

## Co counseling Exercise

These photographs, taken at Netcare Sunninghill Hospital on a Diversity Management workshop held on December 10 and 11, 2007, illustrate some points about posture. They are in chronological order



Here both ladies are holding their course booklets, which they do not need. One has a pen which is also not needed and could be used to point or as a “weapon. One lady has crossed her legs in a closed body gesture. Eye contact is good.



These two ladies are getting on well together and the rapport is obvious from their smiles and similar postures. Again the pen and writing pads seem superfluous, probably “props” that they are use in their professional lives.



All three ladies here have their feet crossed in closed gestures. The one on the right with the pen has her right hand on her left forearm in a comforting gesture. Although the upper part of her body is leaning forward towards the

speaker, indicating interest, she looks tense. Her hair probably gets in the way of her eyes and detracts from eye contact. The position of the chairs looks somewhat confrontational. The person in the centre, an observer, is too close and looks obtrusive.



The position of the chairs here allows the speaker and listener to look away and is not confrontational. Again we see the prop, a pen which is interfering with a gesture. Both ladies have their feet crossed in closed and comforting gestures. One seeks even more contact with herself by interdigitating.



These two seem to be getting on well together judging by the closeness of their feet. They both appear to have small personal bubbles. One lady breaks eyecontact as she writes, probably unnecessarily.



Again the prop of pen and paper, probably symbolizing the authority of the one who records what the other says. A familiar “tool of the trade” for a nurse or receptionist. While it may help to emphasize that what the spakers says is important and should be preserved, it may inhibit those who want to speak in

confidence and without a written record. It may have the same effect for such people as an audiorecorder. They may prefer to speak, “off the record.”

The lady on the right looks slightly uncomfortable in her hunched posture and clutching her leg. She has broken eyecontact. The lady on the left looks attentive and pleasant, but her somewhat eager and unrelaxed posture, with tight looking shoulders may be inhibiting the speaker. On the other hand she looks as if she is “hanging on the speaker’s every word.”



The lady is giving a the spaker her full attention. Her gaze is not warm, but interested and concerned Without knowing what was being said we cannot tell if this was appropriate.



The listener looks down, away from the speaker. However, the camera may have caught her blinking.



The speaker seems absorbed in what she is saying, so much so that she has broken eyecontact with the listener and is focusing on her pen.



The speaker is gesturing towards herself to emphasize how she thinks or feels. Again we see the unneeded pen (she has no writing paper). While the speaker seems to be leaning towards the listen, the listener seems to have drawn

herself back. The table is a small barrier between these two, with one corner between them. They ought to have moved further away from it, so that nothing intruded into the space between them.



The lady on the left has an interested, concerned and fairly neutral gaze.

Once again we see the notepad and pen which add nothing and probably get in the way.



From this point the participants were asked to discard pens and notepads and to try to maintain open gestured and avoid cross-body gestures.

Both ladies look a little uncomfortable. The one on the left is hugging herself with her

left hand. The lady on the right looks somewhat slumped in the chair.



An expressive and dramatic moment which has the full attention of the observer. She seems to be enjoying what the speaker is saying, but the speaker is not smiling. Is this a comedy show? Both ladies are unencumbered by pens and notepads and freer to gesticulate.



These participants have open postures. The one on the left now gestures without holding a pen. Both maintain eye contact.



These ladies are taking notice of each other and have put down pens and notepads. One the left we see closed gestures, crossed feet tucked under the chair and fidgety fingers. Having the chairs facing slightly away from each

other might have made the speaker feel more comfortable. She might have had less need to defend herself. Her participation seemed slightly held back and limited. She may have been more inclined to selfdisclose in a more private setting. Both ladies are smiling and the posture of the listener is good: open, interested and respectful.

The position of the chairs is good, but slightly too close; as shown by the lady on the right drawing



her feet backwards under the chair. The lady on the left seems tense; her hands joined and almost sandwiched between her knees. She appeared less tense when she had the prop of the pen and notepad.



Here we see an awkward moment. The lady on the left had been unable to keep her feet still and moved them often.

The lady on the right, who is listening, tucks her left foot around her right and clasps her hands together.

She is leaning forward slightly

in a posture that shows interest. She appears to be listening respectfully.

This exercise is from the Mandala Managing Diversity workshop. It followed a quick review of Active Listening skills. (This is written on the board in the picture above).

Had there been more time available, it would have been worthwhile for the facilitator to have demonstrated counseling and Active Listening skills with a volunteer in a fishbowl setting. After this to have done triads, (with participants taking turns in the roles of client, counselor, and observer), and then this co counseling exercise.

The facilitator showed these photographs to the participants next morning at the Check In session. They were used as a training aid. While this is fairly quick and easy to do, a few minutes of video would probably have been more beneficial.

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