

Communication Skills Lab 2: Exploring Skills



Communications Skills Lab 2: Exploring Skills

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Time: 6 Hours

Module Purpose: Exploring skills, which include physical and attending behaviors, reflections, silence, reframing, and exception finding questions are used in all interviewing models (narrative, solution-focused, and motivational interviewing). These skills are the bedrock of active listening, and as such, new child welfare professionals should be expected to be reasonably proficient in these skills at the end of core. These skills will be practiced through-out all the labs as new skills are added, and new topics are the focus of an interview.



Demonstrated Skills:

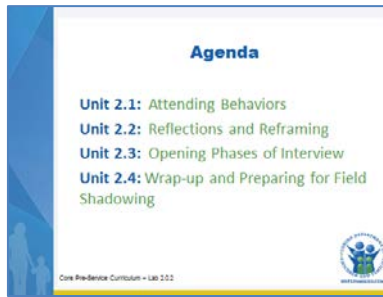
Participants will demonstrate beginning proficiency in:

1. Attending Behaviors
2. Reflections
3. Use of silence
4. Reframing
5. Exception-finding questions

Materials:

- Trainer's Guide (TG)
- Participant's Guide (PG) (Participants should bring their own.)
- PowerPoint slide deck
- Markers
- Flip chart paper
- Blank index cards, no lines on either side

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Agenda:

Unit 2.1: Attending Behaviors

Unit 2.2: Reflections and Reframing

Unit 2.3: Opening Phase of Interview

Unit 2.4: Wrap-up and Preparing for Field Shadowing

Review the agenda with the participants.

1. Explain specific types of exploring skills:
 - Attending Behaviors
 - Silence
 - Reflections
 - Reframing
 - Exception-finding Questions
2. Identify body language of interviewer and family members in interviews.
3. Identify exploring skills used by child welfare professional in interviews.
4. Demonstrate exploring skills.
5. Practice observation and note taking in preparation for field work.

Activities:

Unit 2.1

Lab Activity 1: Determining Meaning of Non-verbal Behaviors – 13

Unit 2.2

Lab Activity 2: Reflecting Content and Emotions - 24

Lab Activity 3: Demonstrating Reflection Skills - 28

Lab Activity 4: Reframing Child Attributes - 31

Lab Activity 5: Developing Reframes - 37

Lab Activity 6: Demonstrating Exploring Skills - 44

Unit 2.3

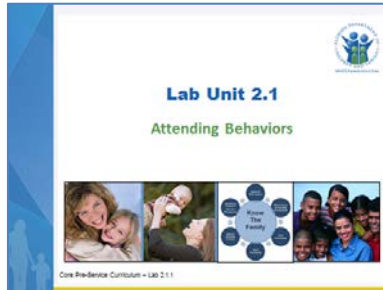
Lab Activity 7: Building Rapport - 50

Unit 2.4

Lab Activity 8: Self-Assessment - 55

Unit 2.1: Attending Behaviors

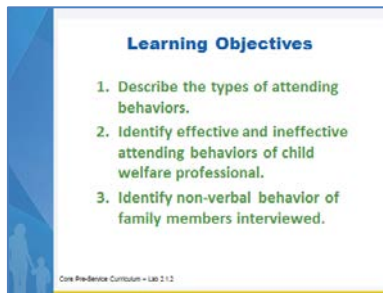
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Time:

Unit Overview: Participants will build on their experience of listening without speaking from Lab 1, and learn the specific types of physical and psychological attending behaviors including the use of silence. They will observe a video and practice the identification of attending behaviors, as well as non-verbal behaviors of the interviewer and family members interviewed.

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Review the Learning Objectives with the participants.

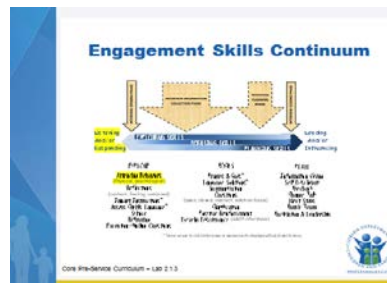


Learning Objectives:

1. Describe the types of attending behaviors.
2. Identify effective and ineffective attending behaviors of child welfare professional.
3. Identify non-verbal behavior of family members interviewed.

Explain to participants that as we learn different skills; practicing the skills with each other is an important way to begin to build proficiency. Using **Lab PG: 4, Personal Topics for Discussion**, ask them to take 5-10 minutes to think about and identify three to four personal topic that they would be willing to share with another participant in training.

Display Slide 2.1.3 (Lab PG: 5)



We discussed during the first lab that most of the meaning from an interview is going to come from non-verbal behaviors that will convey respect, genuineness and empathy. We practiced listening to a person sharing a difficult situation and conveyed empathy using our body language and silence.

Body language and silence are reflected in the continuum under exploring skills. That said, you will use attending behaviors through-out all phases of an interview, along with other skills, to make sure a person feels listened to, each step of the way.

Having a sense that I am being heard (primarily content) and understood (primarily feeling) means that you, the listener, accurately perceive the message I am trying to convey. Maintaining control of the interview begins with that first knock on the door, how you chose to present and introduce yourself.

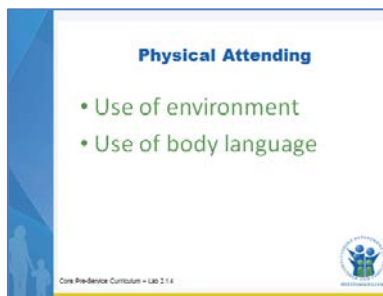
Feeling that “I am being listened to” means that you consciously recognize and acknowledge any emotions expressed (but especially the sad or hostile ones) – frustration, anger or grief - in order to move the person, to the extent possible, beyond that

feeling so they will more fully participate in a conversation with you.

Today we will be learning all of the exploring skills necessary for that first phase of an interview when we want to establish rapport, and get on with the interview's primary purpose, information collection.

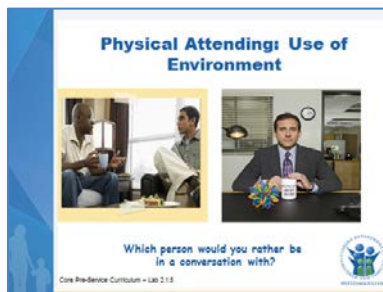
Let's begin with "Physical Attending."

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Physical attending includes two aspects; use of the environment and use of the body.

Display Slide 2.1.5



Which person would you rather be in a conversation with, the man on the right, or one of the men in the left picture?

Endorse and elicit the following considerations:

- Men on the left look more inviting (*ask why so, what does the environment have to do with it?*).

- A living room versus an office.
- The men on the left are facing each other, **there are no barriers in between; on right, the desk would be a barrier**
- Casual clothing versus the man in a suit and tie.
- Everything about the man on the right conveys that he is the “boss,” he is more powerful.

Trainer Note: Participants may point out body language as well, which is good. Give them credit for noticing that.



Paying attention to the physical environment means that to the extent possible, it is in a setting where the family member is most comfortable, and you are both able to focus on the conversation.



What might some “distractions” in a family home be?

Endorse and elicit the following considerations:

- Children who want or need attention from their parent.
- TV that is on.
- Children playing video games.



You will need to be patient, and creative. It never hurts to have some toys in your purse or your pocket that a child can play with; or some extra paper and ink-free magic markers for an older child to draw on.

You might not want to let a child play with your car keys unless you are okay if they get lost.

There might be times when you need to ask, “Would you mind turning the television down or off so that I can hear you better?”

When you are conducting an investigation or a home visit as a case manager, there will many times when you must also observe the home as well as conduct an interview. There will be other times when you might need to conduct an interview at your office.

When an interview does occur at your office, to the extent possible you want to find a way to minimize any barriers between you and the family member to be interviewed.

Display Slide 2.1.6 (**Lab PG: 6**)



What are the seven universally recognized facial expressions and what makes them “universal?”

(From left to right on slide)

	Surprise	Anger
Joy	Sadness	Fear
Contempt		Disgust

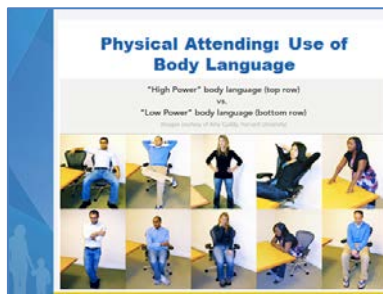
Endorse and elicit the following considerations:

- Universal recognition (similar across all cultures)
- Same for both literate and pre-literate cultures
- Tend to involve the entire face (unlike micro-expressions)
- Congenitally blind individuals produce same facial expressions as sighted individuals (Matsumoto & Willingham, 2009)

Trainer Note: Trainer should lead a discussion as to what the facial expressions convey, making the point that both gestures and facial expressions are usually more readable than other body language that operate more at an unconscious level (e.g., increased heart rate or breathing, or micro-expressions, etc.). Trainers should be prepared to deflect any in-depth discussion on micro-expressions (rapidly processed but unconcealed emotional states that can occur as fast as 1/30 of a second) because most individuals cannot see or recognize them in real time and accurate interpretation requires becoming familiar with the subject’s verbal and non-verbal response characteristics prior to conducting an in-depth interview.

