

# Top 10 Tips and Tricks for Navigating the Healthcare Maze

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[Sick Girl Speaks](#) and [Project Compassion](#)

1. Knowledge, Awareness and Boundaries are the first three keys to effective patient advocacy. Gone are the days of relaxing and letting the doctor call all the shots— Be a humble, polite, persistent Squeaky Wheel!
2. Here's the greatest irony of illness: when you are at your worst is exactly the time when you need to be at your best! If you aren't up for self-advocacy, bring some one who can do it for you.
3. Being sick is difficult. Be kind to yourself and find ways to process your emotional needs while catering to your physical needs. Healing can happen no matter what the physical outcome.
4. There is power in the Written Word. Use signs whenever you can. Always take notes when getting medical instruction. Keep a list of your medications so you don't have to repeat yourself.
5. Know the medical hierarchy! If you have a problem with a caregiver, it pays to know where to find their boss!
6. Seek out other patients who have traveled a similar road, they may help you avoid potholes.
7. When you seek out other patients who have traveled similar roads—be careful who you listen to—they may *be* a pothole.
8. If you go to a surgeon, they will want to do surgery. If you go to a medical doctor, they will want to give you medicine. If you go to an acupuncturist, they will want to give you acupuncture. What do *you* want to do?
9. Always ask direct questions. Never assume that your doctors are telling you “the whole truth and nothing but the truth” unless you have looked them in the eye and specifically asked what you want to know.
10. Illness is difficult but, if you look hard enough, you might find it also offers opportunities for growth, gratitude and joy.