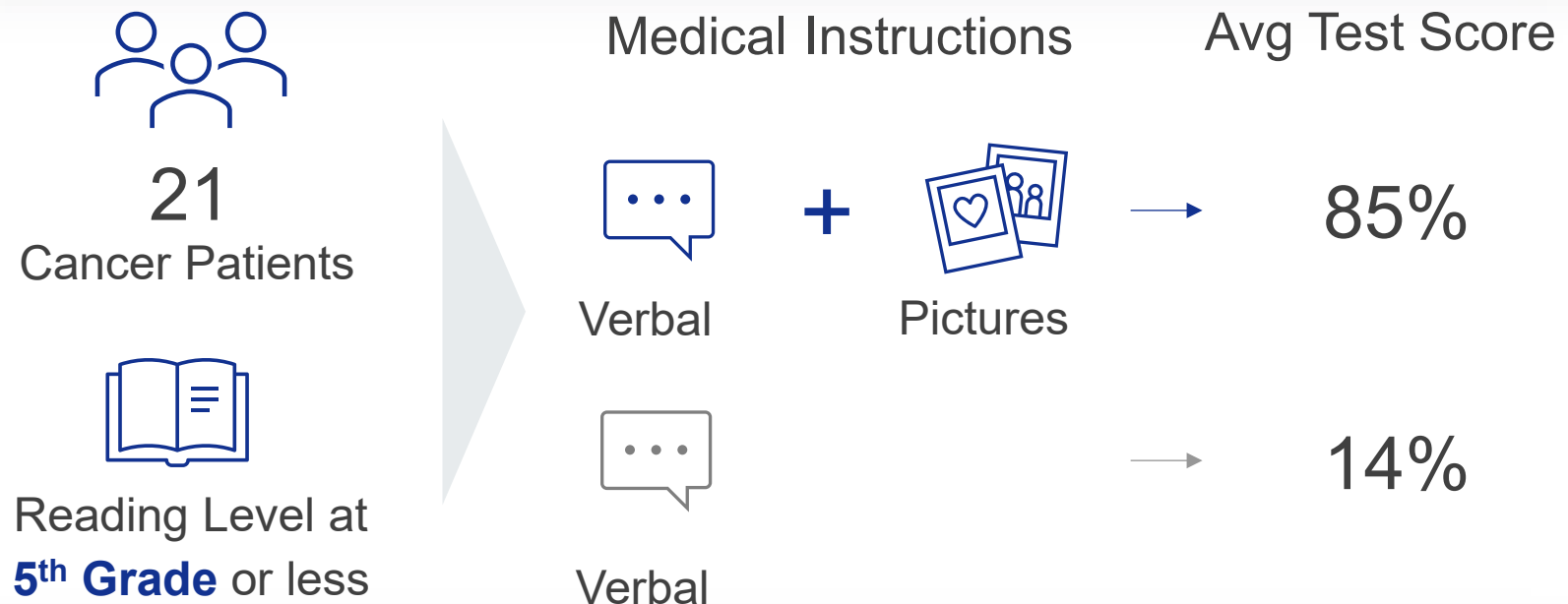
**Illustrated pamphlets significantly increased comprehension**

