

## The Empathetic Refutational Interview

The Empathetic Refutational Interview (ERI) is a tool to guide conversations with individuals who are concerned about vaccination. The ERI is underpinned by techniques to display empathy and encourage reflection. It follows the following general steps:

1. **Elicit concerns** from the patient, inviting them to share their thoughts about vaccination. Practice **active listening** by reflecting what the patient is saying and considering the underlying reasons, or “attitude roots”, that motivate the patient’s hesitancy.

**Attitude roots** refer to deep psychological factors, such as a person’s level of trust or distrust, that shape and constrain people’s beliefs and attitudes.

In this step, we can ask **open-ended questions** to get the patient to explain in more detail why they hold this position. This signals more empathy and can also encourage the patient to reflect on the logic of their position.

2. Build empathy with how the patient is feeling by **affirming** the attitude root. It is possible to affirm an attitude root without agreeing with the specifics of the argument against vaccination. Most arguments contain a partial truth. Acknowledging this partial truth can help build receptivity and openness to further information.

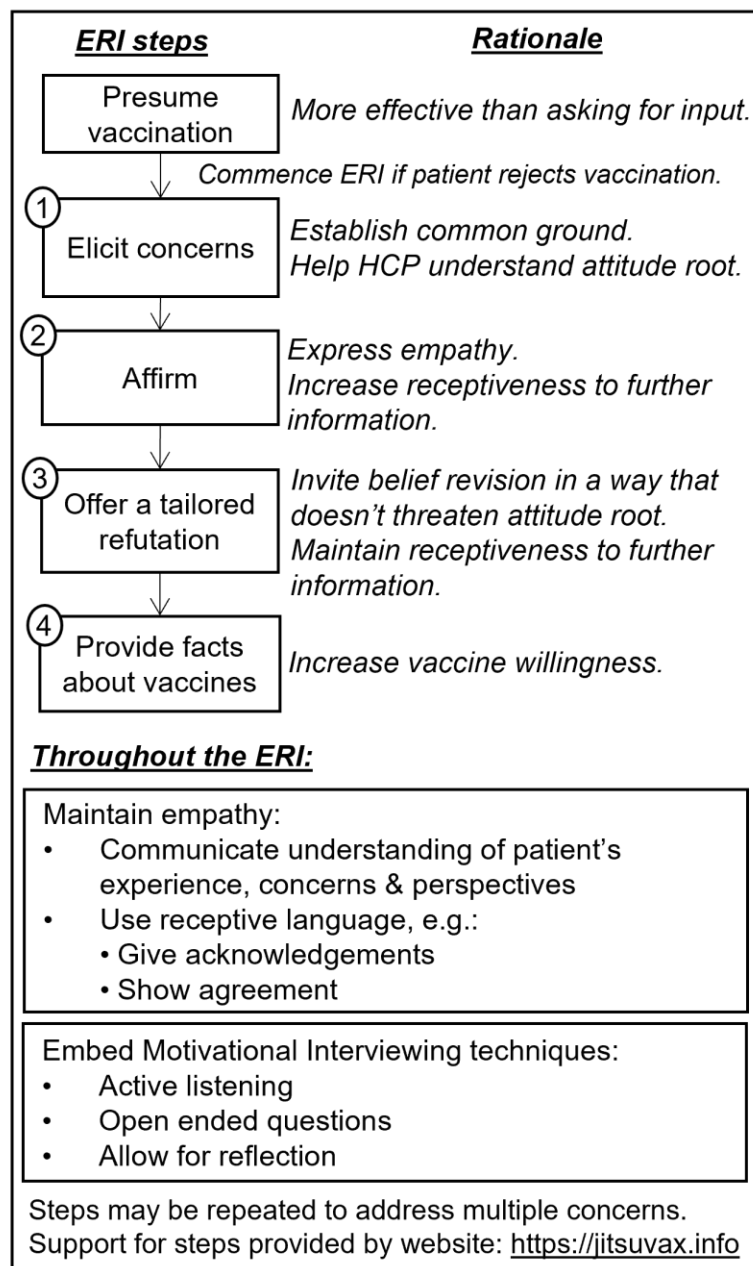
3. Offer a **tailored refutation** of the misconceptions or flaws in the anti-vaccination argument. It is important to explain why the misconception is wrong and replace it with a tailored, acceptable alternative for the patient. Together with the empathetic affirmation in step 2, this encourages the patient to revise the belief without threatening their attitude root.

4. Provide **relevant facts** about vaccination, such as how vaccinations work, the benefits of vaccination against the risk of disease, or the collective benefit gained through vaccine-induced herd immunity.

Bear in mind the patient may wish to take more time to consider the information. Remember the goals of the conversation – if the patient is more receptive and the relationship is still maintained, this is a successful outcome. Remain open to discussing at a later time.

These steps are supported by an educational website, <https://jitsuvax.info>, which offers affirmations and refutations of 62 types of arguments against vaccines, classified by their attitude roots.

## A. Steps of the ERI and their rationale



## B. Conversation example following ERI steps

