

Traps to Engagement

Six easy ways to lose a conversation, and how to step out

Traps
Six

Process
Engaging

Pairs well with
The skits activity

Question-answer	Question, answer, question, answer. The person settles into short replies, and the helper ends up in charge. <i>Way out:</i> fewer questions, more reflections.
Confrontation-denial	The helper argues for change and the person argues back for staying the same. People tend to defend whatever side they're pushed toward. <i>Way out:</i> invite the person's own reasons for change.
Expert	The helper offers answers before the person has found their own goals and direction. The person may agree politely and commit halfway. <i>Way out:</i> explore first, offer ideas when asked or with permission.
Labeling	The helper pushes the person to accept a label or diagnosis. Labels carry stigma, and people with healthy self-respect push back. <i>Way out:</i> set labels aside and talk about what matters to them.
Premature focus	The helper zeroes in on a problem before the person is ready, or on one that matters less to them. <i>Way out:</i> engage first, then agree on the focus together.
Blaming	Talk turns to whose fault it is. Blame doesn't help anyone move. <i>Way out:</i> a "no-fault" stance: what's troubling you, and what might you do about it?

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Rollnick, S., Heather, N., & Bell, A. (1992). Negotiating behaviour change in medical settings. *Journal of Mental Health*, 1, 25–37.