What to do if a patient says no to an intervention.

Not all patients will jump at the opportunity to be enrolled in an intervention. They may feel they have enough support, be unsure of strangers, not think they need help, or they may have a bad experience with other programs in the past. Whatever the reason, it is alright if a patient does not want to participate. At the same time, since we think we believe the intervention will help the patient, we can consider why a patient said no and leave the door open for a future yes.

Consider why the patient said no.

- They don’t want to talk right now. You can always say, “if now is not a good time, I can come back and talk to you.”
- It may be bad timing. A patient may have just taken some medication that is making them feel out of it or they may be keyed up thinking about an upcoming procedure. If this is the case, you can ask, “if now isn’t a good time, can I come back and talk to you.” We want to respect how patients are feeling.
- The patient may feel he has enough support. You can ask some clarifying questions to see if others who are supporting him could use some help to see if the patient will agree to an intervention that will mean less stress for everyone.

Leave the door open.

If a patient does not want an intervention, you can leave your contact information and say, “you are always welcome to give me a call.” You can also ask, “if you are re-admitted, do you mind if I come and see you again.”