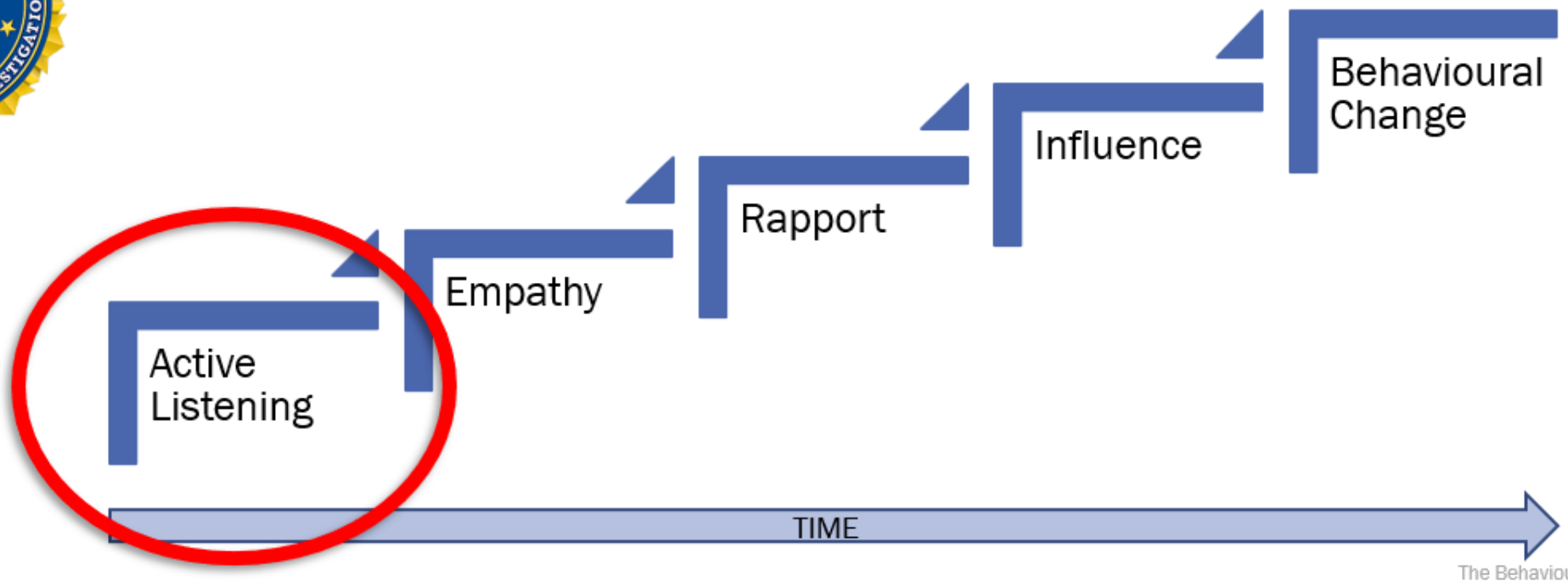


The Behavioural Influence Stairway Model (BISM)
Ireland, Carol A, Vecchi, Gregory M.

The Behavioural Stairway Influence Model (BISM)

BISM is the core philosophy behind all major law enforcement negotiation teams around the world.

The eight core techniques of Active Listening Skills (ALS) are:

- Minimal Encouragers
- Reflecting/Mirroring
- Paraphrasing
- Effective Pauses
- Open Ended Questions
- Emotion Labeling
- “I” messages
- Summarising

Minimal Encouragers

They include nods, non-words like ‘mmm’ and ‘yes’ and ‘no’ and provide the speaker with social “permission” to continue to talk

They are usually used in a non-intrusive manner while the person is speaking, ideally at the end of a sentence

They must align with the emotions/facts expressed by the person speaking

Be mindful of your own instinctive minimal encouragers

Don’t rely on a single ‘one size fits all’ minimal encourager

Discussion Point

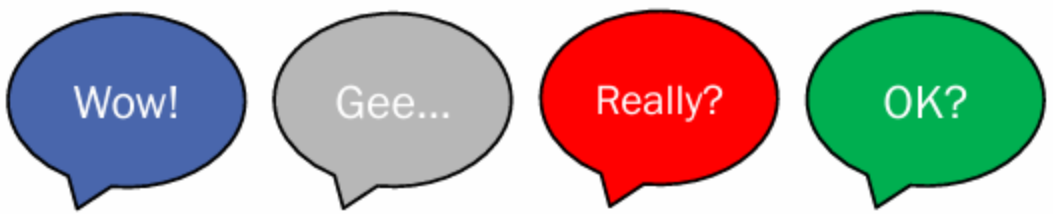
What are some examples of minimal encouragers? How can we match the speakers' emotions?