**26%** 


For women with low literacy

### 3 Pictures Improve Recall

**Research Evidence** Pictures used in combination with spoken or written text significantly increases recall

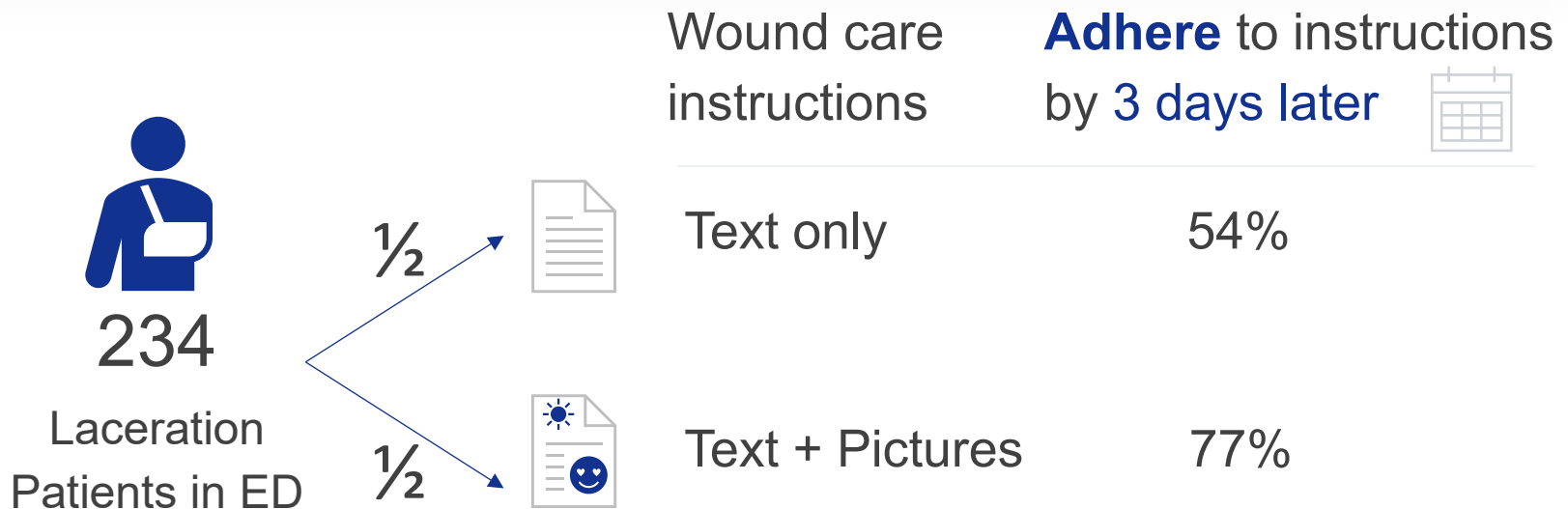



**Patients who got verbal instructions with pictures showed higher recall**

**70%**   
 Average Test score

# 4 Pictures Increase Adherence

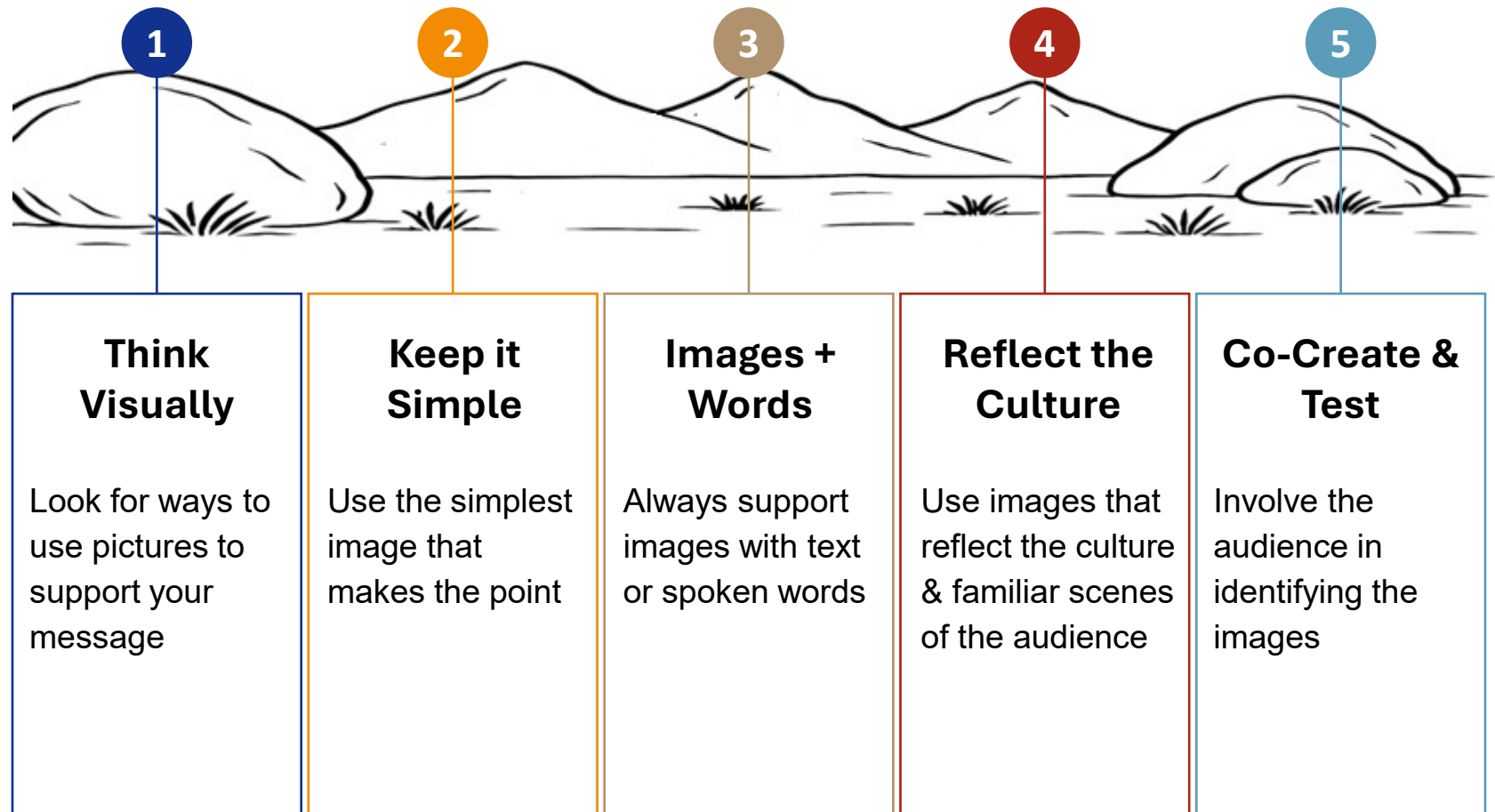
**Research Evidence** Pictures increase the likelihood that patients act on health information



**23%**  **Adherence