

Being an effective Community-Coach

You have two major roles as the coach or the research assistant:

1. To motivate the patient to be able to discuss the topic freely
2. To collect the information necessary to meet the specific needs of the research project.

The first of these –motivating the patient – involves using techniques to establish and maintain communication and rapport with the patient.

The second of these – meeting the objectives of the research project – involves completing the forms and following the study protocol as directed.

The motivation of the patient depends directly upon the personal relationship that you develop. In order to be sufficiently motivated to devote the time, energy, and personal commitment required in this study, the patient must enjoy talking with someone who is receptive and understanding, and the patient must feel that you are likely to understand and accept what he or she has to say. The patient must feel that you are capable of accepting his or her opinions. Thus, in order to motivate a patient to speak freely on a given topic, you should:

- Be responsive and take a genuine interest in their opinions
- Accept all responses without showing any personal reactions, judgments, or biases either verbally or non-verbally.

Another function of your role as a Community-Coach is to be a careful, attentive listener. You must learn to listen to everything that the patient has to say. It is more important to listen to the patient than to talk about your own experiences or feelings.

You are also there to help the patient to feel confident in their own abilities to manage their care. Therefore, it is important to show approval of patient's feelings and experiences. An encouraging nod, a murmur of understanding, and occasional "thank you" during your interaction will all help to establish good rapport with participants.