The main point is that good interviewers recognize the emotion being expressed facially and always reflect the feeling back to the subject (e.g., “You’re angry” or “Talking about this makes you sad”, etc.) to facilitate the on-going rapport building/engagement process. Validating emotions is essential to being seen as respectful and empathetic. Conversely, failure to recognize someone’s emotional state can be seen as disrespectful, disingenuous, and uncaring.

Display Slide 2.1.7



This slide shows body language that is related to “power.” The top row shows postures related to persons demonstrating high power, the bottom row low power.



In terms of child welfare professional behaviors and work with a family, why would we want to be aware of body language that demonstrates “high power?”

Endorse and elicit:

- It comes across to family as arrogant
- Will make family feel powerless
- Might make family feel more ashamed or intimidated
- Know when our boss is mad at us/when to pay attention!



The child welfare professional needs to be clearly in charge of the interview, needs to control the interview. That said, we want to do it in a skillful way that does not demean or intimidate the family member.

Through the use of our communication skills, we will maintain the focus and purpose of the interview, while making it feel more like a two-way conversation to the family member.

We have the power and authority of the state, to be used with thoughtfulness and in consideration of the “least intrusive” interventions. We must make use “reasonable efforts” to draw out or learn the family’s story and perspective, using all of our communication skills to the fullest extent possible.



If any of the persons in the bottom row were the family member we are interviewing, what would the body language tell you about the way they are feeling?

Endorse any of the following feelings:

- Dejected
- Closed-off; I am not sharing anything with you!
- I am worried
- Depressed
- Defeated



Great observations! We are going come back to these pictures in a minute and discuss how to further assess observations of body language along with what the family member is saying.

Display Slide 2.1.8



Let’s talk about the body language in this picture! What is going on here?

Endorse and elicit all of the following points:

- The couple is not in agreement
 - Woman is mad, frustrated
 - Her arms and her legs are crossed, a closed body

language message

- Her mouth is in a tight line
- She is facing away from the male
- Her eyes are looking-up, rolled-back
- The man is conveying that “she is the problem”
 - Gesturing with his thumb
 - Leaning away from her
 - Hand on head (I am so confused)
 - A grimace



One leg over the other (closed off to receiving new information)

What you just did in answering my question is an example of “psychological attending.” You observed the dynamics of body language between a couple, and what it conveyed.

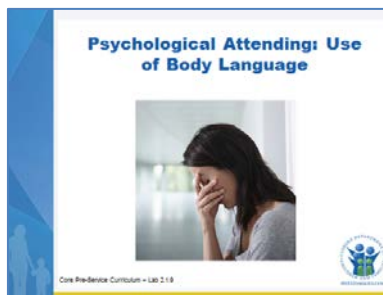


Do you think this woman will feel comfortable talking openly in front of him?

Endorse:

- Yes, she looks like she has the strength to do so given her straight body posture.
- No (This would also be an okay response). He clearly presents in a power position – leaning back, crossed legs - it would be important to speak with her alone to make sure she shares information without fear of reprisal.

Display Slide 2.1.9





And if the woman sitting on the sofa looked like this, do you think she would feel comfortable talking about problems in their relationship in front of him? What is her non-verbal behavior saying?

Endorse:

- Dejected, slumped shoulders
- Covering her face
- Closed eyes
- “No, don’t talk to me now!”



What if the woman in this slide was sitting on the sofa next to that man, and said, “Everything is good here. We have a great relationship. This was our first and only fight. It was my fault and it won’t happen again.”

First, her body language would be incongruent with what she is saying. Given the stance of her partner, he may be a person who exercising all the power in the relationship and she may not want to make him angry.

During an investigation, we would always want to interview a couple separately. During case management services, it will be important to discern what will work best given what you have learned about the nature of the maltreatment (i.e., if it involved domestic or family violence, etc.) and other family dynamics.

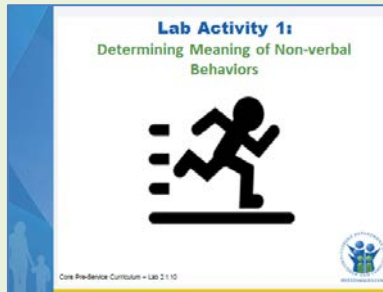
Because family dynamics can be so different from what individuals self-report or how they act by themselves, it is essential that both investigators and case managers also meet with the whole family to observe family dynamics, even if individuals have been interviewed separately.

It should also be noted that when we want to observe family dynamics, we will learn much more about a family in their natural setting rather than in an office.



Activity 1: Determining Meaning of Non-Verbal Behaviors

Display Slide 2.1.10



Time:

Purpose: Body language is instinctive and much of it operates at an unconscious level, for both the person displaying the body language and the person reading it. This exercise is designed to challenge participants to act out the non-verbal behavior, and attempt to interpret what it means. This should help to raise their level of awareness.

Materials:

- **Lab PG: 7, Determining Meaning of Non-Verbal Behaviors**

Trainer Instructions:

- Have participants work in teams of three to five persons.
- If the team does not know the answer, at least one person in the team should display the nonverbal behavior as a way of attempting to determine the interpretation.
- Give participants a chance to complete all answers.
- Debrief the exercise by going through all of the answers.

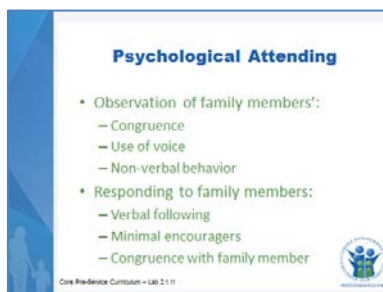
Nonverbal Behavior	Interpretation
Brisk, erect walk	Confidence
Standing with hands on hips	Readiness, aggression
Sitting with legs crossed, foot kicking slightly	Boredom
Sitting, legs apart	Open, relaxed

Arms crossed on chest	Defensiveness
Walking with hands in pockets, shoulders hunched	Dejection
Hand to cheek	Evaluation, thinking
Touching, slightly rubbing nose	Rejection, doubt, or lying
Rubbing the eye	Doubt, disbelief
Hands clasped behind back	Anger, frustration, apprehension
Head resting in hand, eyes downcast	Boredom
Rubbing hands	Anticipation
Sitting with hands clasped behind head, legs crossed	Confidence, superiority
Open palm	Sincerity, openness, innocence
Pinching bridge of nose, eyes closed	Negative evaluation
Tapping or drumming fingers	Impatience
Steepling fingers	Authoritative
Patting/fondling hair	Lack of self-confidence, insecurity



Activity STOP

Display Slide 2.1.11 (Lab PG: 9)



To wrap up this unit, we are going to discuss the importance of psychological attending.

Psychological attending primarily relates to facilitating a conversation by making it clear to the other individual that you are interested in what they are saying and you have understood (not necessarily agreed with) what message/information they are trying to convey.

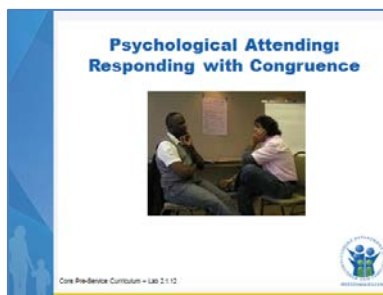
The easiest and most natural way to demonstrate psychological attending is through the use of “minimal encouragers.” Most people are innately adept at these because they are so simple and we use them repeatedly throughout our conversations.

Minimal encouragers include such direct movements as “head nods”, smiles or conversely, a look of concern when told something sad. Minimal encouragers can also be short one or two-word verbal rein-forcers like, “Uh-hum,” “Oh, really?” or the really complex, “Tell me more.”

You get the point, minimal encouragers are simple and straightforward behavioral indicators that “I am interested in what you are saying and I want to hear more!”

Another way we demonstrate psychological attending is through “congruence with the family member.”

Display Slide 2.1.12



This picture shows an interview where there is great congruence of body language that the child welfare professional (man on the right) is demonstrating to the father being interviewed on the left.



What do you notice about the child welfare professional's attending skills?

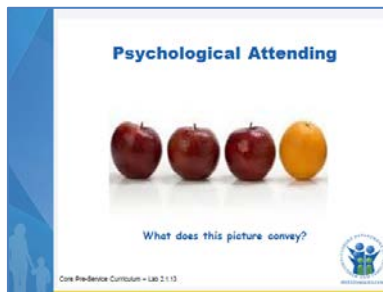
Endorse and elicit:

- He is in close proximity with father
- Leaning forward
- Has his hand on his face, copying the father's hand on face
- His leg is crossed matching the father's crossed arms (although he will probably uncross them at some point to encourage a more open stance by the father)



Physical congruence is the outward demonstration of psychological congruence. Matching an individual's soft or relaxed speech tone (note: not ever angry), similar body postures, and level of emotional concern (degree of seriousness or conversely light mood, etc.) demonstrates respect and empathy to the person being interviewed and is intended to put the individual at ease during the conversation.