to instructions with illustrations was significantly higher**

# Best Practices For Using Pictures In Health Communications

Core tips for using images to enhance health messages



# Any Health Message Can Be Enhanced with Pictures

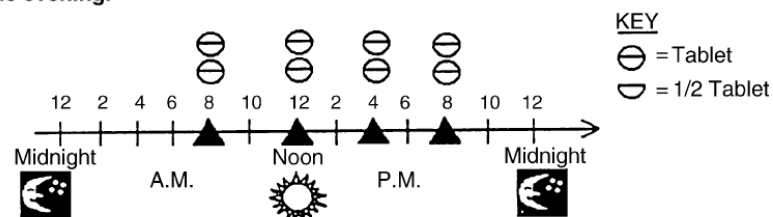


**Think Visually** Look for ways to use pictures to support your message

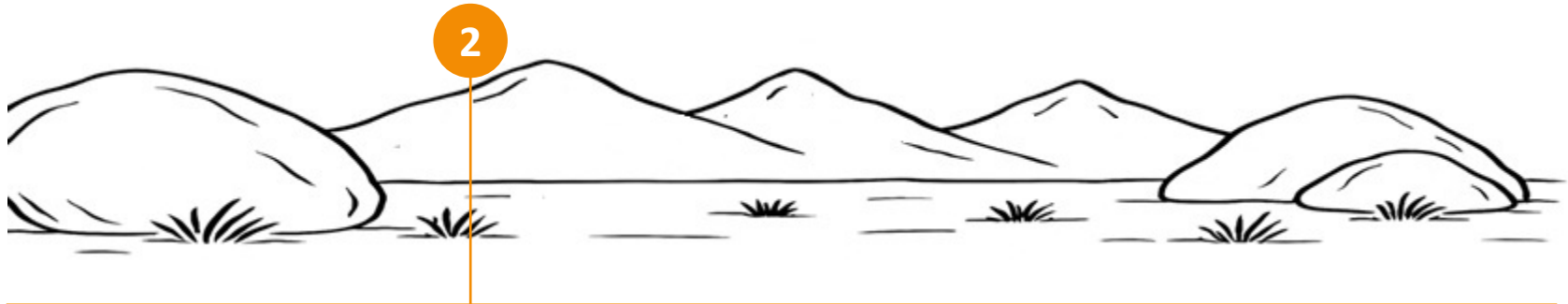
- “What are the most important points I want people to remember?”
- Think of concrete visuals that “show” and make the points with images

