

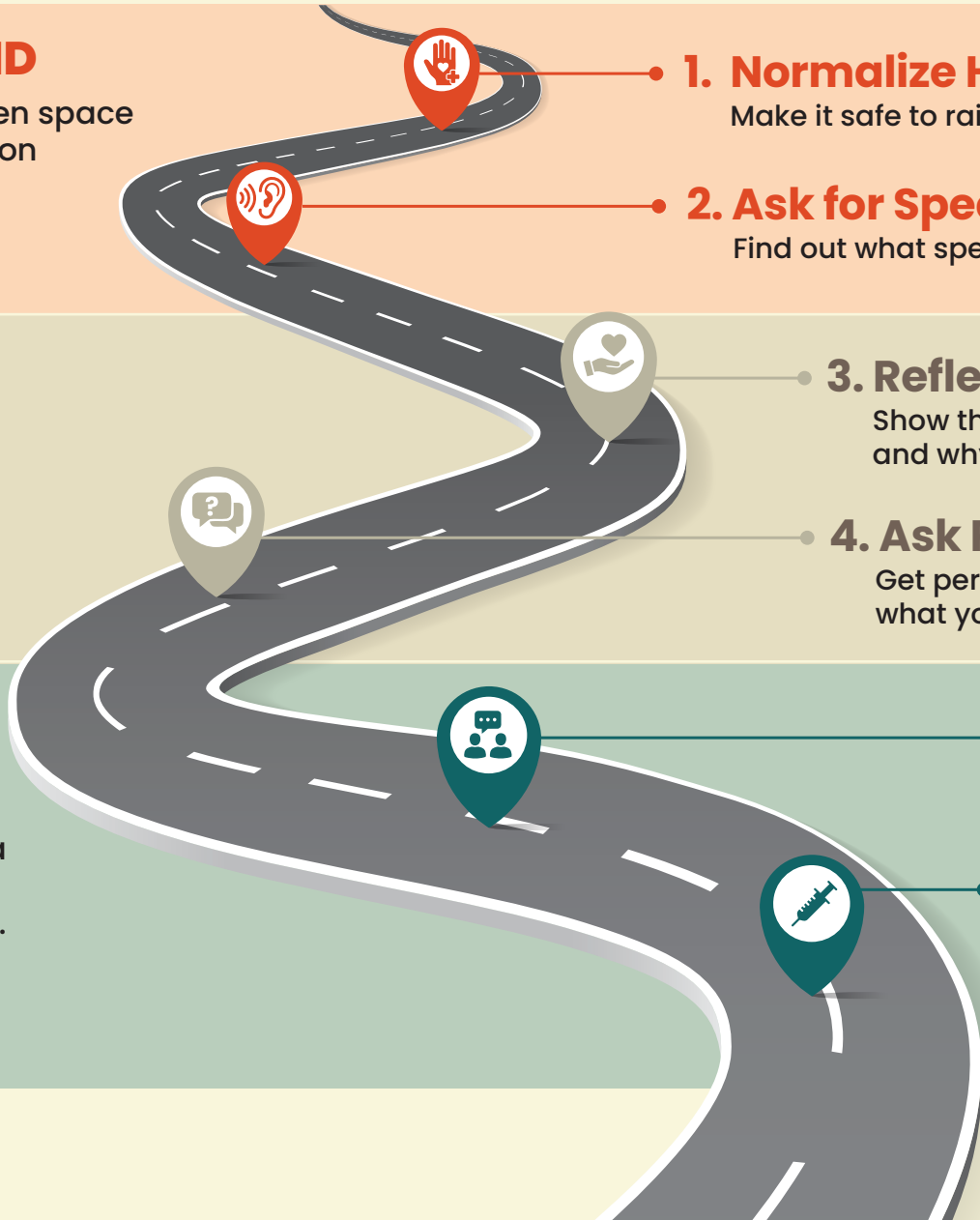
Vaccine Conversations That Build Trust: A Roadmap

The 6-Step Conversation Roadmap

A practical approach for responding to vaccine concerns with empathy, relevant information, and a clear recommendation. Use the pathway as a guide, not a script. Skills may overlap or recur as the conversation unfolds.

UNDERSTAND

Create a safe, open space for the conversation

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1. **Normalize Having Concerns**
Make it safe to raise concerns without judgment.
 2. **Ask for Specific Concerns**
Find out what specifically worries the patient or caregiver.

CONNECT

Show that you understand and are listening.

3. **Reflect with Empathy**
Show that you recognize what matters and why it feels concerning.
4. **Ask Permission to Explain**
Get permission before sharing what you know.