Display Slide 2.1.13



We want to wrap up by looking at probably the most important attending behavior: psychological attending related to content.



Thinking in terms of a conversation, what does this picture convey to you?

Trainer Note: Read out loud several times, "Apple, apple, apple (and emphatically) orange!"

Endorse and elicit:

- Where did the orange come from?
- Not sure how the orange fits in
- It's an obvious and abrupt change!



Psychological attending in regard to content means that as a listener you do not push your agenda on to someone else prior to fully and completely “hearing” what they have to say. In the fast paced work of child welfare you will constantly be challenged to control the interview to get the information you need without cutting people off. Silently, you’re thinking “get to the point” or “why are we going over this again . . . I heard it the first three times you said it!”

Psychological attending means you try to follow the individual’s last statement with a reflection or reframe that indicates you heard and understood both the content and the emotional message behind the statement.

The antithesis of psychological attending is essentially ignoring the person’s response and asking a totally unrelated question because you’re digging or prying for certain information.



The slide represents a conversation of apple, apple, apple, with the worker suddenly bringing up orange.

Here’s a verbal representation of that:

Parent: “I’m concerned about who made this report.”

Worker: “Uh-huh.”

Parent: “It’s like you’re presumed guilty until proven innocent.”

Worker: “I see.”

Parent: “This isn’t the American way!”

Worker: “So how did your child break his arm?”

To switch topics or a line of questioning respectfully, all you have to do is summarize the information you heard and then introduce your new question. This directs the flow of the interview by

providing a bridge or segue to a new topic without discounting anything the individual may have shared previously, even if it was off-topic or extraneous information to your purpose.

Instead of the worker's unconnected switch to "So how did your child break his arm?" a more natural, less abrupt transition would have included reflections and summarization:

Worker: "It bothers you that the reporter's identity is kept confidential and you're worried that I may have already jumped to conclusion about your family." Tell me what you think it is important for me to know about your family..."

We will work more on your summarization skills in the next unit.

For now, just remember that the two surest signs that you are not psychologically attending to the conversation are:

1. The individual is constantly going back over material already presented (because in their opinion, you obviously haven't "heard" them), or
2. An individual that initially was well-engaged in your conversation slowly, but totally shuts down. Most typically this represents that they haven't felt heard or understood and they have given up on you, in regard to believing you really want to hear what they have to say.

Unit 2.2: Reflections and Reframing

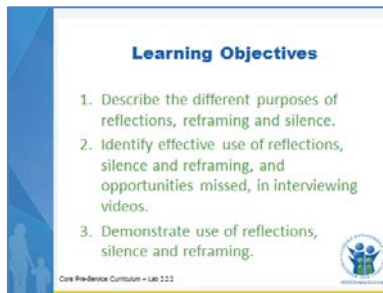
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Time:

Unit Overview: Participants will build on their understanding of attending behaviors, moving into “active listening” techniques. They will continue to practice the identification and demonstration of attending behaviors while incorporating the use of reflections and reframing.

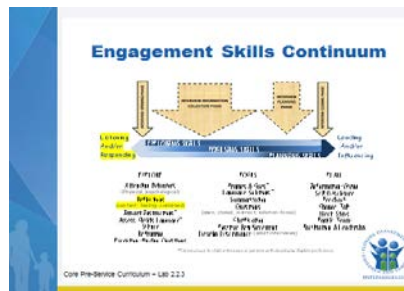
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Learning Objectives:

1. Describe the different purposes of reflections, reframing and silence.
2. Identify effective use of reflections, silence and reframing, and opportunities missed, in interviewing videos.
3. Demonstrate use of reflections, silence and reframing.

Display Slide 2.2.3 (Lab PG: 9)



We discussed the ways in which our attending behaviors convey that we are listening attentively to what a person is telling us. The use of silence, reflection and reframing are more advanced active listening skills which facilitate the exchange of information during conversations or an interview.

Display Slide 2.2.4 (Lab PG: 10)



Exploring skills are important because it is critical for people who share information (content) and express emotions to know that the listener is accurately interpreting the message and any emotional feeling associated with it. One of the main reasons people share information stems from the motivation of wanting to be understood.

Exploring skills are also effective in eliciting a person's understanding of their situation and their role in it. It is an essential method for assessing danger threats to a child and parental protective capacities.

Exploring skills operate with the underlying premise that persons have the capacity for self-insight, problem-solving and growth (or

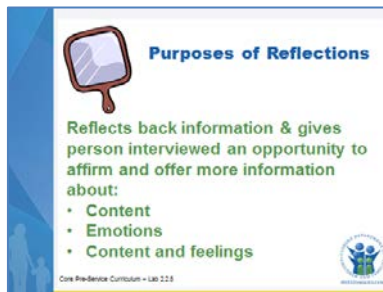
change). These skills help the person being interviewed to explore further aspects of his or her own experience, improving his or her understanding of the situation. This leads to developing a more realistic and active approach to solving problems. This is the beginning of reasonable efforts to plan with families, not for families, when their children are not being adequately protected.

Even though these skills will be used through-out all phases of your interview, they are heavily used during the exploring phase of the interview when we want to know what is happening in the family currently, whether it is a hotline counselor discussing someone's concerns about suspected child maltreatment, a child protection investigation, a case manager's visit to a family home where there is an active safety plan in place, or a foster care specialist's visit with foster parents.

Exploring skills are a further method for demonstrating empathy. They are a way for the child welfare professional to understand the family member's internal frame of reference, to get inside the other person's thoughts and feelings.

It is a way to hear the other person non-judgmentally and accurately. At the exploring stage of an interview, it is not the time to advise, tell, agree or disagree with the perspectives of the person being interviewed.

Display Slide 2.2.5 (Lab PG: 11)



Reflections are a straightforward way to share back with a person what you hear them saying. It is an opportunity for them to clarify

what they mean if you don't repeat information correctly, and it is an invitation to tell more.

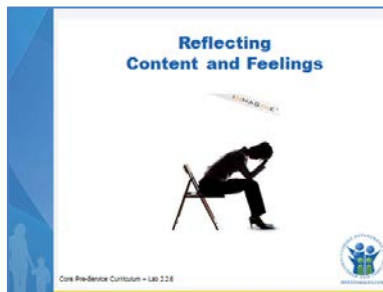
Reflecting content includes the beliefs, opinions, events and facts of the person's message. The reflection back by the worker should be brief, a paraphrase; it should never be longer than the speaker's original statement.

So, for example, a parent has just described a difficult morning routine with her child, and you repeat her situation back to her, "So your son has a lot of trouble getting up in the mornings and as a result, he often misses the bus to school."

Reflecting emotions is a way to accurately identify and label the person's emotional state, and then communicate your understanding of it. This has much value when a person's frame of reference is associated with anger, disappointment or discouragement. When the worker is able to acknowledge such feelings without being judgmental or confrontational, the family member is able to shift their energy to further exploration of the problem.

So with the son who oversleeps, you reflect to the mom, "And you get very frustrated when he misses the bus as you have to take him to school, and then you are late for work."

Display Slide 2.2.6



The person being interviewed may or may not directly state how the situation makes them feel, it may be implicit in their voice tone

or other body language. It is alright for the worker to voice an “educated guess” as this gives the family member a chance to clarify, “Yes that is how it makes me feel, or no, it makes me feel this way.”

When there is a discrepancy between what is being said and body language, that presents a different opportunity for the child welfare professional, as in the following example:

“I hear you saying that you have trouble getting your son up in the mornings and you are smiling about it.” The mother responds, “When he oversleeps, his uncle has to come get him and take him to school and he does not like his uncle’s red car! He is so embarrassed to ride in it.”

In this example, the mother’s response gives you more information, and a chance to reflect, “His uncle is good source of support for you.” In this example, a simple reflection helped to discover a strength and resource that this mother has available, a family member she is willing to call on when she needs help, and who is willing to step up and help her.

Reflections convey that you are listening, that you understand what is being said. This strengthens and builds a productive relationship.

Let’s do some examples together, and then you will have an exercise. Give me back a reflection of content and emotions for the following:

“I feel like it doesn’t matter what I do, things just aren’t going to get any better.”

Response: “You have tried many things, and are feeling discouraged.”

“Well when the baby was born, he just up and left. So now, it’s just me and the baby.”

Response: “His sudden departure surprised you. You’re lonely.”

Let’s take a look at **Lab PGS: 12-16**. This is a useful reference guide to descriptors for “affective states” otherwise known as “feelings.” It is useful to go beyond the usual descriptors of happy, sad, worried, and mad as it better individualizes and describes with more precision the person’s affective state.

