

Nellie message development

Guiding principles

So what?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This is the key question, framing and contextualising how the message is intended to be received and understood by the patient.
Embrace Nellie's persona	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nellie is a friend who guides (unless the patient must do something).• Use language that maximises the personal feel of Nellie• Incorporate 'Nellie' or 'Nell' into messages e.g. sign off with 'Take care, Nell'.
Make messages significant	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Give a reason <i>why</i> the patient should do something. Or give the statement, <i>then</i> the reason.• Be specific. E.g. "...body is getting stronger..." instead of "...body is benefitting..."• Appeal to people's values or goals, rather than facts or fears. Reinforce accountability.• Repetition is a good technique for habit forming.
Identify where the impact should be	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Start of message: for critical information.• Middle: buffer it with personal touches either side.• End: works well for motivational messages (see "Writing messages" below).
Focus the content of the messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reflect on the actual message you are trying to portray. How can you say this in the simplest way?• Brevity is key. Keep messages concise and to-the-point. Try to stick to a character limit of 160.• Design messages to suit the cohort you are targeting (consider the age, culture and literacy levels of your target cohort).
Maximise engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use a warm, friendly and conversational tone.• Ensure all messages add value and feel useful to the patient.• It is fine to make reasonable assumptions about a cohort in general. But watch out for bias and incorrect assumptions (which are probably not revealed until after early testing).• Avoid repetitive wording. If you are repeating the advice (i.e. to form a habit) write the message in different ways.• Avoid questions. Rhetorical questions are okay, but use with care. Ensure it is clear when Nellie is asking for a response vs. a rhetorical question.• Suggest, don't tell or instruct.

- Use thought provoking statements (e.g. 'did you know...?', 'you may discover ...', 'other people like you have found ...', 'ask yourself the question...', 'stop and reflect on...')
- Use 'you' and 'your' to personalise messages and subtly increase motivation.
- Frame positively as much as possible and avoid negative words (for example focus on things people can improve, do more of, or do better, rather than focussing on banning, reducing, or avoiding).
- If something remains unanswered, use the technique of asking the person to reply "M" for more and lead the person into the information. Don't answer in the initial message: **add value**.

Writing messages

Do Use	Don't Use	Why?
Willing		People are more likely to change their minds and respond more positively when asked if they are willing to do something. Works well when already met with resistance.
It's best to... Aim to... Some people find...	Should, must, can't, don't	Suggesting treatment options rather than directing emphasises the individual's choices & acknowledges their autonomy.
	Just	Just is a "permission" word, this can reduce confidence and the impact of sentence tone.
Speak	Talk	People are more inclined to open up the conversation or offer new information. "Talk" casts a negative shadow and has negative cultural idioms. "Can I speak with you about this?"
Some	Any	Any tends to be met with negative responses as it is too open ended. Be specific if you are looking for a response.
It seems like		This is a form of active listening, telling the person you've taken in what they've said and that you understand what it means to them.
	Try	Avoid using try as a verb, e.g. "Try to eat more vegetables...". Use of "try" gives an opportunity for patient to think "well, I tried, but...". Instead be directive.
Hello, hi, good morning etc.		"One friendly word in a bright tone can delete the challenge of the conversation".
Nell(ie)		Adds a personal touch.
	I hope	Suggests that they don't need to do it and it's not very motivating.
Doing ... will have ... effect		For motivational messages.
Commitment	Contract	
	I hope [Nellie hopes]	Not motivating and suggests it can be skipped.

Rewriting Examples

These are examples of drafts of messages and their rewritten version. The aim is to convey how careful and focussed you need to be, but also to give you ideas for how to frame a message or where to put its impact.

Draft	Updated version	Rationale
Fantastic! You may not notice it just yet but your body & mind are already benefiting from the exercise. Nell.	Fantastic! You may not notice it just yet but every time you exercise, your body & mind are getting stronger. Nell	Brings another focus to gaining strength and suggests a 'keep going' motivation.
Great to hear. Exercise helps push away any bad thoughts or feelings. Take care, Nellie.	Great to hear! Exercise helps to put you in a positive mindset and keeps you focused on achieving your goals. Take care, Nell	If you mention bad thoughts, the patient might think immediately of any bad thoughts have. Whereas telling them it helps them to be positive and achieve goals will make them focus on the positive not the negative.
Any moving around is better than no exercise at all, so do what you can. Nellie	Ok, even if you can't manage the whole exercise this time, any exercise is better than none and it all adds up. If you need any help call XXXXXX, Nell	"..do what you can.." can be demotivating (remember focus is on their goal and developing accountability and habit). Using "...this time..." suggests it can be done next time. The phone number reminds the patient they can always get help if needed.
Get a good sleep tonight and I hope you can exercise tomorrow. Take care, Nell	Get a good sleep tonight, tomorrow is a new day. Aim to say "Yes, I did my exercise", you will feel great when you do. Take care, Nellie	Avoid "I hope" (see "Writing messages" above)
Thanks for letting me know. If you can, make some time tomorrow to do your exercises. Nell	Thanks for letting me know. Make some time tomorrow to do your exercises, try doing them in the morning to give you energy for the rest of the day, Nell	"if you can" suggests that if they can't then it doesn't matter and exercise doesn't have to be a priority. Also giving them a suggestion of doing it in the morning might be something they hadn't thought of (see "Maximise engagement" in the Guiding Principles above)