GUIDE

Share clear, accurate information and a personalized recommendation.

5. **Explain What You Know**
Answer the specific concern in plain language.
6. **Clearly Recommend Vaccination**
Make your recommendation explicit and personalized.

UNDERSTAND

1 Normalize Having Concerns

Patient: "I'm worried about the side effects of this vaccine."

HCP response

AVOID "There's really nothing to worry about."

BETTER "I hear that you're worried about side effects."

BEST "It's understandable to have concerns about side effects. We can talk through what's worrying you."

Why this works or doesn't

Can feel dismissive.
Misses an opportunity to build trust and may make the patient feel unheard.

Validates their concern.
Creates a safer space to talk but doesn't yet explore their specific concern.

Normalizes their concern.
Invites a deeper conversation and opens the door to learning what specifically worries them.

Patient reply to the Best response: "I've heard some people can have serious reactions."

Continue to Step 2

2 Ask for Specific Concerns

Patient: "I've heard some people can have serious reactions."

HCP response

AVOID "You're worried about an allergic reaction?"

BETTER "Are there particular serious reactions you're worried about?"

BEST "Can you tell me what you've heard might happen and what concerns you about it?"

Why this works or doesn't

Assumes the fear.
Can shut down the conversation and may not reflect what's most concerning to the patient.

Asks for specifics.
Helps you understand what's top of mind but may still feel a bit narrow.

Invites a full response.
Lets the patient share in their own words and identifies what you need to address.

Patient reply to the Best response: "I'm mostly worried about a severe allergic reaction. Does that happen often?"

Continue to Step 3

CONNECT

3 Reflect with Empathy

Patient/caregiver: "I've heard you can have a severe allergic reaction and suddenly have trouble breathing. That really scares me."

HCP response

AVOID "That kind of reaction is very rare."

BETTER "You're worried about having a severe allergic reaction."

BEST "You're worried the vaccine could cause a severe allergic reaction and make it hard to breathe. That sounds frightening."

Why this works or doesn't

Can feel dismissive.
It jumps to reassurance before showing the patient you understand what feels scary.

Reflects the concern.
It acknowledges the topic the patient raised, but it does not yet address the fear behind it.

Reflects both the concern and the fear.
It shows the patient you heard what worries them and why it feels frightening.

Patient reply to the Best response: "Yes. That's what I'm afraid could happen."

Continue to Step 4

4 Ask for Specific Concerns

Patient/caregiver: "Yes. That's what I'm afraid could happen."

HCP response

AVOID "The vaccine is much safer than getting the disease."

BETTER "Let me explain what we know about severe allergic reactions after vaccination."

BEST "Would it be okay if I explained what we know about severe allergic reactions after vaccination and what we do if one occurs?"

Why this works or doesn't

Explains too soon.
It moves straight into information before checking whether the patient is ready to hear it.

Targets the concern.
It introduces the right topic, but it still assumes consent rather than asking permission first.

Asks permission.
It respects the patient's readiness and creates a smoother transition into explanation.

Patient reply to the Best response: "Yes. I'd like to know how common they are and what happens if one occurs."

Continue to Step 5

GUIDE

5 Explain What You Know

Patient/caregiver: “Yes. I’d like to know how common they are and what happens if one occurs.”

HCP response

AVOID “They’re very rare, so you don’t need to worry.”

BETTER “Severe allergic reactions are rare after vaccination.”

BEST “Severe allergic reactions are rare, and treatment is available if one occurs. I can also tell you what symptoms to watch for and what to do.”

Why this works or doesn’t

Can feel dismissive.
It answers part of the question, but it minimizes the concern and offers little practical guidance.

Answers part of it.
It gives relevant information, but it does not yet explain what to do if a reaction occurs.

Provides a plain-language answer.
It addresses the concern clearly and gives practical next steps the patient can use.

Patient reply to the Best response: “Yes. That’s what I’m afraid could happen.”

Continue to Step 6

6 Clearly Recommend Vaccination

Patient/caregiver: “That helps. I’m still a little nervous.”

HCP response

AVOID “It’s ultimately up to you.”

BETTER “I think getting vaccinated would be a good idea.”

BEST “Based on what we’ve discussed, I recommend getting the vaccine today.”

Why this works or doesn’t

Leaves the recommendation unclear.
It may feel respectful, but it does not give the patient clear professional guidance.

Favors vaccination.
It shows the HCP’s view, but the recommendation is still somewhat soft and indirect.

Makes a clear recommendation.
The guidance is direct, specific, and easy for the patient to understand.

Patient reply to the Best response: “Thank you. I understand what you’re recommending.”

Roadmap complete