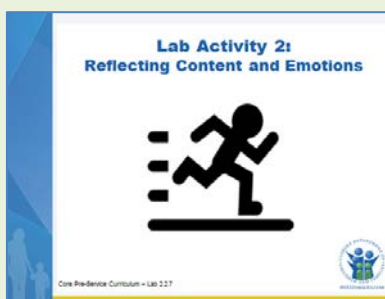
Trainer should take a brief walk through each of the titles.

Now you are going to have an opportunity to use this reference material on “words for affective states.”



Activity 2: Reflecting Content and Emotions

Display Slide 2.2.7



Time:

Materials:

- **Lab PG: 17-19**

Purpose: An important step in the development of this skill is the opportunity to practice recognition of many different affective states. Doing this independently, taking time to consider the person’s affective state and searching for the best descriptor, provides a foundation for practicing this skill verbally. It should help to expand a participant’s repertoire of descriptive words to use. The appropriate recognition of affective states relates to reframing and at a later point in skill development, is essential for conversations about “decisional balance” and “change talk” related to motivational interviewing.

Trainer Instructions:

- *Participants should write out a reflection that conveys the content and emotions of the statements in this exercise.*
- *Encourage them to use the best descriptor word they can find from the lists provided of “Affective States” in their participant guide.*
- *Advise them not to use the same descriptor twice, and tell them not to use the word “worry”!*
- *Allow sufficient time for completion and debrief with whole group, each item.*
- *Ask participants to share the words they selected for “affective” state for each.*
- *Have a brief discussion as to whether participants found this exercise to be difficult and if so, in what way.*

Skill Practice: Reflecting Content and Feelings, Trainer Version

1. “I’ve been looking for a job for three weeks and nothing seems to be open.”
Reflection: “You have been actively searching and are feeling discouraged.”
2. “I don’t know, the night before he left, he beat me up pretty bad. I don’t know what he’d do if he thought I put the law on him to get child support.”
Reflection: He was violent towards you in the past and you are quite concerned that he might hurt you again if you filed for child support.”
3. “My husband and I have talked about it and we don’t feel that we could adopt a child with a severe handicap. We have one handicapped child now and really don’t feel like we could handle another, both from the financial and emotional points of view.”
Reflection: “You and your husband have discussed adopting another child with a severe handicap but and are doubtful that you have the skills or resources necessary.”
4. “What with all the complications and everything, the doctor made me quit work and stay in bed the last couple of months before she was born. I really got behind with all my bills and of course I lost my job.”
Reflection: “You did what the doctor ordered you to do and now feel overwhelmed with making ends meet.”
5. “I’m pretty lucky because my mother can take care of Javon, and I

don't have to worry about him while I'm at work."

Reflection: "You are confident about your mom's care for Javon while you work."

6. "I checked into night school, and there's a bookkeeping course I could take. The only thing is, who would take care of the kids while I'm gone?"

Reflection: "You are ready to gain skills but are stumped about child care."

7. "Ms. Johnson from the employment office called me this morning and said she thinks I have a good chance at that job I applied for last week. They must be interested, because they want to interview me again. Wouldn't it be great if they really did hire me?"

Reflection: "You have a second job interview and are feeling quite excited."

8. "Well, you know I got that job I applied for last week, and I'm supposed to start Monday. So, I've been trying to find some place for Donny and Darcy to stay when they get out of school until I get home from work. I've called about 10 different places and they don't have any room, or they can't pick them up from school. So, I'm kind of afraid I won't find any place by Monday."

Reflection: "You landed a job, have looked into a lot of places for after-school child care and are worried you're running out of time to make arrangements."

9. "I think it could be a lot of fun to have a baby and take care of it. I've always really enjoyed kids. But I really don't think he's going to give me money. I mean he wasn't really thrilled with the idea, anyway. I don't know how I could support it if I did keep the baby."

Reflection: "You would enjoy caring for the baby but are doubtful that the baby's father would provide the financial support that you would need."

10. "I don't like the way that woman is taking care of him. I thought you said he's getting taken care of in foster care as good as in his own home. I think I should take him back home. She just doesn't treat him right."

Reflection: You're frustrated because you want your son to get what he needs.

11. "I don't know where the children's father is, I haven't heard from him in five years, not since he ran off. He's never called or tried to see the

kids or sent any money or anything.”

Reflection: Their father hasn’t been around for some time and you are angry he hasn’t contacted them or helped support them.

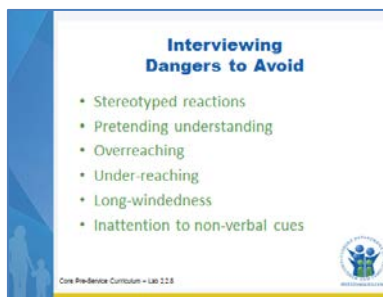
12. “Her teacher said that she seems to have a photographic memory. Yet in math they’re using flash cards and she can’t seem to memorize them as well. But she can look at one word when you’re reading and she doesn’t have to be told that word anymore. If she doesn’t know it one time and you tell her, she knows it then.”

Reflection: You’re confused as to why your daughter is struggling in math when she has such good memorization skills in reading.



Activity STOP

Display Slide 2.2.8 (Lab PG: 20)



Here are some common challenges to avoid as you learn and practice reflective listening:

Stereotyped Reactions are constantly repeating a phrase such as “you feel that...” or “you’re worried that...” or “you’re saying that...”

Pretending Understanding. If you are not following what is being said, it’s better to say “I didn’t understand what you said,” or “I’m a bit confused. What are you saying?”

Overreaching means to go far beyond what the person has expressed such as by giving psychological explanations or interpretations that might be exaggerated.

Under-reaching means to repeatedly miss the feeling that are being conveyed, inaccurately identify it, or to understate the strength of the feeling, for example the difference between being agitated and outraged.

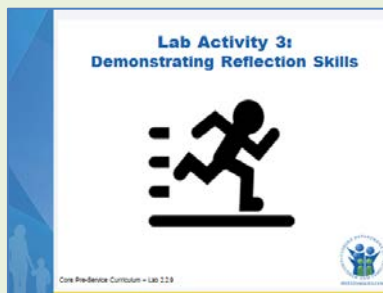
Long-windedness means to give too long or too complex a response. Simple responses are the most effective.

Inattention to non-verbal cues. Facing or leaning away from the speaker, not maintaining eye contact, looking tense, or presenting a “closed” posture should be avoided. A good reflection is of little use when the non-verbal language of the child welfare professional is incongruent.



Activity 3: Demonstrating Reflection Skills

Display Slide 2.2.9



Materials:

- **Lab PGS: 21-22**

Time:

Purpose: This activity is to give participants an opportunity to actually practice reflection skill in a safe environment. It will also serve as an introduction to giving and receiving feedback from a peer.

Trainer Instructions:

Review with the participants the “Guidelines for Effective Feedback” in their participant guide. Explain that in this first exercise, they will give feedback based on their experience as the person being listened to. In later exercises,

there will be a third participant in the group who will play the role of observer and who will provide the feedback.

Guidelines for Effective Feedback

- *Specific*
It isolates the practice of behavior to be affirmed or changed.
- *Behavioral*
It explicitly describes observable actions and behaviors.
- *Useful*
It helps the receiver know what to do differently.
- *Helpful*
The motives for giving the feedback are to be helpful, not harmful.
- *“I” Message*
The sender needs to claim ownership of the message when providing effective feedback.

Trainer Instructions:

- *Arrange participants in pairs.*
- *Each person will share their personal topic with the other, and the “listener” will practice only reflective listening skills – remind them they are not allowed to ask any questions at this point.*
- *After person shares their topic, both persons should discuss each of the four points*
- *Each team should take about 10 minutes per person.*
- *Debrief with the group as a whole, discussing what aspects of this exercise they found difficult.*



Activity STOP

Display Slide 2.2.10 (Lab PG: 23)



Reframing is an empathetic reflection of a purposeful, positive intention.

In the business of helping people achieve change, reframing is both a skill and a tool that child welfare professionals can use in their work with families. Reframing is a way to focus on the purposeful, positive intention or characteristic being expressed through family members' behaviors, feelings or statements.

Reframing does not mean that we agree or endorse the family member's behavior. It is a technique used by the worker to help the family member consider whether the family member's behavior is really congruent with what the family member wants, particularly for their child or children.

Display Slide 2.2.11



Here are some simple examples to illustrate reframing of a parent's negative statement about a child's behavior in a conversation with a parent.

- A Defiant child can be reframed as independent or persistent.

Parent: "I'm tired of my child continually disobeying me. He never listens to me the first time I tell him something."

Worker: "Your son is very persistent and independent. You also want him to be respectful."

- A Bossy child can be reframed as a natural leader.

Parent: "Jasmin is constantly telling her sisters what to do. If something's not done properly they're all going to hear about it from her."

Worker: "Jasmin sounds like a natural leader and wants to make sure things are done right."

- A Sneaky child can be reframed as = Is an Inventive Child

Parent: "Tomas is so underhanded and sneaky. I caught him paying his younger brother a dollar so he could get out of doing his weekly chores."

