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2ND EDITION

Essential Interviewing:
A Programmed Approach to Effective Communication

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Preface

A group of core communication skills is essential to any interview, whether it takes place in counseling, nursing, social work, personnel work, or information gathering. *Essential Interviewing* defines these communication skills and demonstrates how to use them effectively in many kinds of situations.

The single-skills focus and branching programmed structure used in *Essential Interviewing* have proven to be effective in developing communication skills in lay and professional workers. Even those who initially were skeptical about the utility of the programmed learning model have come to value its efficiency in preparing individuals to communicate effectively in a variety of face-to-face situations.

Competent interviewers, regardless of orientation and degree of training, find that communication is basic to their relationships with clients. Physicians, nurses, ministers, teachers, psychologists, counselors, and other professionals are constantly involved with other individuals, and paraprofessionals, from crisis workers to community volunteers, must also know how to establish trust in order to effect beneficial change. Parents note improvements in their relationships with their children when they exercise the skills discussed in this book. Couples can use the material presented here to improve their relationships with one another. *Essential Interviewing* offers techniques that can be useful in conducting personnel interviews and business conferences, and in developing harmonious work relationships.

The second edition of *Essential Interviewing* reflects valuable responses from our colleagues who used the first edition. Each chapter has been revised and, where necessary, updated. A new chapter, on structuring an initial interview, gives readers an early opportunity to practice the initial skills systematically.

Because of its emphasis on developing particular skills, *Essential Interviewing* can be used in self-training or as the basic text for courses and workshops. The mastery of any skill depends on practice. Activity units, including practice interview checklists, are included at the end of each chapter to facilitate the development and integration of communication skills. Chapter 1 outlines the ways in

which the skills examined in the book may be learned and practiced. Chapters 2 through 7 focus on building rapport and seeking information, skills that are basic to all effective communication. Chapters 8 through 12 examine specific skills that can help bring about change. Other works that can be used to supplement this text are listed as Additional Resources.

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Getting Set

Rather than telling you what to do, we want you to participate actively by dealing with actual interview material, choosing the appropriate response, and practicing the essential dimensions of interviewing. You may expect to acquire a basic knowledge of the interviewing process, equip yourself with useful skills important in interviewing and in day-to-day interactions, and establish a foundation for further practice as you develop your own unique style of working with others.

Although this text focuses on the client, both interviewer and client grow in the process of effective interviewing. As you read and participate in the step-by-step process of this programmed text, you may encounter ideas and skills you can experiment with in your daily life—skills that can help you to understand others and yourself more completely. Moreover, as you develop competence in relating to others, the material presented here will help you to understand what skilled interviewers are doing and will enable you to adopt the elements of their styles that seem valuable to you.

An effective interviewer can make a tremendous difference in the life of another human being. This book provides you with specific formulas and methods that have proven useful in a variety of interviewing situations. However, no one method or interviewing skill is appropriate in every situation or with every individual. Therefore, we return to *you*. You, as an interviewer, are the individual who can make a difference if you combine the ideas and skills presented here with your own knowledge and experience. Use this text as a tool—challenge, evaluate, and shape the material, maintaining your individuality and personal genuineness in your relationships with others. Effective use of the tools of interviewing can enhance the development of another human being; poor interviewing can be destructive. If the tools provided in this text become an end in themselves and you act as a slave to them, you will not be an effective interviewer.

Steps toward clarifying the interviewing process

Counseling, psychotherapy, and interviewing are commonly seen as complex, almost mystical activities immune to systematic study and definition. However, several trends have emerged over the years that have made the art of interviewing more definable and specific. In this section, we present major trends that have been especially influential in the development of more effective counselors, psychotherapists, and interviewers. First, we deal with client-centered counseling and the work of Carl Rogers. Next, we examine seemingly antagonistic behavioral approaches and the work of B. F. Skinner. In a final section, we discuss the impact of some of the new, popular forms of helping such as transactional analysis and gestalt therapy.

The most influential psychotherapist of modern times is Carl Rogers, whose *Counseling and Psychotherapy* (1942) brought new precision and clarity to the helping process. His client-centered approach placed special emphasis on listening carefully to the client and provided specific suggestions for helping others to change and grow. Over the years, Rogers has continued to enrich the helping professions with his innovations, writings, and faith in human potential. *On Becoming a Person* (1961) reflects a high point of interviewing analysis and discussion. Moreover, Rogers has continuously changed and modified his points of view. He provided strong impetus for the encounter-group movement and, more recently, has examined the issue of personal power in helping situations.

