



Cognitive Interview

Nuno Tavares -Lt. (Ret.)

nunotav@icloud.com

Dr. Frances Surmon-Bohr

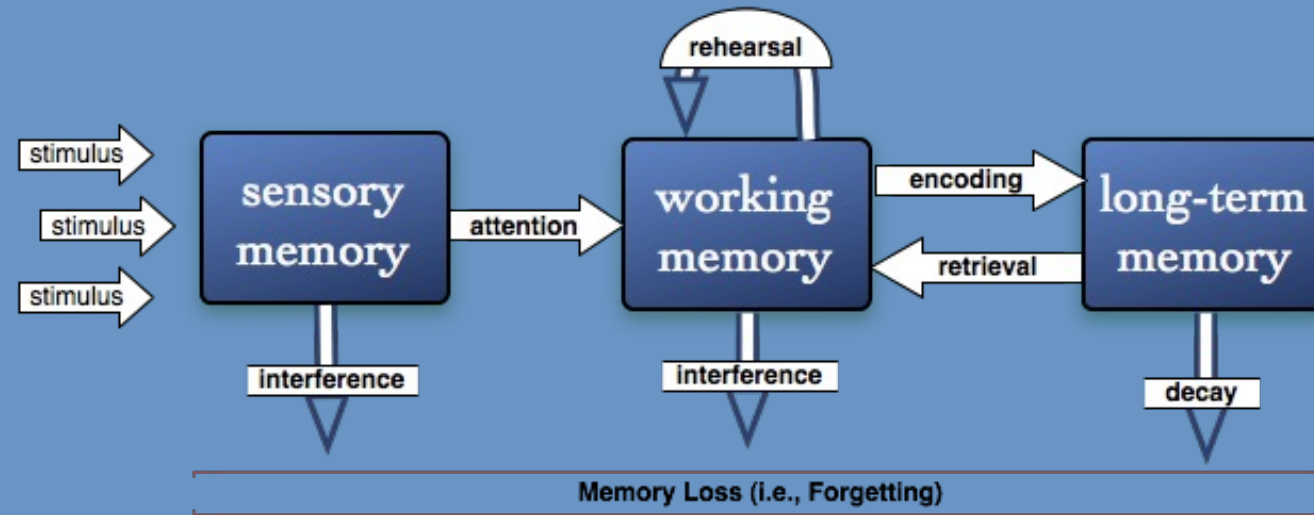
ORBIT Research & Training

Witnesses, Victims & Suspects

COGNITION

Your brain is not a video camera

Vision
Smell
Sound
Taste
Temperature



COGNITIVE INTERVIEW

Fisher and Geiselman (1987): Found that the Cognitive Interview enhanced recall in both quality and quantity.

Studied standard police interviews and found:

- Questions were brief, direct, and closed.
- Sequencing did not match witnesses' own images of the event.
- Police interviewers often interrupted, not allowing witnesses to expand on their answers.