Worker: "So Tomas is quite inventive . . . he's not going to be discouraged very easily."

- An attention-seeking child can be reframed as effectively communicates needs

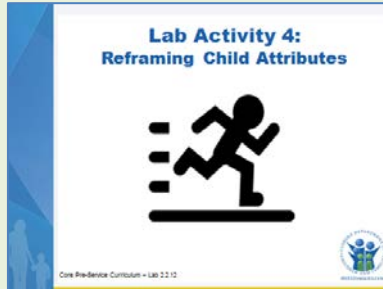
Parent: "Anna is constantly climbing into my lap or pulling on my dress. It's mommy this, or mommy that, incessantly!"

Worker: "So despite her young age, Anna is very good at telling you what she needs."



Lab Activity 4: Reframing Child Attributes

Display Slide 2.2.12



Time:

Materials:

- **Lab PG: 24-25**

Purpose: This begins to develop the communication skills that require a deeper level of thinking than attending behaviors and reflections. It is a communications intervention that sets the stage for motivational interviewing. This exercise can also help to broaden participant's perspectives beyond the beliefs and values that they have learned from their own families.

Trainer Instructions:

- *Participants should record a positive reframe for each negative term associated with a child.*
- *Tell participants if they are stumped, skip over the word. They will get the answers to fill in when the exercise is debriefed as a group.*
- *Allow sufficient time for completion and debrief with whole group, each item.*
- *Have a brief discussion as to whether participants found this exercise to be difficult and if so, in what way.*
- *Were certain words especially hard, and why do they think that was?*

Trainer Notes: Challenge participants to consider whether some of the words were hard to reframe because of stereotypes that are associated with their own deeply held belief system.

Skills Practice: Reframing Child Attributes, Trainer Version

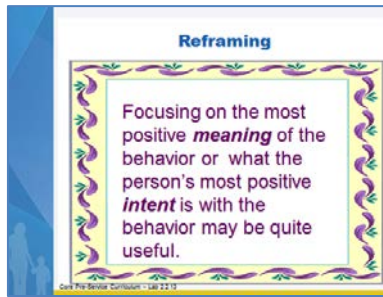
Negative Perspective	Positive Reframe
Clingy	Affectionate

Compulsive	Efficient, Attention to Detail
Conceited	Confident, Values self
Crabby	Communicates needs
Dawdles	Easy going, Mindful
Defiant	Strong beliefs, Courageous
Demanding	Assertive
Dependent	Connected
Doodles	Creative, Artistic
Dramatic	Emotionally aware, Expressive
Fearful	Thoughtful, Careful
Foolish	Fun loving
Fussy about food/clothes	Specific tastes, strong sense of self
Goofy	Joyful, Entertaining
Impulsive	Spontaneous
Loud	Exuberant, Confident
Manipulative	Gets own needs met
Mean	Power seeking
Messy	Practicing skills, Learning
Mouthy	Expressive
Naughty	Independent, Exploring boundaries
Nosey	Curious, Inquisitive
Not Focusing	Processing various information
Picky eater	Discriminating tastes
Quiet	Thoughtful, Reflective
Rigid	Keen sense of order
Shy	Inner directed, values trust
Silly	Good sense of Humor
Spoiled	Needs clear boundaries, Loved
Stubborn	Determined, Persistent
Talkative	Good communicator
Talks-Back	Courageous, Honest
Tattletale	Seeks justice



Activity STOP

Display Slide 2.2.13



In reframing, the “lens” with which the worker views an adult behavior or statement is changed in order to get at the underlying positive intent or characteristic of the family member. It is a way for the child welfare professional to see the behavior from behind the person’s eyes, or when it is difficult to find a positive intent, to relate to a positive characteristic of a parent, such as, “I know how much you care about your child.”

With reframing, we can help a family member consider that their behavior is not congruent with their intentions or a positive characteristic they have, and may actually have an adverse consequence for their children and family relationships. Reframing is a way to begin to “develop discrepancy” with a family member about what they verbalize and their subsequent actions or behaviors.

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The key is that the child welfare worker helps to identify the underlying intent of the behavior, or a related personal quality, through reframing as a first step, and then is able to help the

family member explore and articulate the impact of that behavior. Without the first step of identifying positive intent or a positive characteristic, it is unlikely that the worker will be able to have a further conversation with the family member to explore the actual consequences of their actions.

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Exploring skills include the ability to help others clarify the depth of their feelings and emotions. There is a difference between the feelings a person is able to self-identify and express, the tip of the iceberg, and the related underlying feelings that are below the surface.

Without exploring the underlying feelings, the opportunity to move towards solutions and changes in behavior will be missed. Consider this example:

A teenage child in a family you are interviewing says, “My father is always checking up on me like a criminal. It makes me so mad!”

Reframe: “Your father wants to be sure that you are safe, and you are feeling hurt that he doesn’t trust you.”

In this example, notice how the reframe proposes a positive intent for the father’s behavior, and suggests a deeper underlying feeling (hurt) that the teenager is experiencing. So the teenager begins to reframe her own thinking, “He does care about me, and I want him to trust me.”

Both aspects of this reframe help to set the stage for the worker to then ask the teenager, “What might be some ways for you to help your dad trust you?”

Second example:

“My husband doesn’t spend any time with us. It’s work, work, work and that’s all he does.”

Reframe: “He is a good provider for your family; you would like him to have more quality time with you and the kids.”



How does this reframe change the intent of the husband?

Endorse:

- Good provider
- Working hard because he cares about his family
- Taking care of the basic needs of his family

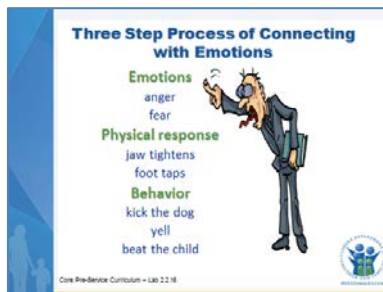


How does the reframe turn the thinking towards other feelings that the wife might be experiencing?

Endorse:

- She feels rejected or resentful

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There are a few key points to be made about “emotions” and the connection to behaviors. These points are true for all persons, meaning our families and us as child welfare professionals.

Emotions are the label for how we interpret and experience any situation. They are intuitive and instinctive, unless you have grown up in a home where it was not okay to express or talk openly about them – such as in the case of a families impacted by addictive behaviors, particularly substance abuse. Individuals raised in those circumstances typically have trouble recognizing what emotion they are feeling or in expressing emotions in general.

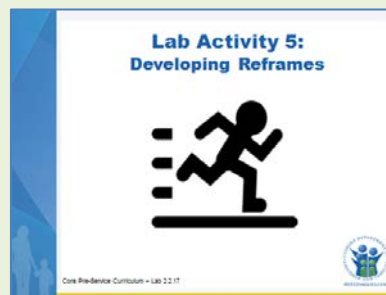
Emotions result in a physiological response, which is then further manifested as a behavior. So the emotion is anger or fear, the physical response is a jaw tightening, and the behavior is kicking the dog.

Active listening skills are used by child welfare professionals to assist in exploring feelings associated with behaviors. They do not require that the child welfare professional be a clinician or a therapist.



Lab Activity 5: Developing Reframes

Display Slide 2.2.17



Time:

Materials:

- **Lab PG: 26-27**

Purpose: This exercise will help participants apply information they have just learned about the difference between expressed and underlying feelings. It is important for them to process this individually, not as a group.

Trainer Instructions:

- *Instruct participants that they will be completing, individually, a list of individual statements. The purpose is to identify the expressed feelings and provide a reflection “opening the door” for exploring probable underlying feelings.*
- *Provide them with the example: “I didn’t mean to get into a fight, but some of the other kids were making fun of me...saying my mom is a bad mother because she can’t take care of me, calling her names. I couldn’t let them get away with that.”*
 - *Expressed feeling(s): furious, angry, humiliated*
 - *Feelings to explore: hurt, fearful, doubtful*
 - *Reflection: “You wanted to defend your mother; but you’re wondering why you got so angry over what they said.”*
- *Debrief by reading through each example, asking participants to provide their responses and discussing their answers.*

EXPLORING FEELINGS: TRAINER VERSION

1. John and I feel good about adopting. It’s something we want to do, but I guess we both still think about what will happen if Jimmy and Alicia don’t get along. Alicia says she wants a little brother, but she doesn’t really know what it will be like. What if she can’t adjust?

Expressed feeling(s): joyful, excited, afraid

Feelings to explore: inferior/incompetent, insecure

Reflection: “You’re excited about the prospect of adopting; but you’re also doubtful of your ability to successfully parent Alicia through any sibling rivalry.”

2. I’ve tried everything I know to do, and now she’s run away again. I can’t control her. Maybe it would be better if you put her in a foster home. Maybe they can figure out what to do with her.