4. Dose:  
Take two pills each time.

5. Time to take medicine:  
Take the White Pill four times each day. You should take your medicine at 8 a.m. in the morning, 12 noon, 4 p.m. in the afternoon, and 8 p.m. in the evening.

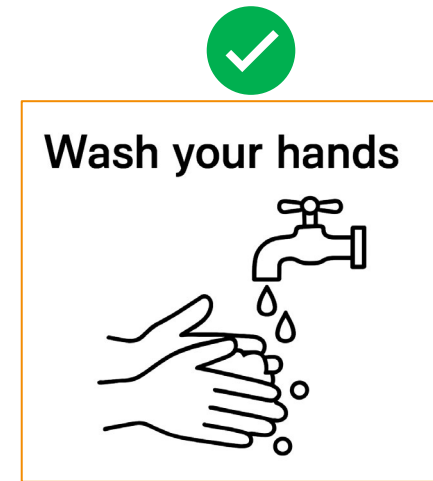
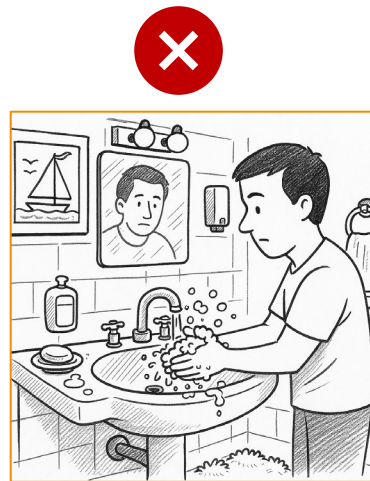