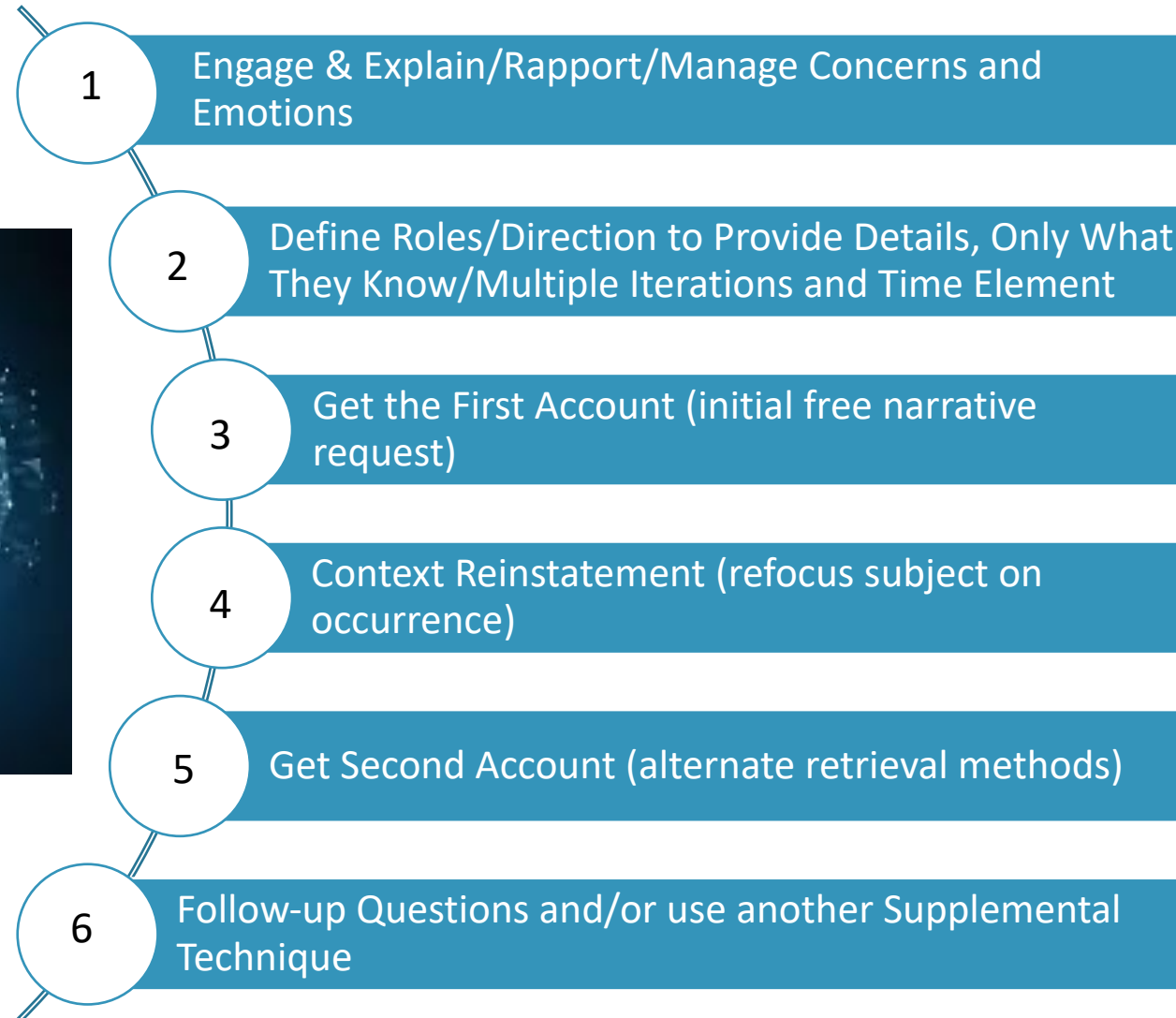
COGNITIVE INTERVIEW

Enhance recall in both quality and quantity with a subject who is cooperative and willing to talk.

Principles:

- Let the subject tell his story without interruption.
- Maintains autonomy and adaptability.
- Memories can be retrieved through various cues.

Cognitive Interview Components



Cognitive Interview

Step 1- Engage & Explain/Rapport

- **Manage Concerns and Emotions**

- Make sure the subject has time for this type of interview- Agree on needed stop time, if applicable
- Highly traumatic topic? (Victim/Witness)- Engage and Explain and adequately prepare.
 - Consider having services available

- **Explain the Purpose of the interview**

- Interviewing with an eye to enhancing memory recall
 - "I'm going to ask you to tell me about the event. I may ask you to tell me more than once, not because I don't believe you, but because you are likely to remember more each time you tell your story"

Cognitive Interview

Step 2- Define Roles and Expectations

- Explain Ground Rules & Expectations
 - I'm not going to ask questions. My role is to listen. I may take notes to help me remember what you say. Please don't guess; if you can't remember, just say you can't remember or you are not sure"
- Encourage Active Participation
 - No detail is unimportant or too small; provide as many details as you can remember, even if they occur to you out of order. You were the one who was there, I am depending on you to tell me everything that happened, no matter how small a detail you think it is"

Cognitive Interview

Step 3- Get first Account (initial free narrative request)

- Request initial free narrative of everything that occurred....(**do not interrupt, ask questions or use minimal encouragers**)
 - When **you** are ready, tell me everything you know/remember from the beginning...
- *Take **notes** to help guide you along the way to keep track of details for future follow-up questions

Cognitive Interview

Step 4- Context Reinstatement

Request the subject to mentally reconstruct the situation.

- Form a mental image of the scene.
- Put back in the context of the scene to remember more detail regarding:
 - Emotions
 - Thoughts
 - Smells
 - Sounds
 - Physical conditions/visuals

Cognitive Interview

Step 4 & 5- Context Reinstatement/Get 2nd Account

- Explain that this is a method that aids memory
 - Ask subject to close eyes or look at a blank spot on the floor (explain that this reduces distractions)
 - Ask subject to put themselves into a particular moment of the memory (e.g. “when you entered the office”)
 - “Tell me everything you can see, hear, taste, or smell, what you are thinking and feeling”
 - “Once you are in that moment tell me again what happened from that moment until you left the office. Include as many details as you can recall”
 - Be silent and let the subject talk (*One "slow down" if needed)
 - Once finished, ask if there is anything they wish to add.
- **Ok take notes and if they do not close their eyes or look away break eye contact by taking notes**

Cognitive Interview

Closing the interview

1. Summarize

- Review information.
- Clarify inaccuracies.
- Probe any new information.

2. Establish follow-up expectations.

- Request permission to re-contact with any additional questions.
- Request contact email and cell number.
- Provide your contact email.
- Request interviewee to continue to think about incident and contact you with new details.

How does CI fit with other models?



CI is compatible with the other SBI components



ORBIT principles/ethos entirely consistent



However, CI is not always appropriate – e.g. if you encounter resistance/subject is very emotional



It's possible to flow into a CI

Dispelling the Myth: “It Takes Too Long”

A common misconception is that the Cognitive Interview always takes longer than a standard interview.

In practice, allowing the subject to speak uninterrupted often produces more useful information earlier in the interview.

Traditional interviews slow the process through repeated interruptions, repeated questions and narrow questioning.

When subjects provide uninterrupted narratives, investigators gain broader context and more investigative leads quickly.

The Cognitive Interview improves efficiency because the subject does most of the talking.