Expressed feeling(s): frustration, disappointment

Feelings to explore: guilt, inferior, confused

Reflection: “You’re frustrated and at a loss at what to do; you’re having doubts you’ll ever manage her behavior.”

3. I can’t believe this is happening! I never thought anyone would want to adopt me. It’s almost too good to be true!

Expressed feeling(s): joyful, excited

Feelings to explore: fear, inferior, suspicious

Reflection: “You’re excited to become part of a new family; but you’re

worried that things might not work out.”

Instructions: In your small groups, discuss different ways to reframe the following statements. Based on your group’s consensus, record the most favorable one to share with the rest of the class.

1. You don’t believe me. Why should I talk to you?
Reframe: “Trust is very important to you.”
“You want me to know you’re honest so you can be open with me.”
2. Coming to these meetings is a waste of time.
Reframe: “Your time is important to you.”
“You’re frustrated and you’re serious about getting help.”
3. You people don’t know what you’re doing!
Reframe: “You want your family to get the right help.”
“You want to have a better understanding of what we’re asking for.”
4. I’ve said before that I’d stop drinking, but this time I mean it.
Reframe: “You’re really serious about stopping drinking.”
“Getting and staying sober is very important to you.”
5. I have no friends, I’m all alone and life is miserable.
Reframe: “You want to connect with people.”
“Your mental and emotional health is important to you.”
6. Every time something goes wrong, they blame me.
Reframe: “You want people to know you’re competent.”
“You want people to have faith in you.”
7. The kids walk all over her and I have to be the heavy.
Reframe: “You want the kids to see you as loving, too.”
“You want to share the disciplining responsibility.”
8. Why shouldn’t I do drugs, all my friends do?
Reframe:
“Being accepted by your friends is important to you.”
9. My wife and I just don’t talk anymore?
Reframe: “You want to feel close to your wife again.”
“Spending time with your wife is important to you.”
10. I don’t understand why people keep forcing me to do things. They need to leave me alone.

Reframe: "You're very independent and self-reliant."
"People should respect an individual's space."

11. He keeps promising not to hit me anymore, but he can't help it. I really want to try and make it work with him.

Reframe: "You want him to get the help he needs so he can stay a part of your life."

"The relationship is very important to you; you want help in making it work."

12. My wife and I were fine until you started coming around. Now she won't listen to me.

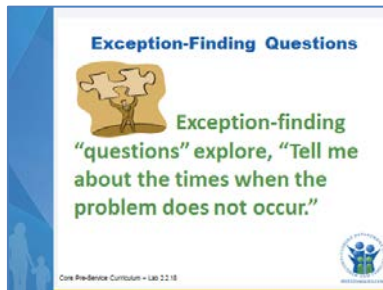
Reframe: "Having your wife believe in you is important to you."

"Having a healthy marriage is important to you."



Activity STOP

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This is the first type of question that you are being introduced to. Notice that it is at the bottom of the "exploring skills" list in the continuum of engagement behaviors.

The reason that it is at the bottom of the list is that it is anticipated that all of the other skills will be used to build enough rapport and trust so that "the problem" is shared by the family member. This question comes after the child welfare professional has demonstrated empathy for the situation that the person is in, and has explored the person's feelings associated the problem.

The exception-finding question comes when the person being

interviewed is at a point where they see that the problem behavior is at odds with their intent, or a related positive, personal characteristic.

So here are some examples:

“You have been actively looking for a job, and are feeling quite discouraged right now. Tell me, the last time you landed a job, how did that happen?”

This question assumes that the person has been successful with job searches in the past, and that there might be useful information learned that can be repeated, building on the person’s prior expertise and skills.

“When your boyfriend has been drinking, he gets violent and beats you up. Tell me, the last time he was drinking and did not beat you up, how did that come about?”

This question assumes that there are times when the boyfriend does drink, but does not beat her up. It leaves the door open for her to consider whether she takes actions that protect her from being hurt, or whether he takes actions to stop himself. That can lead to further discussion to determine whether what worked before to stop the problem from occurring can be used in the future.

“Tell me about the times when your toddler does not get what she wants, and does not throw a temper tantrum.”

Again, notice that the assumption is that there are times that the problem does not occur. The parent might notice that the temper tantrums only occur at dinner time, or in the mornings getting ready for child care, or may be associated with another family member’s presence. This information helps the parent think about what might be a solution for the temper tantrums.

When exploring an exception to the problem behavior, there is a general sequence recommended to further assess why the behavior is different:

1. Explore what time of day, where it happens, who is around, what is going on.
2. Move to the person with the behavior problem and discuss what is different
3. Last, move to focus on the person being interviewed. How is their behavior different when the “problem” is not as severe?

The same detailed information that is gathered for the actual problem is gathered with respect to the times when the problem does not occur. All of this information will be important for purposes of safety planning, to know when a danger threat is likely to be operating and when it is not.

Display Slide 2.2.19 (Lab PG: 28)



Before we conclude this discussion of exploring skills, let's introduce the skill of “silence.”



When I ask you a question, and then remain silent even if everyone in the room appears stumped, what happens?

Endorse and elicit:

- Someone feels compelled to answer/jump in
- Gives us time to think
- Silence can be uncomfortable
- Eventually one of us will make the effort to answer



When we are exploring difficult situations and circumstances with families, the power of silence is extremely useful. It gives the person being interviewed some time to think about what they want to say and it creates the expectation and pressure to “fill that void” of silence. If you hold your silence long enough, the person being interviewed will continue to offer information.

When you are discussing topics that the person might not have shared with others before, your “silence” conveys in a powerful way that you know they have important information and expertise, and you will patiently wait for them to share it.

While you are waiting for the family member to speak, it also gives you time to consider where to take the interview next. Is there something that has already been said that you want to further explore, such as “You said earlier your girlfriend can be quick tempered, can you tell me more about that?”

While silence is very effective, there is an appropriate span of time to wait before a productive “uncomfortable-ness” turns counterproductive, into being perceived by the individual as rudeness and/or as a power play. Most people estimate 6- 10 seconds is about the longest period of time to wait on someone before asking a follow-up question or moving on to another topic. One other caveat to keep in mind, the more emotionally upset the individual being interviewed appears to be the shorter the span of silence should be. We always want to keep in mind that for individuals experiencing post-traumatic stress simply asking a sensitive question can trigger a reaction. So when using silence continually assess its effectiveness.

When you are first practicing active listening skills, silence will be your best friend! As you become more skilled, you will be better able to listen intently to what the family member is saying and know how to steer and focus the conversation in a responsive and conversational way, without having to constantly be thinking about “What do I do next?”

We have now completed your introduction the types of interviewing skills used in the first phase of an interview. In the next unit we will discuss the opening phase of the interview, and then you will be prepared to practice the skills we are learning today with each other.



Lab Activity 6: Demonstrating Exploring Skills

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Time:

Materials:

- **Lab PG: 29**

Purpose: This activity is to give participants an opportunity to actually practice reflection skills in a safe environment. It will also serve as an introduction to giving and receiving feedback from a peer. In this exercise the focus is on the listening skills of attending behavior, use of reflections and appropriate use of silence. It is not the goal for the interviewer to “help solve the person’s problem.” The goal is to be a good listener.

Trainer Instructions:

Review again with the participants the “Guidelines for Effective Feedback” in their participant guide. Explain that in this first exercise, one person will be in role of observer and they will give feedback based on their experience as the observer, and recorder of feedback.

Guidelines for Effective Feedback

- Specific
It isolates the practice of behavior to be affirmed or changed.

- Behavioral
It explicitly describes observable actions and behaviors.
- Useful
It helps the receiver know what to do differently.
- Helpful
The motives for giving the feedback are to be helpful, not harmful.
- “I” Message
The sender needs to claim ownership of the message when providing effective feedback.

Trainer Instructions:

- *Arrange participants in groups of three. They will take turns as the person sharing the personal topic, the listener, and the observer.*
- *Each person will share their personal topic with the “listener” practicing as many of the exploring skills as possible. In this exercise the focus is on the listening skills of attending behavior, use of reflections and appropriate use of silence.*
- *After person shares their topic, both persons should discuss each of the four points*
- *Each team should take about 10 minutes per person.*
- *Debrief with the group as a whole, discussing what aspects of this exercise they found difficult.*



Activity STOP

Unit 2.3: Opening Phase of the Interview

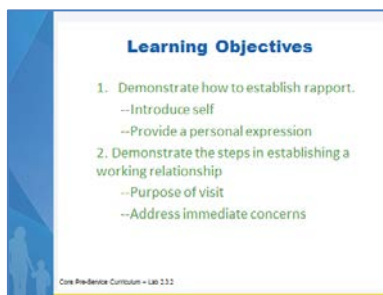
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Time:

Unit Overview: The purpose of this unit is to go back to the phases of an interview and discuss how the exploring skills are used in the opening phase of the interview. Participants will use the information learned to watch a video of two different styles opening an interview. They will be expected to observe interview openings as part of their child welfare professional shadowing and observations during their field days.

