

Getting Started With Clients:  
Some Interviewing Basics

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We will make many mistakes along the way,--  
saying things we will later regret and having  
to apologize to clients, learning from these  
mistakes, correcting them, and then making  
more sophisticated mistakes."

Lawrence Shulman  
*The Skills of Helping*

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In micro *and* macro  
practice, social work  
interviewers *are* :  
Purposeful  
Structured  
Flexible



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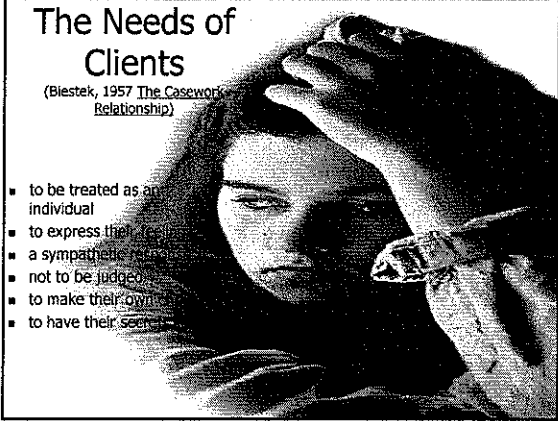
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## The Needs of Clients

(Biestek, 1957 *The Casework Relationship*)

- to be treated as an individual
- to express their feelings
- a sympathetic relationship
- not to be judged
- to make their own decisions
- to have their secrets



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## First Interviews: Purpose I

- Build the relationship
- Anticipatory empathy
- Informed consent
- Nonverbal attending
- Listening
- Empathy
- Reflecting/paraphrasing



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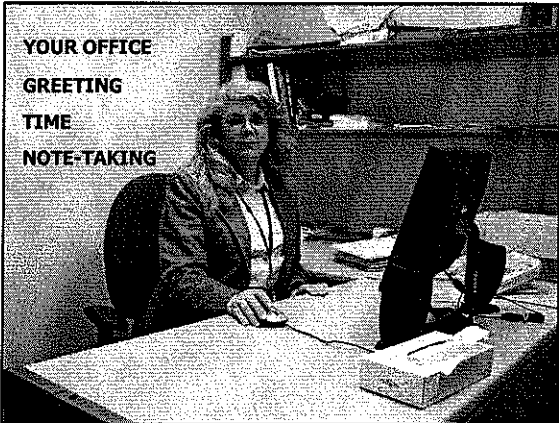
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**YOUR OFFICE  
GREETING  
TIME  
NOTE-TAKING**



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**Attend to Nonverbal Cues  
(yours and the interviewee's) and  
adjust pace and questions  
accordingly**

Body Language and Tone of Voice

- Facial
- Posture
- Gestures, mannerisms, motor behavior
- Appearance
- Mood
- Affect

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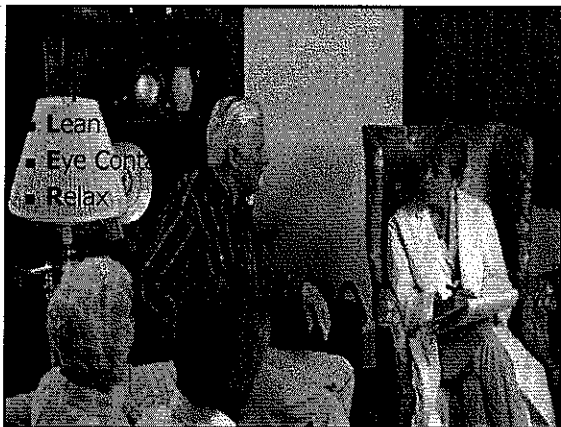
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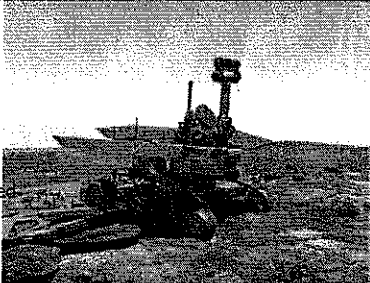
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**First Interviews:  
Purpose II**

Explore the Problem

Tuning In  
Open and closed-ended  
questions  
Probes and requests  
Verbal and nonverbal  
following  
Seeking concreteness  
Reflection/paraphrasing  
Summarizing/focusing  
Pacing



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Techniques to Help You Learn More  
In the First Interview

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Exploring, Clarifying, Reflecting

- Exploration Questions are to get the conversation started.
- Clarifying questions help you get more detail.
- Reflecting questions make sure you've heard the information correctly and lets the client know they've been heard.

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Encouraging, Paraphrasing,  
Summarizing

- Functions:
  - Client knows when understood
  - Clarify for client what s/he just said
  - Clarify for SW what was just said
  - Accuracy check
  - Encourages client to go deeper (surface vs underlying)
  - Helps overly talkative stop repeating

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## Encouraging

- Silence
- Minimal verbal utterances, neutral phrases
  - encourage client to keep talking
  - least directive
- Restatement/Repetition
  - key word or phrase to repeat
  - shapes direction
  - facilitates exploration of deeper meaning of word
  - don't overuse

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## Paraphrasing

- Give your own rephrase of the client's words
- Goal to
  - facilitate client exploration
  - clarification
  - let client know you understand

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## Partializing and Summarizing: Most Often Used Toward the End of an Interview

- Partializing Breaks Problems/Situations Down into more manageable parts
- Longer period of time
- Integrates verbal and non-verbal over time
- Good to begin, end, and pull together lengthy issues

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## Roadblocks to Communication

- Body Language and Space
- Moralizing, preaching, "ought and should"
- Judging, criticizing, blaming
- Labeling, stereotyping
- Distracting, diverting, social interaction
- Interrogating
- Passivity
- Glib analysis or diagnosis
- Lecturing, arguing

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## Roadblocks to Communication

- Advising, suggesting, premature solutions
- Reassuring, sympathizing, excusing
- Unfounded praise
- Questions as veiled advice, leading questions
- Sarcasm, humor, teasing
- Threatening
- Parroting
- Dwelling on remote past
- Dominating the interaction

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## First Interview Endings

- **"Door Knob Comment"** happens all of the time. Calls for judgment in how to manage.
- **FOLLOW THROUGH** - Always make sure the client is set for the following meeting, either with a referral that you will follow up with, an appointment, etc.

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