# Simple Images Are Best and Help Avoid Misunderstandi

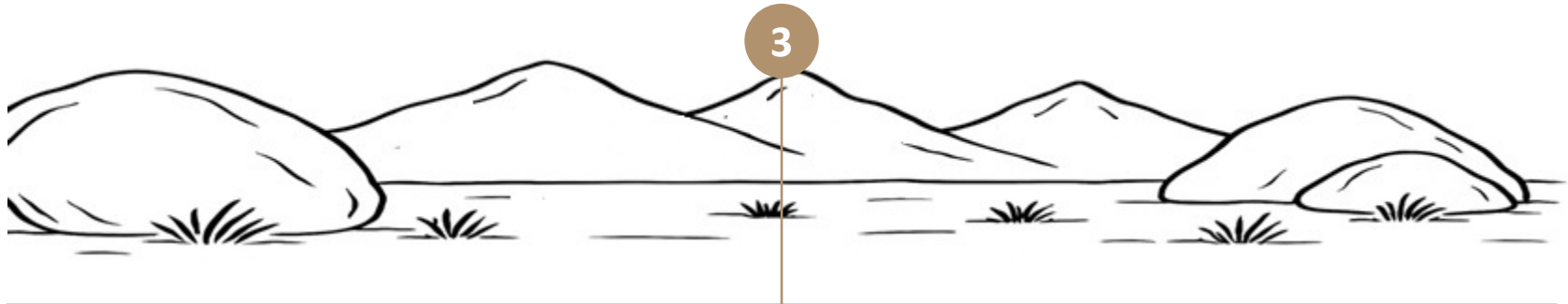


**Keep it Simple** Use the simplest image that makes the point

- Limit each image to a main idea
- Use simple line drawings over photographs

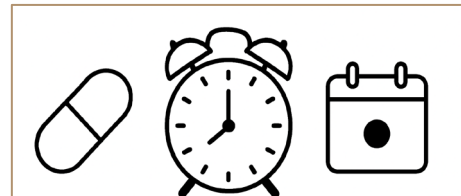


# Use Words and Images Together to Improve Understanding

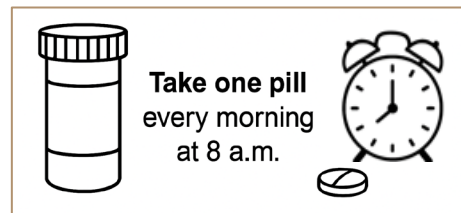


**Images + Words** Always support images with text or spoken words

- Add clear captions or spoken words to explain images
- Keep text simple and place it close to the image

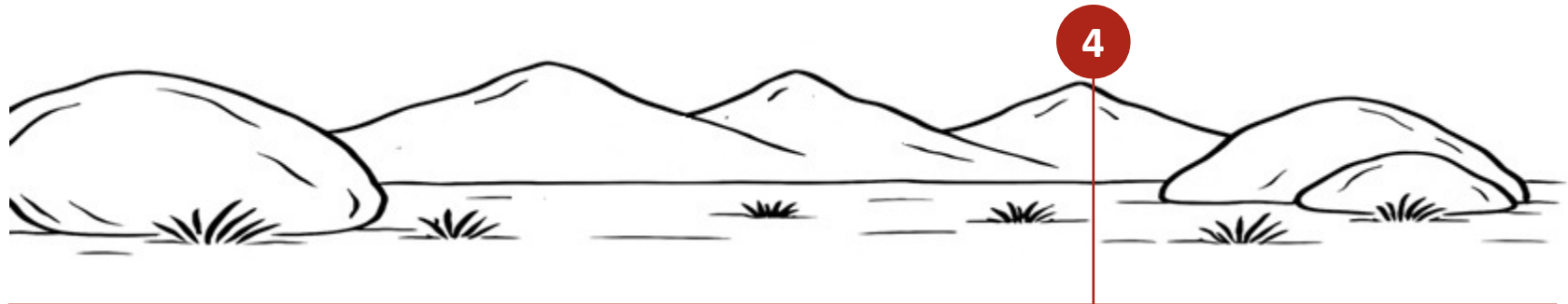


This image is easy to misinterpret



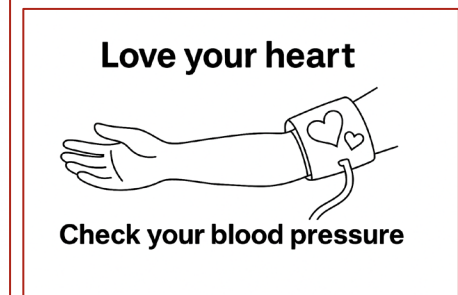
This image is easy to interpret

# Choose Images That Are Culturally Sensitive and Familiar



**Reflect the Culture** Use images that reflect the culture and understanding of your audience

- Use objects, settings, and symbols that your audience recognizes
- Test pictures for meaning, not just appearance; check gestures, symbols and colors



# Work with Your Audience to Create Effective Images

Image choices should focus on accuracy and cultural sensitivity, not just artistic design



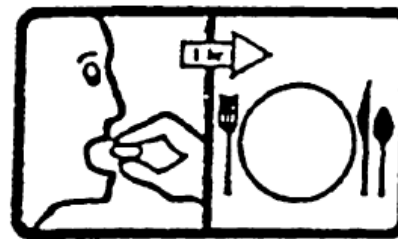
**Co-Create & Test** Involve the audience in identifying images that resonate

- Involve patients or community members
- Test for meaning, emotional or cultural sensitivity not just appearance



