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. Choose from the options below or use the space to write down what fits best for you.

Step	Options, Tips and Examples
ASK #1 for 1) permission OR 2) what they know or want to know	**Option 1: Permission to give information and advice:** □ "Is it ok if we talk about … ?" □ "Would you like to know more about … ?" □ *OR* **Option 2: What they already know or want to know:** □ "What do you know about … ?" □ "There are several things we could talk about, so where should we start?" □ "What information can I help you with?" □ "You already know a lot about … , but are there any questions you still have?" □ ** For information about what to do when you have an obligation or when people ask for information, see next page*

TELL
 	
information respectfully, clearly, and in small amounts
	1. Make sure the information **fits** the person and is **focused** on the present.
	   □ "You said that … is on your mind right now."
	2. Provide the information in a **neutral** way. The purpose is to **give information, not change their minds.**
	   □ "Sometimes people in this situation … , … , or … "
	   □ "Let's look at the (questionnaire/survey/screening) results together … "
	3. **Focus** on one or two key messages that the person wants to know.
	   □ "There are two things to think about right now … "
	4. Use **plain language** (short sentences and familiar words).
	5. Use **pictures** and **handouts** when they are helpful.
	6. Emphasize **choice** and **options** by avoiding words like "can't," "must," or "have to."
	   □ "There are three choices about where to go from here… "
	   □

ASK #2 1) what they thought OR 2) use teach-back to make sure there is understanding	**Option 1: What they thought:** □ "What do you think about that?" □ "I wonder what this all means to you?" □ "I wonder how you think we might best proceed?" *OR* **Option 2: Use teach-back to make sure there is understanding:** □ "I'd like to make sure I did a good job explaining. Could you say it back to me so I know I was clear?" □ "If someone asked you what we talked about today, what would you tell them?" □ "Can you show me how you are going to (use this equipment/complete this form/….) so I know that I explained it well?" □

Based on Miller W and Rollnick S, 2012, Chapter 11

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Special cases: A rule or a professional or legal obligation:

☐ 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 counsellor/nurse/doctor/etc. 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 lab tests/screening results/questionnaire 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."

People ask me for advice, can't I just tell them what to do?

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:

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1. **Emphasize choice.**

"I can't tell you what to do, but I can tell you what others have done."

"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.**

   1. **ASK:** "Would you like to hear some ideas others have used or that might fit for you?"

   2. **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."

   3. **ASK** if any of these ideas might work.