

Reflective Questions



Reflective Questions for Therapists: Putting Patient Perspectives into Action

Engagement is a shared process between therapists and patients, shaped by relationships, systems, and daily realities. The following questions are designed to help therapists of all experience levels pause, reflect, and translate patient insights into meaningful action.

Under each question, you will find practical suggestions that can be adapted to a variety of settings, from hospitals and clinics to community or home-based care. Use these prompts to guide your thinking, spark discussion with colleagues, and explore new ways to support patient engagement in lymphoedema management.

Reflection and action are key: by considering both the patient's perspective and the realities of your setting, you can co-create care that is practical, realistic, and empowering.

1. How do our current systems, routines, or protocols make engagement easier or harder for patients?

Suggestions:

- Review appointment scheduling to reduce waiting times or repeated trips.
- Audit referral pathways and identify common delays for specialist access.
- Map the patient journey from diagnosis to therapy and look for bottlenecks.
- Collaborate with administrative staff or suppliers to streamline garment ordering.
- Encourage feedback from patients about what "friction points" they experience.

2. What does meaningful engagement look like for each patient, given their life, routines, and support networks?

Suggestions:

- Ask patients about their daily routines, work, and family commitments before planning therapy.
- Co-design self-care plans that fit into existing schedules, e.g., timing pump use during reading or relaxation.
- Adjust frequency of visits based on what is achievable for the patient.
- Identify and include support people, like family or caregivers, where appropriate.
- Recognise that engagement may fluctuate and revisit goals regularly.

3. When patients struggle with self-care, what assumptions might I be making, and how could I explore the real barriers?

Suggestions:

- Use open-ended questions to explore challenges without judgment.
- Observe practical barriers, such as difficulty applying garments or limited mobility.
- Consider emotional fatigue, frustration, or past negative healthcare experiences.
- Encourage patients to share what they can do rather than focusing on what they cannot.
- Document and reflect on patterns to avoid repeating assumptions with other patients.

4. Which tools, techniques, or processes I recommend might need adaptation to fit a patient's real-world context?

Suggestions:

- Offer alternative garments, wraps, or nightwear to improve comfort or usability.
- Demonstrate multiple ways to perform self-massage or use pumps.
- Adjust exercises or routines for small spaces, limited time, or physical limitations.
- Check in on temperature, skin sensitivity, or comfort in hot climates.
- Provide simple resources, guides, or apps for tracking self-care that patients can integrate into daily life.

5. How could I co-create engagement with patients, rather than expecting it as an individual responsibility?

Suggestions:

- Set realistic, shared goals and celebrate milestones together.
- Invite patients to provide input on treatment decisions and routine adjustments.
- Use collaborative problem-solving to overcome barriers like time, discomfort, or garment issues.
- Encourage patients to share successes

and challenges with peers or support networks.

- Frame engagement as a partnership: therapist guidance plus patient action equals better outcomes.

Tip: These questions and suggestions are meant to spark reflection, discussion, and action. They are not prescriptive, but a tool to help tailor care, improve collaboration, and support patient engagement in lymphoedema management across a variety of settings.

“Engagement is not something we expect from patients – it is something we co-create through relationships, systems, and shared responsibility.”