Thanks to Rogers, the concepts of warmth, empathy, and positive regard have become basic to the helping professions and have assumed an important place in the lives of humanistically oriented individuals in many fields. Rogers studied the existence or absence of these concepts, or core conditions of helping, by observing interviews through the then-new medium of audiorecording. In 1957, he presented a three-step training program to teach the skills he considered important in constructive therapeutic intervention. First, he proposed that students listen to audiotapes of both experienced and inexperienced helpers. He assumed that this exercise would help the students to discriminate between good and bad interviewing methods in practice. Second, students observed experienced helpers conducting therapy sessions or participated directly as clients. In the third step of training, students conducted interviews with the direct supervision of an experienced helper.

Much work has been done to define the underlying dimensions of effective helping proposed by Rogers. Prominent among these efforts has been the work of Truax and Carkhuff (1967) who systematized Rogers' thinking and demonstrated that it was possible to teach helping skills more quickly and efficiently than had previously been thought. Their work inspired a variety of research literature that tends to validate Rogers' constructs and the concepts developed by Truax and Carkhuff. (See Anthony & Carkhuff, 1977, pp. 103-119; Truax & Mitchell, 1971, pp. 299-344; Truax, Wargo, & Silber, 1966.)

However, more recent reviews of the literature on Rogers' constructs have been more critical. Lambert and DeJulio (1976), for example, reviewed the extensive data produced by this group and concluded that many of the studies

were methodologically inadequate. Parloff, Waskow, and Wolfe (1978, pp. 233-282) examined the data of many studies carefully and concluded that Rogers' work was an important stimulus to the field, but that issues of effective helping are more complex than this early work suggests.

Rogers has continued to make his ideas more explicit. His three-step program in helper training is still important: it is useful to see and hear both the effective and ineffective helper and to examine the specific qualities that facilitate positive personal change and development. Although it may be possible to discriminate between ineffective and effective helping, Rogerian concepts don't identify the actual behavior of the counselor. The behavioral psychologists, inspired by the work of Skinner, have identified many specific verbal and nonverbal behaviors that induce systematic change. For example, in 1955 Greenspoon determined that it is possible to shape the behavior of a client in an interview by using head nods, "uh hums," and other signs of approval. Subsequent research demonstrated that, through such simple behavior on the part of the interviewer, clients could be conditioned to talk about whatever the interviewer reinforced.

So-called nondirective or client-centered counselors might reinforce certain types of client verbalizations in the interview. A comprehensive investigation of this issue is beyond the scope of the brief review presented here, but many studies, clinical cases, and theoretical writings have clearly identified the power of behavioral approaches in helping and the underlying operation of behavioral principles in the interview. Behaviorists have introduced a carefully developed, systematic approach to helping that is important regardless of theoretical school. Numerous reviews and theoretical discussions of the behavioral approach are readily available. (See Bandura, 1969; Craighead, Kazdin, & Mahoney, 1976; Krumboltz & Thoresen, 1969; Rachman & Wilson, 1980; Rimm & Masters, 1974; Spence, Carson, & Thibaut, 1976.)

Abundant evidence clearly indicates that helping can be made more explicit and that concepts of listening effectively are central in both client-centered and behavioral approaches. How can we determine, then, which approach is more effective, and how can we translate these basic concepts of effective helping into workable programs for training people to become more empathetic? Evidence suggests that both client-centered and behavioral approaches are effective. A recent review of the outcomes of nearly 400 psychotherapy and counseling research studies (Smith & Glass, 1977) reveals that more than one approach to personal change "works." The authors found indications that different clients could be effectively reached through different approaches. Therefore, under certain circumstances a behavioral approach is likely to be effective; under other circumstances a cliented-centered approach might be the preferred method of treatment. This point is complicated by the fact that approaches as diverse as transactional analysis, psychoanalysis, gestalt therapy, and others are effective instruments of change in the lives of many individuals.

Although this brief review has focused on client-centered (Rogerian) and behavioral approaches, many other approaches to the art of helping are effective and useful. Transactional analysis, for example, draws from psychoanalytic psychology and uses certain aspects of both the Rogerian and behavioral approaches

to the interview. The transactional helper is concerned with diagnosing the *pattern* of relationships rather than focusing solely on interpersonal relationships or primarily on external behavior. Transactional analysis identifies individual behavior as "parent," "adult," or "child" and broadens the possibilities for action by using these concepts. A useful source for additional information on this approach to helping is James and Jongeward (1971). Gestalt psychology, another humanistic approach to helping, focuses on the "here and now" and uses many exercises and methods to enable people to speak through "impasses" and "splits." (See Fagan & Shepherd, 1970.)

