

The Accusation Audit

An accusation audit is a negotiation technique where you acknowledge the other person's potential objections or negative perceptions before they voice them.

This can help build rapport with someone who has fixed biomedical beliefs about their pain, while introducing a biopsychosocial model in a non-threatening way.

Here are some examples:



1. Acknowledging scepticism around the psychological factors of pain

"You might be thinking, 'You don't believe my pain is real and you're just saying it's all in my head.' I want to assure you that's not the case."

"Your pain is absolutely real, and what I'd like to do is help explain why factors beyond just damage (like stress, emotions, and even past experiences) can all have an impact on your pain levels."



2. Recognising frustration with prior treatments

"I wouldn't be surprised if you're feeling frustrated after trying multiple treatments that haven't worked. It might even feel like no one is taking your pain seriously."

"I want to take it seriously, and help you understand why your pain is persisting and what we can do about it."



3. Addressing fear of being blamed

"You might be worried that I'm going to tell you that your pain is your fault or that you just need to 'think positive' and it will go away. That's not what I'm saying at all. Pain is complex, and I want to work with you to find ways to help reduce it."



4. Anticipating resistance to non-biomedical explanations

"I can imagine you might be thinking: 'If my MRI shows a problem, how can stress or sleep have anything to do with my pain?' That's a great question, and what we now understand is that pain isn't just about the structural body. It's about how the nervous system and brain decide when pain needs to be produced."

"The good news is this means we have more ways to help you than just with surgery or medication."



5. Pre-empting Concerns About 'Soft' Treatments



"You might feel like I'm about to suggest something that doesn't seem like 'real medicine,' like exercise, mindfulness, or working with a psychologist. I totally get that. It might sound like I'm saying your pain is just a mood issue, but that's not it at all. Science shows that these approaches actually help retrain the nervous system and brain and as a result, reduce pain levels."



Why the Accusation Audit works:

- It builds trust by addressing unspoken fears
- It prevents defensive reactions by showing empathy
- It creates curiosity by framing the biopsychosocial model as an opportunity, not a dismissal.

