

# Quality Conversations



## What is push and pull communication?

### Push:

- Telling
- Instructing
- Offering guidance
- Giving feedback

### Pull:

- Deep listening
- Asking open exploratory questions
- Summarising, paraphrasing and reflecting
- Listening to understand and encourage

## Why do we refer to them as push or pull?

Pull or push describes the flow of a conversation and considers if the person you are talking to is moving towards you or away from you in the conversation.

### Push techniques:

- Characterised by phrases like 'Why don't you...?' or 'Try ..'.
- Often leads to suggested solutions that are not suitable or have already been considered.
- Common responses often include 'but...' or 'No because...'.
- This can lead to resistance and a conversational struggle between parties.

### Pull techniques:

- Characterised by phrases like 'It's normal to feel frustrated, what do you think might work?' or 'what have you tried before?'.
- Aims to understand the person and their situation better through supportive curiosity.
- Creates a sense of partnership and encourages the person to find their own solutions.

## How can I remember this technique?

One way to remember this technique is to think of conversations as a dance, not a wrestle.

**Push** techniques can make conversations feel like a wrestle. Telling someone what to do can often lead to resistance and people are more likely to make progress if they find their own solutions.

**Pull** should feel more like a ballroom dance, in which you are creating a collaborative and working together in the same direction. If you feel resistance consider changing topics temporarily and come back to it or notice if you have been in push and change to pull.



Dance don't wrestle



### Remember:

No one gets things right all of the time but the more you practice this the easier it gets. The more you spot yourself slipping into using push, the more you can redirect yourself to pull.



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## How to word pull questions

- It is good to ask questions starting with what, when, who and how. Sometimes why questions can be ok but we have to be very careful that these do not come across as judgemental.
- TED is a good way to remember how to start open questions. TED stands for **Tell Explain Describe** which are all great question openers.

## Example pull questions

- What's important to you?
- What do you enjoy doing?
- What have you tried before?
- What do you think would work for you?
  
- When do you find yourself feeling...?
- When do you find it difficult to...?
  
- Who supports you?
- Who could support you with this?
- Who could you speak to about this?
  
- How have you found...?
- How did you feel about...?
- How have you been since we last spoke?
  
- Tell me about your day to day life
- Tell me about your sleep
- Tell me more about...?
  
- Explain what happens when you feel stressed
- Explain to me when this happens
- Explain to me what steps you have already taken to resolve the problem
  
- Describe your current health
- Describe how you felt when...
- Describe what makes you want to...

## Example scenario

Patient attends their stop smoking service appointment and says 'I've smoked this week because I had so much going on'.

A push response might sound like 'It sounds like this weeks been really tough, but remember when things get tough you still need to avoid smoking for your health'.

A pull response would make sure to understand the person and their situation better. This might sound like 'It sounds like you've had a difficult week, tell me a bit more about what's been going on for you'. This opens the conversation up and allows the patient time to express their challenges. In this case, the person was having some financial and housing related challenges and the staff member was able to signpost the patient to relevant support - helping prevent future relapses to smoking.

## Important things to remember

- Using pull or push can depend on the context. For example, we would not use pull to explain how something (e.g. a care line button) works but we use pull techniques to find out if it works for them and that they understand how to use it.
- Pull techniques engages people and creates positive working relationships where people have involvement in their healthcare decisions. This allows for personalised strategies to be put into place to support them in their journey towards better health.