Many other prominent helping approaches in current use make varying claims of effectiveness. The wide array of competing theories might confuse the beginning student as well as the advanced practitioner when trying to choose the best approach for each individual under particular conditions. Paul has perhaps stated it best: "What treatment, by *whom*, is most effective for *this* individual with *that* specific problem and under *which* set of circumstances?" (1967, p. 111)

To meet the different treatment needs of a widely varying clientele, you must develop a wide-ranging response capability. In a single day you might work with a 72-year-old depressed retired person, a jobhunting teenager, and an Hispanic individual victimized by discrimination—each has different needs.

Out of this confusing array of conflicts, theories of helping, and demands from clients, you must choose the most appropriate intervention. This text develops some beginning ground rules in surviving the interview and provides a foundation for your future growth as you develop increasing interviewing competence and confidence.

Let us now examine how single helping skills can be useful in developing some of the behaviors of the effective interviewer.

The single-skills approach to interviewing training

One problem in interviewing analysis is that the beginner is often overwhelmed by information because of the complexity of the interviewing process. As Rogers (1957) has suggested, people seem to learn and remember best those things that are developed step by step. The question is how to break down the complex interviewing process and determine which skills are most useful under varying circumstances.

Ivey, Normington, Miller, Morril, and Hasse (1968) and Zimmer and Park (1967) evaluated counselor/client interaction independently and isolated several specific, observable behaviors that constitute effective interviewing. Ivey and his associates analyzed videotapes and developed logical categories; Zimmer and Park employed a complex statistical approach to examine the verbal responses of counselors. The findings of the studies were identical, supporting the idea that it is possible to delineate particular interviewing skills. The videotape analysis resulted in more emphasis on nonverbal behaviors, but the verbal categories of the two research teams are quite similar.

Because it is possible to identify specific interviewing behaviors, you might wonder (1) which behaviors have been identified as crucial to an interview? and

(2) can these behaviors be taught? We'll answer the second question first and then describe the behaviors identified thus far in a later section.

The video analysis system is called *microcounseling* (Ivey et al., 1968; Ivey, 1971; Ivey & Authier, 1978; Ivey & Gluckstern, 1982) because microportions of interviews are identified and classified. Microcounseling stresses teaching *single-skill* units of the interview one at a time, making it possible for the beginner to grasp concepts quickly. Although there are a number of variations of the basic microcounseling format, the standard paradigm consists of the following steps:

1. A five-minute audio or videotape interview held between a trainee and a real or role-played client.
2. Training in a single skill.
   a. Reading a manual that describes the skill to be taught.
   b. Presentation of video or audiotaped examples of experts engaging in the skill.
   c. Self-observation by trainees who compare their own work to the manual and the taped presentations.
3. Taping a second five-minute interview between the client and the trainee. The tape is reviewed with a supervisor to determine whether the trainee has met competency standards. The steps are repeated until mastery of the skill is demonstrated.

Over a period of time, the trainee learns many skills and practices integrating the skills into a natural interviewing style. Trainees are encouraged to use the skills in their own unique fashions.

The research base of microcounseling is extensive. Ivey and Authier (1978) and Kasdorf and Gustafson (1978) cite about 150 data-based studies indicating that identified skills can be taught to people in many professions. Interviewing skills in the microcounseling model have been taught to medical students, nurses, clinical and counseling psychologists, social workers, community-service personnel, teachers, administrative personnel in industry, paraprofessional and community-action volunteers, and many lay people, including sales personnel, parents, and elementary-school students. Research data comparing the microcounseling single-skills format with other approaches are encouraging. However, if individuals don't practice the skills on the job or in the home, the training is lost. Evidence suggests that you must use communication skills if they are to be maintained, just as you must practice the piano, ballet, or tennis to maintain your level of skill.

This programmed text is based partially on the microcounseling concept of single skills. Research evidence indicates that this material is a workable alternative to the full microcounseling model. Using the materials in this book, you can learn skills of interviewing that are useful in many settings. But again, unless you systematically practice and use these skills, the effort of learning them will be wasted. The emphasis in each section of this text is on the development of systematic ways in which you can take the ideas presented here and use them immediately. Cognitive learning or merely reading the material is not enough: you must integrate these skills into your style. The skills presented here are the basis

for establishing constructive interpersonal relationships as well as for sharing, information gathering, self-exploration, and positive personal change. Now let's look at the interviewing skills emphasized in this text.

