



# Incorporating EPE in Health Coaching

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One of the blessings of living in the 21st century is the availability of information. Besides the plethora of physical resources and the internet, conversations with medical and health professionals are also great sources. Knowing this, how we share information with our clients and patients can drastically affect their motivation for health changes and our relationships with them.



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One way we can share health information is through the Elicit-Provide-Elicit (EPE) method. This approach comes from motivational interviewing, which is “a collaborative, goal-oriented style of communication with particular attention to the language of change” (1). Sometimes, when a health professional has information to share, he or she may make assumptions, share too much, or use confusing health jargon. But with EPE, the process is more collaborative. Here is how it works:

1. Elicit: The health coach or clinician first asks the client to share what s/he knows about a topic to assess prior knowledge. After the client shares, the coach asks if it is okay to share additional or clarifying information about the topic.
  - If the client says no, then the coach has to respect the client’s choice and not provide any further information (2). However, there is an exception, which is discussed below.
  - If the client says yes, then go on to “provide.”
2. Provide: In a non-judgmental manner, the coach would provide small amounts of new information (and/or clear up misinformation) using clear and simple words (2,3).

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## References

### References

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2. Miller, W.R., & Rollick, S. (2013). Chapter 11:

3. Elicit: The coach would find out if the information was understood and what it now means to the client (3).

Because clients may already know some information on a topic, it is important to elicit information first before sharing or explaining anything. When clients are “talked with” instead of “talked at,” they also feel more empowered and involved in their own health care. It is also important to note that not all clients are ready (or interested) to learn about a certain topic. So never assume or overwhelm clients with unsolicited information.

As mentioned above, there is an exception to point 1. There may be instances where the coach has a legal responsibility to still offer the information. When required to do so, the client’s autonomy must still be honored. For example, if a client shares how he or she abuses a child, the coach has a responsibility to report it and to let the client know about this duty (2). Also, the Bible reminds us of our Christian duty to care and warn others about actions that can affect them negatively. In all these instances, gracefully and tactfully share information without coercion or threats.

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4. Mark 2:6-8

5. Mark 9:21

6. Luke 10:26

7. Luke 10:30-35

8. Luke 10:36

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In the Bible, we can identify similar EPE principles at work. Although Jesus already knew what men were thinking (4), the Savior sometimes asked individuals open-ended questions about a particular topic (5, 6). He then provided pertinent information (7), ascertained if it was understood, and what it meant to the receiver (8). We would do well to follow in Christ's footsteps.

EPE is a powerful tool for sharing information when the time is right and the client is ready for it. Include it in your coaching toolkit today. It will encourage continued engagement and forward momentum in your clients.



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