



To get what you need from your doctor, let's first get clear about your role in this important partnership.

If you're struggling to work effectively with your rheumatologist or other healthcare provider, you're not alone. The good news is that you may simply need help to "reframe" your doctor-patient relationship. That just means thinking about your relationship with your doctor in a new way.

Many skilled patients with chronic diseases find it helpful to think of their doctor as a business partner or consultant. This means:

- Your doctor is usually not your friend.
- Your doctor has a job and you have a job.
- Your doctor is here to help you.
- By working together, you can succeed as equal partners in keeping your lupus managed.

Ready to reframe? Great! Let's get to it.

Step 1

Know your job as a lupus patient.

It's natural to think about your doctor's job since it's their occupation to care for patients like you. But have you ever thought about what your role is in this partnership?

On the next page is a list of some responsibilities that every lupus patient has when working with their rheumatologist, nephrologist, or other healthcare provider. We've left out a few keywords, so see how you do at the job description "quiz." (The answers to the quiz are at the bottom of page 4, but don't peek!)

Step 2

Think about your choice of doctor.

Now that you know some things that may help this partnership work, let's think about what your doctor needs to do to perform their job well. After all, as with any business partner, you need to feel good about your choice of doctor or other healthcare provider.

Ask yourself if you:

- Feel comfortable with your healthcare provider.
- Trust their judgment.
- Have confidence in their training and skills.

Did you notice that many of the qualities you would need in a friend do **not** need to be present for a good doctor-patient relationship? To be more certain of your choice of doctor, take a look at what you **want** vs. what you **need** from your doctor.



Step 3

Sort out your wants and needs.

Remember this approach from when we worked on general communication skills? ([Click to review the Wants and Needs activity.](#)) This time it's very similar, except your wants and needs relating to your physician might be very different from those in your other relationships. Take a look at the example on page 4 of this worksheet. Then use the blank table below it to create your own list of wants and needs.

i Things to consider while you're reframing:

- Your relationship with your doctor is indeed a relationship, but it's a different kind of relationship.
- Because it's a different kind of relationship, you can expect different things from it.
- You may notice that you **want** emotional support from your doctor.
- What you **need** from your doctor is expertise and professionalism.
- It's okay to have a doctor who mainly provides what you **need**, as long as there is mutual respect and an ability to work together.
- Remember, you can get the things you **want** from many of your other relationships!



Your Job Description: Quiz

Word Bank

friend | life | practice | questions | records | symptoms

My job as a lupus patient is to:

1. Invite a _____ or family member to be my "appointment buddy."
2. Make copies of all my medical _____ from any doctor appointments, emergency room visits, or urgent care center visits I've had since my last appointment.
3. Take note of all the _____ I've been experiencing, even if I'm not sure they are lupus-related.
4. Share with my doctor how lupus is affecting my _____.
5. Be ready to answer my doctor's _____ about how I've been feeling.
6. Before my appointment, _____ expressing my top questions and concerns in a way that is clear and to the point.



Example: Wants vs. Needs

Review this example of some typical wants and needs that lupus patients have in their relationships with their doctors. Then create your own list in the blank table below.

| I WANT my doctor to: | I NEED my doctor to: |
|--|---|
| Understand how hard it is to live with lupus | Provide the most up-to-date care |
| Show compassion | Help me keep track of my progress |
| Spend more time with me | Stay alert to changes in my health |
| Get to know me as a person | Treat me with respect |
| | Answer my questions in terms I can understand |
| | Listen carefully to my concerns |
| | Refer me to other specialists when necessary |

My Wants and Needs

| I WANT my doctor to: | I NEED my doctor to: |
|----------------------|----------------------|
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Quiz Answer Key:

1. friend | 2. records | 3. symptoms | 4. life | 5. questions | 6. practice

→ Ready for more?

Go to usinlupus.com/SoLAppt to download the next activity: "Preparing for an Appointment"

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