"You're not going to believe this; I've just won a new car!"

"These interest rate rises are killing me; I don't know how we can pay the bills?"

"The Boss is really riding me at work, some things went wrong and she's blaming me! Its not fair!"

"I've made my decision; I'm getting a tattoo on my face!"



Open/Closed questions

Open ended questions seek understanding. Closed questions confirm that understanding.

For open questions, ask questions that cannot be answered with a yes or no – an explanation is required.

A tool to generate open questions is the “six faithful servants” – who, what, when, where why and how.

Closed ended questions can be used sparsely to confirm important details –
“Is this correct?”

A series of open ended questions to explore the issues, followed by a closed ended question to confirm understanding by both parties, allows discussions to move forward in a positive manner.

“What’s your side of the story?”

Reflecting/Mirroring

Involves repeating key words or phrases verbatim to encourage the subject to continue speaking – you are REFLECTING some their exact words back.

Can be used early without placing any judgement and provides a good solid response

If delivered well it shows you are listening

By mirroring/reflecting the subject's words, no bias or interpretation issues are present

Conversational control is achieved by reflecting topics the listener chooses

Emotion labeling

Telling the subject what emotions you perceive, for example: *“You sound (e.g. sad)”, “you seem (e.g. disappointed)”, “I hear (e.g. anger) in your voice”.*

It is not accusatory in tone – rather you are inquiring by asking

You should first identify the basic feelings being expressed, then wait for an opportunity to express your perceptions of the speakers emotions.

Adding a questioning phrase such as *“Is that right?”* at the end will ensure that the listener is not making unfounded assumptions.

This shared understanding is a powerful connection between the parties.

Remember:
“Name it to tame it!”

Paraphrasing

You are repeating what was said, but in your own words.

This response must entail some recognition of the subject's feelings.

This lets the subject know that you're actively listening and understanding.

Paraphrasing is used to take some of the 'heat' out of a conversation.

But should not be dismissive of the depth of feeling expressed.

Paraphrasing also allows provides a platform to ask more questions and encourage discussion.

"I just hate him so much!"

"It's clear you dislike him."

"I" Messages

When speaking with people in crisis, they can adopt negative behaviours or focus on a specific issue, refusing to move forward.

An "I" message can be used to deal with confronting language/threats without seeming combative.

Its structure is to identified the negative behaviour seen in the subject, identify your concern as to the activity and the link a negative outcome to the identified behaviour.

The outcome must be linked to the subjects self interest as you perceive it to be and NOT to your own.

FORMAT: When you (described the negative behaviour) I feel (your emotion) because (describe the potential negative outcome for them).

"When you raise your voice at me I worry as I feel that might make the situation worse for you"

Effective Pauses

The use of an unexpected pause in conversation can trigger social conditioning and encourage a person to continue speaking longer than they had intended.

Quite often the subject will fill the gap with something they hadn't planned on talking about – free of any filter and often the underlying issue (as its in the forefront of their mind.)

A correspondingly timed subtle physical movement (head inclined/tilted, minor hand gesture or raised eyebrows can be very compelling in inducing the subject to vocalise their private thoughts.

Summarising

Summarising, like paraphrasing, shows understanding but of the entirety of all that's been said.

It works to demonstrate you understand the facts and the emotion of what the subject is going through. If done well, you can provide insight into the subjects feelings that they themselves were not aware of.

It allows you to communicate to the subject that you understand or are trying to understand the entirety of what the subject is saying or feeling.

It also allows for a 'line in the sand' where you can move conversationally forward towards a resolution. It sets a clear separation between what HAS happened and what NEEDS to happen.

The ‘Do’s’ of Active Listening

Be empathic/Suspend judgement

Recognise you are representing others/Are an authority figure

Slowly / Calmly

Give reassurance you are doing your best to help them and that you are both fair and reasonable, mindful to treat everyone with respect, even those who you feel not deserving

Gather information and intelligence that may assist you achieve organisational goals

You conduct is on display and may be revisited later in a formal setting

The ‘Don'ts’ of Active Listening

Don’t rush the conversation, even if under time pressure.

Don’t criticise or argue – the goal is to achieve your outcome, not ‘win’

Don’t overwhelm with instructions. Keep instructions simple by using plain language.

Do not react/Take offence! It may be the goal of the person to have you erupt

Don’t become frustrated if you need to repeat yourself. Focus on your outcome

Difficult conversations are confronting for both parties,
and the temptation to join them in escalating can be VERY strong.