



Practical tips to EMPOWER you during a medical appointment

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What is the goal of the appointment? How do you want to feel? How can you make it SUCK less?

Remember: **HONOR** your body and what it's requesting

BEFORE

Set an **INTENTION**—word or phrase that you can focus on. Or a **SAFE WORD**.

Check in with yourself and see how you are feeling.

Create and give an **ABOUT ME card**.

This can be an index-size or business-size card sharing what you need to help this appointment go smoothly.

Example: Medical appointments sometimes make me anxious. Ways you can assist me:

Ask my permission before you touch me.

Tell me and explain what you are going to do before doing it.

You may not agree with or understand my decision and that's okay. I ask that you respect it.

I may cry and that's okay.

Add anything else you think is important and might not remember or be able to say in the moment.

DURING

Acknowledge what you're feeling.

Repeat and focus on your INTENTION/SAFE WORD.

Feel free to **ask for a moment**, a pause, while you reset/regulate.

Allow for some **embodied movement** if it feels like that will help: A forward fold, tapping, arm swinging, a full-body shake—honor your needs and your body.

Breathe: start with 4:4, 4:6; 6:6; 6:8 (inhale for 4 seconds exhale over 4 seconds; inhale for 4 seconds exhale over 6 seconds; repeat or go to the next number).

Know that different situations may require different actions—**honor your body** and what it is requesting.

Read from or offer your ABOUT ME card.

AFTER

Check in with yourself: how are you feeling?

If the appointment totally sucked: Determine if giving **feedback** is worth your time and energy.

Feedback doesn't have to be given right away; it's okay if you choose not to provide feedback.

If you choose to give feedback:

- IN WRITING: if it's not in writing it didn't happen
- Find a person who can say YES—someone in leadership who has the ability to hold others accountable
- To the provider
- To a quality management department
- Patient Experience or Patient and Family Centered Care department
- Complete a survey

Identify **lessons learned or takeaways**:

What can you do to help you feel differently (better) at the next appointment?

Let go of the outcome—do your part (if you give feedback) and let go if you don't see any change or results. Remember that you can't change other people.

While this handout is targeted for medical appointments, the points and practical skills given are transferable for use in other areas of your life.