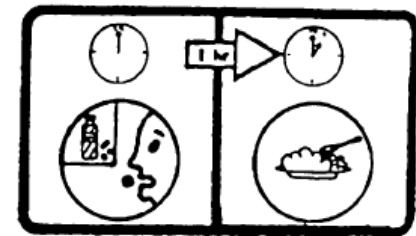
**Before Testing**

15. Take one hour before meals



**After Testing**

15. Take one hour before meals



# TAP-CV – Tap Into better Health Communication!

**T**each-Back

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**P**ictures & Multimodal  
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**C**ulture & Trauma-  
Informed Care

**V**alidate Patient  
Support Needs



## **C is for Culture & Trauma- Informed Care**

**What it  
is:**

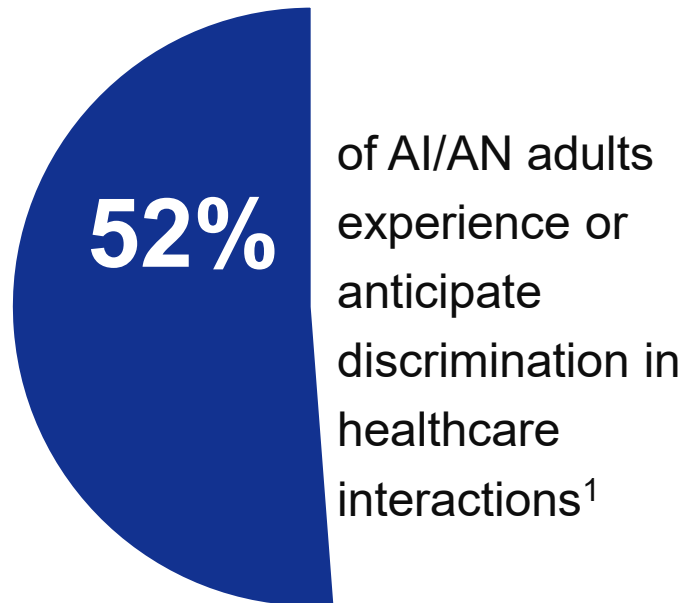
Be respectful and culturally aware in interactions

**Why It  
matters:**

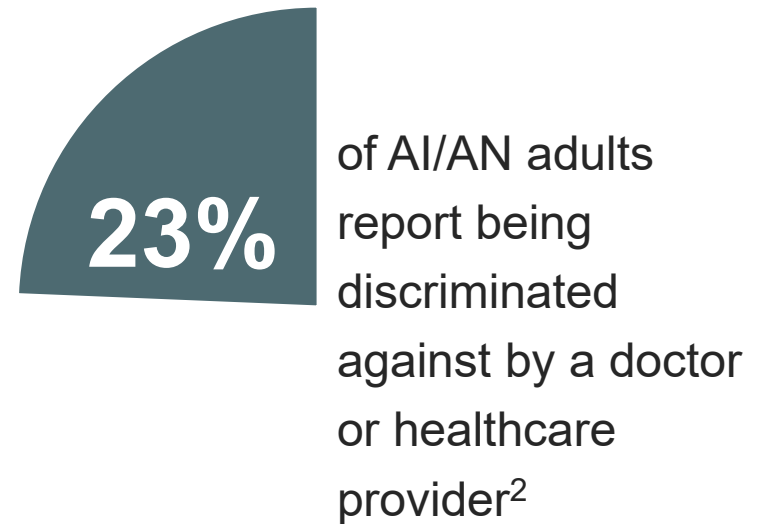
When people feel respected, they are more likely to trust healthcare providers and engage with health information

# Mistrust Of Healthcare Is Widespread In AI/AN Communities

About **1 in 2 AI/AN adults brace for negative experiences** if they need healthcare



About **1 in 4 AI/AN adults experience discrimination** at healthcare visits



# Low Trust Deepens Health Disparities For AI/AN Communities

A Significantly lower share of AI/AN adults report high health<sup>1</sup>



**17%**

Of AI/AN adults

**45%**

Of White Adults

## Case in Point

Low Trust Reduces AI/AN Engagement In Lifesaving Care<sup>2</sup>



Cancer Care



AI/AN

Higher mistrust in  
Lower satisfaction with



Lower Recommended Cancer Care

# Research Shows Cultural Sensitivity Strengthens Trust



## Trust Can Be Rebuilt



**Study Setting:** Navajo Nation



**Goals:** Patient Experience  
Evaluation

AI/AN adults report increased trust when providers acknowledge traditional practices and communicate in a clear, nonjudgmental way

