

The HEAR Principles of Engagement

OR HOW TO ENGAGE THE FOLKS
WHO DON'T WANT TO BE ENGAGED



Acknowledgement

- We acknowledge that we're giving this talk on Aboriginal land, the land of the Bunurong people of the Kulin nation, and want to pay our respects to Elders past and present.
- We want to acknowledge that this land was never ceded, and the Aboriginal people maintain a strong connection to the lands, waters, and skies.
- We also want to affirm the importance of Aboriginal children being raised with a strong connection to family, community, and culture.

Engagement in Family Work



“No single strategy is of itself effective in protecting children. However, the most important factor contributing to success was the quality of the relationship between the child’s family and the responsible professional.”

– Dartington 1995,
quoted in BICM Summary

General Practice Guidance



Engagement is a process not an event.

Initial engagement is often fragile.

Some families will readily engage during the first visit or interview...

The relationship we build is dependent commitment from all parties.

Strong engagement supports us being robust and direct.

Indirect conversations can be vital to difficult content.

Responding promptly to the child's and family's practical needs builds the credibility.

Rapport

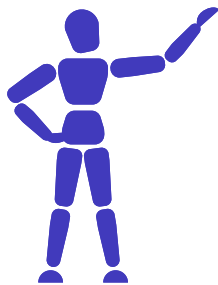
Rapport requires the ability to empathise and adapt.

- Laurence and Emily Alison are world leaders in forensic psychology, specialising in the most difficult criminal interrogations. They advise and train the police, security agencies, the FBI and the CIA on how to deal with dangerous suspects when the stakes are high.
- Across 30 years' experience and studying 2,000 hours of videot terrorist interrogations, they developed a model of interpersonal communication that works.
- The most effective rapport building behaviour to master is the art of allowing others to be in control. To seemingly take a back seat as events happen around you, and the ability to be humble.
- Rapport is all about maintaining respect, dignity and compassion for others, regardless of how they are behaving towards you.



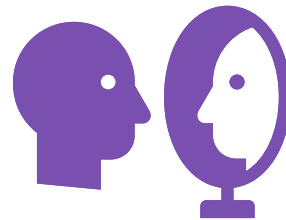
Honesty

Empathy



Autonomy

Reframing



HEAR Principles

- Rapport requires investing your effort into listening to and understanding others rather than being focused on your own agenda or point of view.
- Being able to put listening and seeking understanding of others before your own desire to be heard is the most simple but significant step.
- No matter how the other person is behaving, always try to stick to the HEAR principles. They are the steady platform on which all other rapport strategies are built.

Honesty

- 'Be honest with people' sounds like simple, straightforward advice. However, it can be easy to overstep that honesty and deliver a message that is too blunt or laden with emotion to be received productively by the other person.
- The skill is to deliver the right degree of honesty with the right amount of sensitivity. It's about avoiding trickery, being clear, objective and direct, and keeping calm. There's no room for emotions here.



"I solemnly and sincerely declare and affirm that the evidence I shall give will be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth."



History of Engagement: Collecting Baggage

Breaking Through Baggage

Honour the Past

Overt that you're the most recent in a long line of people this child/parent has worked with. Finding out who's been helpful, unhelpful, and what's made the difference can be a jump start for all involved.

Start in the Middle

Wherever possible, don't ask families to repeat things they've already told a professional. Where you can, read and communicate with others to catch up to where the family is in engaging with services.

Take Responsibility

Lead the engagement process with the family by taking the initiative, modelling how you want them to communicate, and using every rupture as an opportunity to demonstrate repair.

Subvert Expectations

Try to approach the family in a way that shows them early that you're going to do things differently to previous episodes of care. This can be by saying radically honest things and acting in refreshing ways.

Empathy

- Empathy is used often but frequently misunderstood – true empathy is not about showing compassion or warmth, but about trying to genuinely understand what a person is thinking and feeling.
- You need to uncover another person's core beliefs and values so that you don't just imagine how you'd feel if you were them but can think about how their view on the world and their life experiences also colour how they're responding to a situation.
- This means you can acknowledge how someone feels before explaining your position.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HznVuCVQd10>

Contextualising Problems

Historical Context

- By talking to families about the barriers faced by parents and the intergenerational patterns they're caught in, we can help make sense of where deficits come from.
- Consider what patterns are showing up for these parents that came from an earlier generation – now is the opportunity to break that cycle.
- This reduces blame and increases parental insight around why they're stuck.

Current Context

- By talking to parents about the current factors that are making their life and parenting more difficult, we can help make sense of what gets in the way of progress.
- Effectively, what is currently getting in the way of the parents being able to provide the care and boundaries to their child that they want?
- Doing this reduces blame and increases give parents new options for agency.

Interpersonal curiosity

Discerning self-disclosures

Pre-emptive validation

Gentle challenges

Reassurance

Empathic Principles

Be relentlessly curious about the interpersonal context (and thoughts) preceding any feelings and behaviours.

Empathy for the Non-empathetic

- Consider the following scenario:
 - A father you're working with has perpetrated family violence toward his partner and in front of the children is currently excluded from the home until he completes a MBCP.
 - After going to the first few sessions, he has missed the next 2 which impacts his contact.
 - When asked, he's said that the facilitator of the program was disrespectful to him, and the other participants were bad guys not like him. He still wants contact to progress.
- What would we need to remember to hold empathy for this father when you think about him? How would you express empathy toward him when talking? What would you need to hold onto this empathy for the father if he were to be upset while talking to you?