Building a step-by-step model of interviewing skills

Find a partner who is willing to be interviewed by you. If at all possible, audiotape the session or have a third person watch the interview and give you feedback. Here are your instructions for the interview:

Imagine you are to conduct an interview; however, you are to do the *worst* job possible; do as many things wrong as you can, and do them deliberately. Be creative and, above all, ineffective in the session. As a result of being ineffective, you can later define some positive aspects of interviewing. Spend about three minutes in this interview. Remember, do the worst job possible and exaggerate to make clear what you are doing. After you have completed the exercise, go back and list *specific* things that indicate a poor interviewing technique.

This procedure is similar to the first step of Carl Rogers' innovation in training, in which interviewers listen to high- and low-quality sessions. However, the exercise presented here involves you and asks you to identify in precise terms the *specific* things that are done incorrectly.

In one classroom exercise, the following list was drawn up by the students.

interrupted	maintained poor eye contact
interviewers talked all the time	paid no attention to emotions
listened poorly	contradicted the client
gave extensive advice	appeared bored at times
maintained sloppy posture	expressed no empathy
played with lighter	seemed phony
didn't seem interested	looked at floor frequently

This list describes many inappropriate interviewing behaviors. Obviously, to be effective, you should try to develop skills that counter these behaviors. However, correcting these problems all at once may be too difficult for many beginning interviewers. A more feasible approach is to select just a few behaviors, perhaps only one, master it, and then move on to others.

This book is a structured learning experience in eight basic skill areas crucial to all types of interviewing. An overview of these areas, with a brief summary of the key dimensions of each, is provided below. Note that the first four skill areas— focusing and following, effective inquiry, reflecting feeling, and reflecting content —emphasize *listening* to the client. The client's problem need not (indeed, should not) be solved by the first two or three comments made by the interviewer. You may find that, in practice interviews, you ask one or two questions, obtain a sense of the client's problem, and suggest solutions ("Have you tried talking to your parents?" "Why not try . . . ?" and so on). We urge patient and careful attention to these four skill areas, for unless you can truly hear the client's concern there is little chance of effective change. The patient and careful clarification of the client's concerns and problems in detail separates interviewing from the routine

superficial advice that friends often give to one another. We strongly suggest that you not read the later sections of this book until you have mastered these basic introductory skills at a high level, as assessed in Chapters 6 and 7, and can effectively conduct an interview with a real or role-played client for at least five minutes without using skills that could result in direct behavior change. When you have demonstrated that you can listen, move on to the complex skills presented in later chapters.

An overview of the skills covered in this book

1. *Focusing and following* (Chapter 2) sharpens your general listening skills as well as your attending skills of eye contact and appropriate verbal and nonverbal following.
2. *Effective inquiry* (Chapter 3) teaches you to ask open and closed questions and to make minimal encouragements. You will also learn their usefulness in helping clients to express themselves fully.
3. *Reflecting feeling* (Chapter 4) teaches the accurate identification and reflection of the client's emotions and gives you the opportunity to learn and practice this skill.
4. *Reflecting content* (Chapter 5). Effective listening requires more than attending, questioning, and tuning in with emotions. It also requires the ability to *hear* and reflect clearly the verbal content of a client's statements.
5. *Developing an individual style* (Chapter 6) reviews the preceding skills in an interview that allows you to see how well you have mastered the material thus far. Integrating the skills and developing a personal style are considered.
6. *Structuring for information* (Chapter 7) teaches you to structure an initial interview using the skills you have developed to this point.
7. *Communicating feeling and immediacy* (Chapter 8). Sometimes it is important to share your own *immediate* feelings in the interview with the client. This chapter presents examples of appropriate and inappropriate communications of feeling and immediacy.
8. *Effective confrontation* (Chapter 9). Specifically, confrontation involves the identification of discrepancies or inconsistencies in a client's behavior. Before you confront a client, however, you must be able to identify inconsistencies and state them clearly without value judgments.
9. *Self-disclosing* (Chapter 10). At times, it is appropriate for an interviewer to self-disclose. However, this must be done without taking over an interview or leaving the client little room for self-exploration.
10. *Structuring for information and action* (Chapter 11) builds on the skills developed in Chapter 7 and helps you conduct interviews so that clients are able to examine issues, consider alternatives, and make their own decisions.
11. *Putting it all together—integrating the preceding skills* (Chapter 12). The challenge of this book is manifested most completely in this chapter. You will move through an interview, selecting from an array of potential responses. When you have mastered the material in the preceding chapters, integration of the skills and concepts will come naturally to you. However, mastery is not achieved by reading alone. This book can be successful only when you take

the concepts out of each section and practice them in interviewing situations.