- ❖ Show Respect For Traditions
- ❖ Use Plain Language

- ❖ Engage Community Voices
- ❖ Support Patient Choice

# Putting Trauma-Informed Principles into Practice

## 6 Guiding Principles to a Trauma Informed Approach<sup>1</sup>



Authored by:



## Safety Opens the Door to Healing and Trust

**Safety means being seen, respected, and protected in body, mind, spirit, and story**



- A PHYSICAL** Be intentional in creating a secure space
- B EMOTIONAL** Show up with warmth
- C PSYCHOLOGICAL** Let people be themselves

- D SOCIAL** Foster a sense of belonging and shared support
- E MORAL** Ground interactions in shared values

## Clarity and Consistency Builds Trust

**Honor experience, communicate with honesty and follow-through on what you say**



- A** Speak clearly and honestly
- B** Show up with consistency and integrity
- C** Acknowledge the history; honor experience

## Support Healing Through Shared Experience

**Connection with others who have walked a similar path builds trust and strengthens healing**



- A** Offer encouragement and presence, not pressure
- B** Refer to peer-led programs wherever possible
- C** Honor support preferences

## Trust Grows From Building With, Not Building For

**Trusting relationships grow when people are included, respected, and share in the work**



- **A** Use language that signals partnership
- Honor reciprocity - create space for people to offer help as well as receive it
- Be aware of dynamics that can re-traumatize

## Sharing Power and Choice Builds Trust

**Healing deepens when people feel heard, valued, and in control of their path**



- A** Communicate a realistic sense of hope, grounded in their strengths and progress
- B** Ask open-ended questions and truly listen to the answers
- C** Co-create goals and let people set the pace and define what success looks like

## Honor Identity, History, and Experience

**Building trust means respecting culture, naming past harm, and creating space for every voice**



- **A** Acknowledge and affirm cultural identity, traditions and remedies
- Be sensitive to how gender, generation, and community status shape how someone engages
- Name mistrust without defensiveness e.g. “I understand that the healthcare system hasn’t always treated Native peoples fairly.”

## TAP-CV – Tap Into better Health Communication!

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**V**alidate Patient  
Support Needs



## **V is for Validate Patient Support Needs**

**What it is:** Help patients understand where to go, who to talk to, and what steps to take.

**Why It matters:** Seeking care is especially challenging due to confusion about eligibility, and access barriers like travel distance and provider shortages.

# Help Patients Navigate Care, Not Just Understand It

**T**each-Back

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## Validate Patient Support Needs: Practical Tips

- 1** Break down the process for accessing care into clear, actionable steps
  - ✓ *"Call this number, ask for an appointment with Dr. Smith."*
  - ✓ *"Your doctor needs to send approval to the specialist first."*
- 2** Connect patients directly with a **person** in the resource area they need

# TAP-CV: Tap Into Better Health Communication!

**T**

## **Teach-Back**

Ask for explanation back to you in their own words

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Create a welcoming environment and respect culture

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## **Validate Patient Navigation & Support Needs**

Encourage questions and connect patients directly to resources





## Take Aways

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1 Health literacy is our shared power to help AI/AN communities thrive

2 Every role, every one of us, has daily opportunities to strengthen it

3 Good intentions need practice to become impact

4 TAP-CV turns good intentions into action to meet the mission



# Reflections

What insight from today's session most surprised or resonated with you?

Which TAP-CV technique do you plan to apply most often in your work?

How will you continue strengthening your health literacy building skills after today?



**Noşúun Lóoviq**

**Yôotva Wok-hlew'**

**Thank you**

**Medaase Madash**

**Migwetth Ah cha ma**

**Kaq<sup>h</sup>ina's Ky'**