Autonomy

- 'Encourages the worker to be as clear as possible about what is and what is not negotiable, and then to negotiate as far as possible within these boundaries.'
 - Barber (1991) in BICM Guide
- This is an incredibly powerful feature of how we interact with others. Whether or not we feel someone is trying to control us has a huge influence on our behaviour.
- Freedom to choose appeals to an instinctive drive within all of us to be in control of our own destiny.



Being 'In' but not 'Sucked In'

- Joining the system means to become a part of it and feel in it
- But not join it with for ourselves, rather for the family and in line with our process.
- “One of the great challenges is to respond in a way that is neither personal nor automatic but rather strategic.”
- Importantly, we must be relationally and emotionally connected to effect useful change but not lose our boundaries.

Layers of the Self



Negotiables & Bottom Lines

- Be clear and honest with the family about the bottom lines, but do so in a manner that is not cold and or indicative of a 'power over' stance.
- We want to 'work with' families and empower them to be the parents the children need to have.
- But we also need to be clear about what things aren't up to the parent's volition – things that would cause us to PA/Breach is a good starting point for these.



Reframing

- This is repeating back in part or in paraphrase what someone has said to you. By using reframing, all you are doing is inviting the other person to expand and add more by 'sending' out the key words, feelings or values that you've just heard them say.
- Reframing is useful in both long and short interactions to improve communication. It also helps you sidestep some common conversational traps.
- A reframe helps a family see new possibilities in their current pattern and it builds insight by allowing everyone to see a problem differently.

Default Strategies

Demand

Sarcasm

Accuse

Dismiss

Confront

S

Simple

O

On the one hand

N

No argument

A

Affirmations

R

Reflection

Simple

Simple reflections are just that – a direct and often verbatim restatement of what has just been said. The important thing is to select the correct word/portion to reflect – what do you want to know more about? What is significant about what has been said?

On the one Hand...

This involves summarising back to the person two conflicting views, conflicting emotions or conflicting evidence. Whatever you place at the end of the sentence is likely to be what they speak about more, so be tactical.

No Argument

Rather than engaging in argument or rationalisations, explore the argumentative statement with reflection and do not argue back. So, statements such as, 'So what you're saying to me is ...' or 'Can you tell me more about that?' are helpful and prevent tit-for-tat arguments.

Affirmations

Actively and determinedly seek out positives to build on and ignore the negatives – you can go back to them later. Look hard for them even if they seem buried by negative statements or behaviour as they are the platform for change.

Reflection

Reflect back what has been said using paraphrasing, summarising or by reflecting deeper feelings or values that you think might present. 'Based on what you said, I think _____ is very important to you.' This is often most effective when followed by a key question that then moves the conversation forward to the next topic.

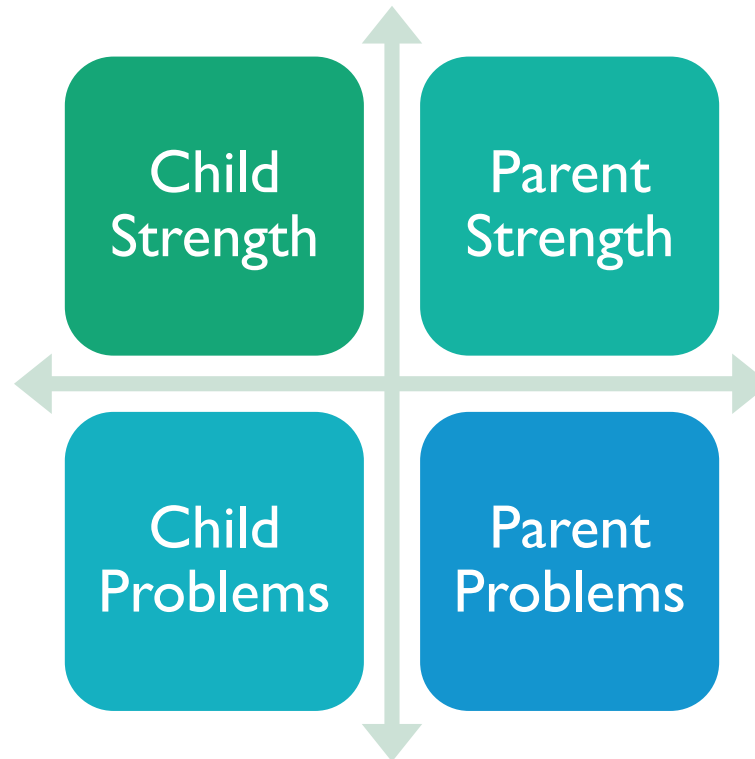
SONAR Reframing

The verbal judo of engagement – using the momentum of the person we're talking to as a power to shift them into the position we want.

Tensions in our Engagement

Problem or Strength Focussed?

- Forensic interviewing vs collaborative engagement.
- Transparency is critical.
- Push on the problem: it's how you uncover the problem attributions.
- Keep the focus on the immediate circumstance.



Child or Parent/Carer Focussed?

- Our legislated focus is always on the child but...
- Understanding the parent is central to our work.
- ‘There is no such thing as an infant’ – Winnicott
- We need to balance our alliance like a spinning top.

Holding Engagement Across Transfer



If you need something from somebody, always give that person a way to hand it over to you.

- Sue Monk Kidd