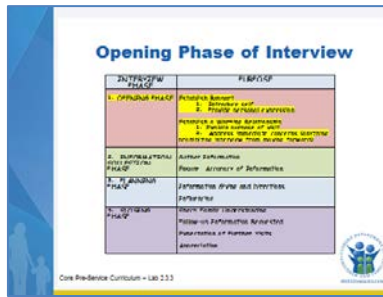
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Learning Objectives:

1. Demonstrate how to establish rapport
 - a. Introduce self
 - b. Provide a personal expression
2. Demonstrate the steps in establishing a working relationship
 - a. Purpose of visit
 - b. Address immediate concerns (anything preventing interview from moving forward)

Display Slide 2.3.3 (Lab PG: 30)



Trainer Notes: You will be referring to the flip chart created in lab 1, activity 1, on “Feelings and Emotions” associated with the guided imagery of being the focus of a child abuse investigation.

As we have already discussed, having a child welfare professional knocking on one’s door and questioning one’s ability as a caregiver can result in strong emotions that are tied to how they perceive the child welfare professional, the agency and any recommendations for interventions as a whole.

The first child welfare knocking on the door, the CPI, is likely to have the strongest response from families. By the time the investigation is completed and a family is referred for case management, some of the initial surprise and anger may have worn off. Even at this point however, as safety management and ongoing services are non-negotiable for families when a child has been determined to be unsafe, the family may still be unhappy about the case manager’s involvement.

All child welfare professionals need to be prepared to build rapport with families who may not feel the same way about us. In your specialty tracks, you will be learning about the preparation work that should occur before you get to any home and the first encounter. For now, we are going to focus on the exploring skills you will use to build rapport during that first encounter.



Looking back the guided imagery we did in the first lab, and the “Feelings and Emotions” you had, what would you have wanted to hear from the child welfare professional to minimize those negative feelings?

Elicit and endorse, leading participants to articulate all of the following:

- Greet the person in a manner that shows respect

- State your name, job title and the name of the agency you represent
- State the reason why you are making the contact
- State the purpose and outcome of the contact (participants may state this as “hear my side of the story” which would certainly be part of the purpose and outcome of contact)

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Your first goal is to establish rapport. After greeting the person with their title and last name (Mr., Mrs., Ms.) and introducing yourself, it is important to offer a personal expression. It may be as simple as “thank you for taking the time to listen to my concerns” or “thank you for allowing me to come in to talk you about this” or it may be a positive comment about something you have observed outside the home (e.g., such as how well-kept the lawn, what a nice porch they have, cute pet, etc.). It’s a small ice breaker, and should convey a positive note.

You want to have your “script” as to the reason for the contact well-memorized and practiced. For CPIs, generally the statement goes like this:

CPI: “Someone called the Department of Children and Families with concerns about the care of your children, and I am required to determine whether those concerns are valid or not. I want to work with you to assess your situation and if need be, assist you in making any changes necessary to keep your child safe in your home.”


CM: “I will be the person taking over responsibility for the safety plan that your family developed with the (CPI), and will work with you to figure out what supports or services will be helpful to your family to eliminate the problems that resulted in your children being unsafe.”

If a person is angry or hostile, you must help them work through it by acknowledging their feeling, and normalizing it. For some persons, one empathetic response may be sufficient. For others, it may take a few tries.

Display Slide 2.3.5 (Lab PG: 31)

Words to Build Rapport

<p>Words to build rapport</p> <p>Activate the shared experience</p> <p>I want to discuss your concerns with you</p> <p>You know the point in the movie</p> <p>What would you remember the conversation?</p> <p>I want to let you hear your concerns</p> <p>Even though what you're in is a person in your dream</p> <p>What would I do to solve your issue?</p>	<p>Let your support building</p> <p>I want to be involved in it. I feel alone</p> <p>I want to experience the heart-pumping</p> <p>I know the adventure is pretty much over</p> <p>What did you do to make someone survive?</p> <p>I want to keep your life</p> <p>I want to know something and just do it as an act of courage</p> <p>I want to see you and what you're doing right now. I want to see</p>
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Core Proficiency Curriculum – Unit 2.5



Review the following chart which is in their Participant Guide, helping participants understand that their choice of words to use will make a difference.

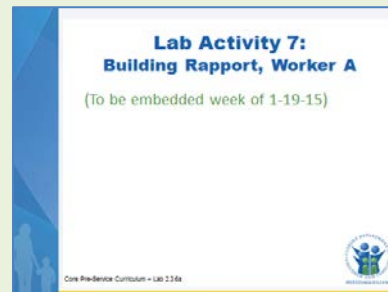
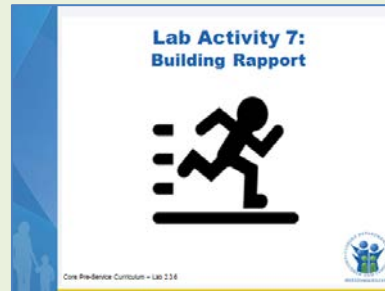
(Lab PG: 31)

Words to build rapport	Vs. Not rapport building...
Someone has shared concerns	Someone has accused you of child abuse
I need to discuss these concerns with you	I am responsible for investigating your family
You have the right to be heard	I have the authority to gather this information
What would make someone be concerned?	What did you do to make someone concerned?
I really need to hear your perspectives	I need to hear your side
I don't know what it's like to be a parent in your shoes	I know a lot about parenting and child development even though I am not a parent
What could I do to gain your trust?	I can't help the way that last investigator/case manager came across to you



Lab Activity 7: Building Rapport

Display Slides 2.3.6, a and b



Time:

Materials:

- **Lab PG: 332**

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to show two brief interviews conducted by a child protection investigator; one with a defensive posture towards a mother who is angry about being the subject of an abuse investigation and the other with demonstration of reflective listening skills that effectively defuse the mother and lead to more information sharing, more rapport building, and a plan for next steps.

Trainer Instruction:

- Ask participants to watch each video and record their observations on **Lab PG: 32**.
- The observations are for effective behaviors observed and what the participants believe would have enhanced the worker's effectiveness.
- Debrief the exercise by going through observations of each video. Main points to take away:
 - Worker in first video got very self-defensive. She was not able to effectively hear and empathetically respond to mother's anger

and fear.

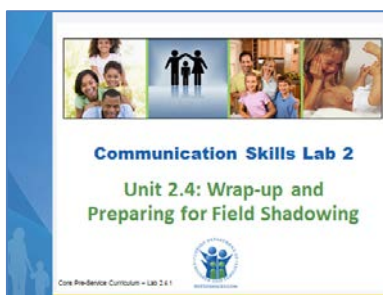
- *Worker in second video stayed attuned to how mother was feeling, repeating back content and emotions. When mother asked how she would feel, she was honest (and brief) in saying, “Yes, I would be angry too.”*



Activity STOP

Unit 2.4: Wrap-up and Preparing for Field Shadowing

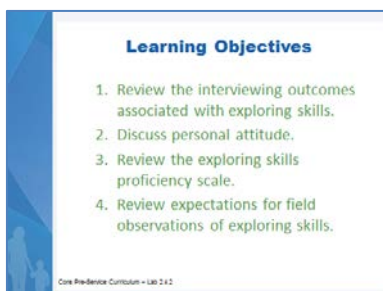
Display Slide 2.4.1



Time:

Unit Overview: The purpose of this unit is to go back to the phases of an interview and discuss how the exploring skills are used in the opening phase of the interview. Participants will use the information learned to watch a video of two different styles opening an interview. They will be expected to observe interview openings as part of their child welfare professional shadowing and observations during their field days.

Display Slide 2.4.2



Learning Objectives:

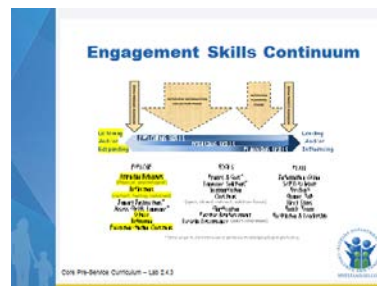
1. Learning Objectives
2. Review the interviewing outcomes associated with exploring skills.
3. Discuss personal attitude.
4. Review the exploring skills proficiency scale.
5. Review expectations for field observations of exploring skills.



All of the exploring skills that we have covered today are geared for “active listening.” We have only discussed the use of one type of question thus far, the exception-finding question.

Exploring questions when used skillfully give the person being listened to a sense of fairness, being heard and being respected. At this point, both the interviewer and the person being interviewed can progress to the “focusing” skills, which is getting down to specific details necessary for complete information gathering.

Display Slide 2.4.3



You have only been just introduced to exploring skills, but how do you think they will help you, the child welfare professional, achieve having productive conversations with parents?

Endorse and elicit each of the following points:

- It will help me convey empathy
- It will help me keep my mindset open about the parent
- Help me maintain a positive attitude
- Will help the parent not feel judged
- Will help the parent feel less defensive



Keeping our emotions and attitude in check is going to be important throughout all of our communications with families, and will be especially difficult when we know children have been hurt.