The second section of this book focuses on the effective use of four skill areas that require more activity on the part of the client—communicating feeling and immediacy, confronting, self-disclosing, and structuring. Effective use of the initial skills, in addition to mastery of the advanced skills presented here, will lead to effective interviewing with the client.

In the final chapter, the text gives you the chance to apply the skills you've learned as you act as an interviewer working with real client problems. You will have an opportunity to demonstrate that you can select appropriate skills from the many possibilities presented throughout the book. In order to master these skills, however, you must be able to employ them effectively in real and role-played interviews. We suggest that you obtain an audiotape recorder and practice each skill with a friend until you can use the skill at will and note its positive impact in the interview.

We believe in a solid, step-by-step approach to mastery and competence in interviewing. We can provide guidance, but you must provide the involvement and work. Having presented the rationale and structure for this series of skills, we now examine the effectiveness of this step-by-step program.

Research on essential interviewing program

The programmed-text format followed here presents both positive and negative instances of interviewing behavior. You'll be presented with some information—an interviewing problem or issue—and you'll be asked to respond to a question. You will then be directed to the next frame, in which your answer to the question is evaluated. If your answer is correct, we will explain why it is correct and ask you to continue. If your answer is incorrect, we will explain why it is wrong and ask you to return to the original frame to select another answer. Do not move ahead until you have mastered each step of the program.

The technique used in this book was developed by Crowder (1960, pp. 286-298), who demonstrated that mistakes can be considered opportunities to receive additional clarification on critical issues. Research has demonstrated that reward of accomplishment is important in programmed-learning formats. Ample evidence suggests that the programmed approach to learning is effective. (See Hartley, 1974; Mackie, 1975; Stones, 1968; Taber, Glaser, & Schaefer, 1965.)

A number of research studies have evaluated the effectiveness of the training units in this book. Hearn (1976) taught interviewing skills to three groups—one using traditional microcounseling methods, another experiencing sensitivity training, and a third using the programmed format. The microcounseling and programmed format groups significantly improved their interviewing skills; the sensitivity training group did not change and was found to be similar to an attention control group who watched and discussed films of counseling sessions. A similar study by Uhlemann, Hearn, and Evans (1980) with community hotline workers revealed similar findings.

A third study (Uhlemann, Stone, Evans, & Hearn, 1982) compared three

groups of paraprofessional workers from a therapeutic community center. Two groups read portions of the first edition of this text and participated in role-play exercises with feedback. When compared to the third group, a notraining group, again significant impact of the programmed text was found. When these workers were trained to use the remaining skills some two years later, they were found to have increased their use of the initial skills and easily incorporated the remaining skills into their interviewing style. A further study by Uhlemann and France (1982) demonstrated that the programmed materials presented in the first edition of this book, in conjunction with modeling and supervised practice, were effective in increasing the empathy and interviewing skills of graduate counseling students.

These studies strongly suggest that the programmed-learning format is a viable alternative or supplement to the traditional microcounseling model of single-skills training. Moreover, the programmed-learning format is economical in terms of both equipment and time. Careful study of the data derived from the studies also reveals that participants were more involved when text material was supplemented by practice. This information suggests that training can be enriched by the addition of modeling and systematic role-play practice with feedback. The format, amount, and frequency of supplemental training activities should be geared to the needs of the participants. The most important component in the process is the student's active and involved participation.

Cultural issues in interviewing

Patterns of communication vary from culture to culture. In American culture the reflective/listening approach is the predominant mode of communication when issues and concerns are discussed without haste and in detail. Feelings and emotions are often stressed. Certain patterns of verbal and nonverbal behavior are normative. For example, Haase and Tepper (1972) state that an interviewer should lean toward a client and maintain eye contact and that client and interviewer should be at least an arm's length apart.

Don't assume that what is considered correct in one culture is appropriate with all people. Workshops on listening skills conducted in Alaska and the Canadian Northwest Territories have floundered on the critical issue of cultural differences. Eye contact among some Eskimos or Inuit is considered inappropriate and distracting. In the United States, eye contact patterns among Blacks sometimes differ from those of Whites. Individuals in the Middle East stand closer to each other when they talk than do people in the United States and Canada; therefore, interviewing at what is considered normal distance in America would be uncomfortable for individuals from Egypt or Lebanon. The direct approach of focusing on one topic may be inappropriate for some Asian populations who may prefer more indirect, subtle approaches.

Recent examinations of beginning interviewers reveal that White males tend to ask many questions; White females use more reflective listening responses such as paraphrasing and reflection of feeling. Also, evidence indicates that Blacks tend to give more directions and advice than Whites (Berman, cited in Ivey