

INTRODUCTION

The Emotionally Aware Interview is about more than asking good questions.

It's about becoming more aware, and using your *emotional* and your *intellectual* self.

It is not about demolishing or fighting an opponent. It is about creating, however briefly, a relationship. One that allows both you and your interviewee to perform to your best ability – to educate, inform and possibly entertain.

As with coaching or counselling, the focus is on working *with* the interviewee and facilitating the telling of *their* narrative.

Whether this is with the most media-savvy politician or a survivor of childhood care, you'll end up with a better product - a "truer" story, more open, honest, revealing and interesting.

Remember that only 7% of communication happens through words. 55% is body language. The rest is tone of voice.

So as an interviewer, be humble. There is much more going on – in potential support of your interview goals as well as threatening to trip you up – than you know.

Use it.

ACTIVE LISTENING

Trust and understanding are at the heart of a good interview. Active listening helps the safe environment in which that can take place.

- Match body posture and tone of voice.
- Eye contact.
- Show interest/stay connected.
- See it as a dance.

PRINCIPLES

- Trust, Integrity and Rapport.
- Empathy, Congruence and Unconditional Positive Regard – the Core Conditions.
- Chemistry, perseverance – and Magic.
- This is NOT about you, or your expertise. You are a facilitator, a conduit, mirror or funnel.
- Ask permission – hand back control.
- Less is More. And Keep it Simple.
- Be aware of your own prejudices. Notice them, and put them aside.
- But also, use your intuition. Notice what you're feeling, and trust the process.
- At least do no harm. The Hippocratic Oath. Do not retraumatise.

ARTFUL QUESTIONING

If listening skills help create the **context**, then artful questioning elicits the **content**.

- Emotion from the interviewee – not you
- Simple questions work best.
- As John Sawatsky says, the best questions are like clean windows. They allow a clear view, unobstructed by superimposed values.
- Open – not closed. (Almost) always avoid anything that can be answered just Yes or No...
- Be curious. "Tell me more..."
- Try prefacing questions: "I wonder..."
- "What happened next."
- "Let me check. What I'm hearing is..."
- Reflect back – paraphrase, summarise, check understanding.
- Pick up the "hot words".
- Allow silences and pauses.
- Statements elicit statements.
- One question at a time.
- Name what your interviewee is doing – e.g. "I notice you're smiling" ..
- 5 Ws and an H.
- **Never** ask, how do you feel. What are you feeling is already less invasive...

PREPARATION

- Clarity of purpose – what do you want out of this interview?
- Do your research – but expertise from interviewee.
- Prepare your questions - but expect to depart from them.
- Prepare yourself. Remember to breathe! Circular to count of five.
- Physically safe/appropriate space.
- Chairs and setup.
- Your dress and authority.
- Introduce crew and technology.
- Informed consent. Interviewee must know what you intend.
- Card and details for possible future contact. You don't want to be left holding the baby. But you do have responsibilities.
- Boundaries: be conscious what you can and cannot do.
- Self-care: healthy eating, exercise and sleep are critically important when you are facing stress. Take a moment to focus/ground yourself before and after an interview. The Zen Moment.

FOUR PHASES OF LEARNING

As with any change of approach, there are four unskippable stages until the new ways become second nature.

1. Unconsciously Incompetent: You neither have nor know the new skill and good interviewees are a matter of luck.
2. Consciously Incompetent: At least you know you ought to be doing different, but it's still hit and miss.
3. Consciously Competent: You're getting things right. But it's still hard work.
4. Unconsciously Competent: You're getting it right and don't have to think.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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The Emotionally Aware Interview

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A Simple Summary

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