There will be times when we are dealing with families in crises, and that is likely to increase the parents'/caregivers' feeling and potential resistance to us.



Given what we have learned so far, what are some strategies that will work for you when you are interviewing a family in crises?

Endorse and elicit:

- *Remain calm*
- *Stay focused on what I need to accomplish*
- *Remember to breath*
- *Allow family to vent, use my reflection skills*
- *Think “I would be angry too if I were in their shoes.”*

Display Slide 2.4.4 (**Lab PG: 33**)



Having productive conversations with families and building productive working relationships requires that we be vigilant with our own attitude. Attitude matters in particular when we are reframing, otherwise our exploring skills will not be viewed by the family as “genuine.”

It is through a keen sense of self-awareness that we will know whether we need to do an attitude check. Remember the iceberg about emotions; many of our feelings operate below the sea level, at an unconscious level. While we may not be aware of our non-verbal signals, the family member being interviewed will pick up on our signals instinctively.

Review and lead discussion with participants on the “Tips for Maintaining a Positive Attitude,” **Lab PG: 33**.



Remember that:

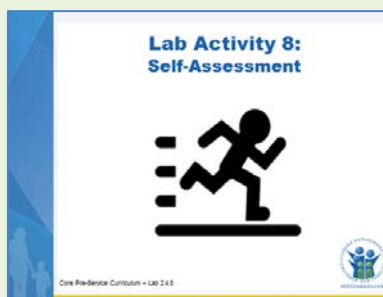
- No parent, spouse or caregiver intends to fail with caregiving responsibilities.

- Most caregivers do not intend to harm their children; abuse and neglect result from complex circumstances and conditions.
- Most related caregivers love their children and want to provide quality care.
- Despite their behavior, people who are angry and out of control are in psychological pain and feel vulnerable and afraid.
- Everyone wants to feel in touch and each person has a hand extended for a connection, although it may be well-concealed.
- All behavior is meaningful; don't disregard what any behavior is trying to express or the effects of environment on behavior.
- Most people can change, given sufficient support and assistance.
- Many parents who abuse and neglect their children also were abused and neglected. Trauma can have a profound, ongoing impact on their current life experiences.



Lab Activity 8: Maintaining Self-Awareness

Display Slide 2.4.5



Time:

Materials:

- **Lab PG: 34-35**

Purpose: This is an individual activity that is intended to help participants self-

reflect about their personal reactions when they experience the different feelings that they might experience in their child welfare work. This will help them know when they need to an “attitude check.” They will write record their self-assessment, and will be asked to update it after their field experience days.

Trainer Instructions:

Have participants look at the “Self-Assessment” tool in their participant guide.

Walk through the first two examples:

Emotion: When I feel accepted

*Physically: My body feels relaxed
I feel calm inside*

*Behavior: I feel free to be myself
I can let my guard down*

Emotion: When I feel scared

*Physically: My mouth dries ups
There are butterflies in my stomach*

*Behavior: I run away
I talk to someone who is understanding
I am unable to concentrate
I withdraw*

Have participants complete the self-assessment in their participant guide. They will complete the self-assessment for the feelings of “anxious, scared, disgusted.

Debrief by letting participants know that they will consider what emotions they felt during field observations, and whether they need to update their self-assessment. Reassure participants that such feelings are normal, and should be expected. That said, in order to be an effective listener, they need to be able to tune in to their own emotions both for the benefit of effective listening and attending to their own mental health. Otherwise, they will experience worker “burn out.”



Activity STOP

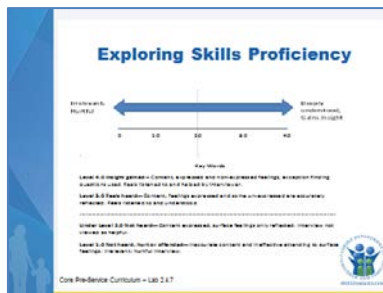
Display Slide 2.4.6



The quality of the information you gather from the interview will be directly proportional to the quality of your listening skills. Effective listening skills will result in the best information gathering.

How much the person you interview feels listened to is directly proportional to your proficiency with exploring skills. When a person interviewed feels truly heard, you are much more likely to walk away from the interview with useful information rather than crap.

Display Slide 2.4.7 (Lab PG: 36-37)



This slide shows a scale of exploring skills proficiency. If the interviewer's skills are a "4" shown on the far right of the continuum, it means that that they have succeeded in obtaining content as well as expressed and un-expressed feelings, and used exception finding skills. The person interviewed feels that they have been listened to, and helped by the interviewer. Moving to the left, a "3" depicts that content and feelings were expressed; some un-expressed feelings were also reflected. The

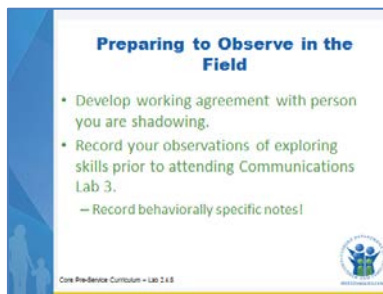
person interviewed feels listened to.

Exploring skills that are greater than a “2” have resulted in a person feeling listened to, and empowered.

Notice that skills that are under a “2” are associated with content only, and the interview is not viewed by the person interviewed as “helpful.” Information gathered from interviews where the interviewing skills are rated as under a “2” is generally less than sufficient.

An interview in which the exploring skills are so absent, there is ineffective listening, inaccurate content is gathered. The person interviewed feels that the interview was irrelevant and/or hurtful.

Display Slide 2.4.8



As you shadow child welfare professionals over the next few days, you will be recording your observations of exploring skills. A guide for recording your observations is in the Participant Guide; there are worksheets provided for observing up to three interviews.

Prior to shadowing a worker, be sure to spend a few minutes developing a working agreement.

Observation of exploring skills is also a way for you practice the observation skills that will be important in your everyday work. You will need to learn what your style of note taking is, and how to be precise with observed behaviors that illustrate important information about a family dynamic or condition.

Some workers are able to jot down words and remember the associated content; other workers find a need to be more detailed in their notes.

Trainer Notes: Review the “Working Agreement” information as well as the “Field Shadowing Observations” form that is in their participant guide (shown below). Emphasize the “observer role” and the need to avoid getting “caught up” in the conversation. Specifically tell them NOT to ask questions during their shadowing experiences but to discuss and process those experiences during classroom debrief times. Ask for and discuss any questions or concerns. Remind participants that the first part of Communications Lab 3 will be spent reviewing and discussing their field observations.



(Lab PG: 38)

Working Agreement

1. Explain to person you are shadowing that you have been tasked to observe their interviewing techniques. IF asked, feel free to share a copy of the field shadowing guide you are required to complete or share the topics verbally.
2. Ask them if they would introduce you to person being interviewed as a “trainee” who is there to observe them, not the family member!
3. Ask person you are shadowing to tell you a little bit about the interview they are going to conduct and what they want to accomplish.
4. Ask person you are shadowing if it is okay for you to jot down observations during their interview.
5. Remember that you are there to shadow only!
6. Do not use your cell phone for calls or texting during the interview.



(Lab PG: 39-44)

Your task is to be a keen observer of exploring skills used, to observe and record specific behaviors you noticed in as many of the following areas as possible. Instead of recording a “yes” or a “no,” record exactly what the interviewer did and the effect it had.

Also notice any other skills that were effective, for example specific questions asked even though we haven't yet covered focusing and planning skills.

You will likely find it difficult not getting "caught up" in the conversation from time to time, wanting to ask a question that wasn't asked. But remember, your focus right now is to observe, not participate so you can gain a better understanding of how and when to effectively use exploring skills. So, save your questions for the classroom debrief discussions (maybe 'Opportunities Missed'?). You should not be asking any during your observations at this point!

Example:

Recognize non-verbal cues: Instead of recording "yes," record that "worker noticed mother constantly looking towards room where infant was sleeping, and asked "I noticed that you seem to be worried about that little one waking up, do you want to go check on him?" Mother said yes and went to check on baby.

Opening of Interview

- Was greeting respectful?
- Was purpose explained?
- Was personal expression provided?
- Was purpose of meeting explained in an understandable way?
- If necessary, were immediate concerns addressed?

Attending Skills

- Non-verbal behaviors of worker that demonstrated listening:
- Recognition of non-verbal cues of person interviewed:

- Matching of non-verbal behavior of person interviewed:

Reflections

- Examples of content reflections:
- Examples of content and feeling reflections:

Reframing

- Examples of positive reframes:
- Exception-finding questions:
- Is there anything you would have done differently?
- Other observations of interviewing skills:

Field observation work sheets are provided for up to three interviews.

Display Slide 2.4.9



This concludes Communications Lab 2. In Lab 3, we will learn about focusing skills and will be introduced to child interviewing. In Lab 4, you will learn how to use exploring and focusing skills in interviews with adults.