TIPS FOR HOW TO BE AN EFFECTIVE PATIENT OR FAMILY ADVISOR: A BEGINNING LIST

▼ Believe that your investment in your own health experiences or your family members’ will help you in making a difference for others.

▼ Develop good communication skills.

▼ Listen with empathy.

▼ Be honest.

▼ Be available.

▼ Ask questions.

▼ Be open-minded.

▼ Avoid assumptions. Don’t judge someone based on appearance.

▼ Learn to be comfortable with staff and other patients and families.

▼ Educate other patients and families.

▼ Be willing to partner with other patients and family members.

▼ Learn negotiating skills. Be a team player.

▼ Think about the points you want to make.

▼ Adapt to different situations.

▼ Take responsibility for learning.

▼ Give input based on your own experience but be able to step out of your individual perspective. Do not deal with personal issues in advisory activities.

▼ Tell your own story or be clear if it is someone else’s experience.
When talking about an experience that did not go well, don’t just complain – offer suggestions on how it could have been made better.

Think carefully about the words you use. Anger is not productive. If you want to tell a story that brings up strong emotions, ask a peer to help develop your story.

When speaking to a group, thank them for asking for your input.

Support staff.

Be willing to partner with staff.

Honor commitments—when you say you are going to do something—follow through.

Take risks.

Have faith. Expect the best.

Stick to it.

Ask for help or support from other advisors when you need it. Do the same for others.

If you find that you are having difficulty balancing your personal and family life with advisory activities, take a break or give up some responsibilities.

Source: Patient and family advisors and health care professionals attending various Institute seminars.