

## **Micro-Skills Techniques when Consulting**

Here are some ideas for techniques to use when consulting, to encourage the patient to continue with their story in their own words.

### **Nudging**

Short encouraging words, noises, and gestures eg “go on, right, okay, yes, um-huh”, nodding, smiling.

### **Verbal Echoing**

Repeat back the patient's last word or phrase in a mildly questioning tone of voice.

### **Verbal Mirroring**

Adopt a similar tone of voice to the patient, similar rate of speech, use patient's own words.

### **Body Mirroring**

Adopt a similar posture to the patient (be careful **not** to mimic).

### **Silence**

Remain quiet and allow the patient space to think about what they want to say.

Ensure that this is a dynamic encouraging silence, with good eye contact, nodding, smiling, etc.

### **Soft commands**

Saying straight commands (eg “go on, tell me more,” etc) can appear abrupt. Giving soft commands can be helpful, eg:

“Could you expand on that.”

“Could you tell me a little more about what happened.”

### **Statement as a question**

Make a relevant statement as a neutral comment, and then leave a silence. The patient may respond as if you had asked a question, eg: “There's been a lot on TV recently about X ...”

(Note the ellipsis ... at the end of the statement ... this is an effective punctuation style ... and it usually works better than adding a question ...)

### **Feedback**

Tell the patient something you have noticed, eg, “You looked quite anxious when you said ...”

“You have mentioned the word ‘failure’ several times ...”

### **Checking for understanding (mini summary)**

Give a brief summary of the main points the patient has mentioned so far, eg:

“So you've had it for a week, and ... and ... and it's not improving? Have I missed anything important?”

### **Explain why you are asking something**

Tell the patient the reason you are asking about something, particularly if the patient may not consider it relevant, eg:

“I would just like to ask about any symptoms that might suggest this is a virus infection...”

### **My Friend John**

Make a statement about some third party with whom the patient may or may not wish to identify, eg:

“Many young mothers get worried about having their babies immunised ...”

“I remember another patient with similar symptoms who thought it was all due to stress ...”