

Ask-Tell-Ask

An Effective Way to Give Information and Advice

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Ask-Tell-Ask (also called Elicit-Provide-Elicit) uses the spirit of motivational interviewing to increase the chances that people will be ready, willing, and able to act on information or advice.

Ask for Permission OR Ask what they know or want to know "Is it ok if we talk about ...?" "What do you know about ...?" "Would you like to know more about ...?" "What information can I help you with?" Tell: respectfully, clearly, and in small amounts Make sure it fits the person and is focussed on the • Provide information in a neutral way. The present. purpose is to give information, not change o "You mentioned __is important to you right minds. now." o "Sometimes people in this situation try ____, Focus on one or two key messages. , or " o "__ and __ are two things that we could focus Emphasize choice and options by avoiding on if that is helpful to you." words like "can't," "must," or "have to." Use plain language (short sentences and familiar o "There are three choices about where to go from here..." Use pictures and handouts when they are helpful. OR **Check for understanding** Ask what they thought "What do you think about that?" "I'd like to make sure I did a good job explaining. "I wonder what this all means to you?" Could you say it back to me so I know I was "I wonder how you think we might best proceed?" clear?" • "If someone asked you what we talked about



today, what would you tell them?"

that I explained it well?"

"Can you show me how you are going to (use this equipment/complete this form/....) so I know

Special Cases

Rules and Professional or Legal Obligations

- A rule: "There are some important things to know about working together, and I want to make sure you understand what they are."
- A professional obligation: "As your _____. I'm very concerned about . . . I'd like your thoughts on what I just told you."
- A topic you must discuss: "There's something I need to tell you. I noticed something in your assessment/ results/situation and I wonder what you will think about it."
- A reporting requirement: "As you know, our conversations are confidential, but there is an important exception. The law requires me to report _____. I want our work together to be helpful, and I want to be sure you understand this responsibility I have."

Someone Asks for Information or Advice

Be careful when giving advice, because you can fall into the **expert trap**. The expert trap is when you give people advice based solely on your ideas and it doesn't fit for them.

Here are two things to remember when asked for advice:

- 1. Emphasize choice.
 - o "I can't tell you what to do, but I can tell you what others have done."
 - o "Something you could try if you want to is _____"
- 2. Instead of giving one piece of advice or a single idea, **offer a menu of choices**. This is a special kind of Ask-Tell-Ask, sometimes called a **behavioral menu**.
 - o **ASK:** "Would you like to hear some ideas others have used or that might fit for vou?"
 - o TELL: Share two or three ideas all at once. Use the last idea to encourage one of their own. "Some things you could try are _____, or maybe you've had an idea while I was talking."
 - o ASK: "Do any of these ideas work for you?"

Sharing Personal Experience

When we have had a similar experience we often become enthusiastic about a particular idea. In order to not fall into the expert trap, remember that every person's situation is unique, and share your own experience briefly as a way to encourage the person to come up with an idea that might work for you them.

- ASK: "I experienced something similar in the past. Would you like to hear some things that I tried?"
- **TELL:** Briefly one or two options.
- ASK: "That was my experience, and yours is unique to you. What thoughts do you have?"

Based on Miller W, Rollnick S. Motivational Interviewing: Helping people change. 3rd ed. New York: Guilford Press; 2012.



