

ORBIT: The Science of Rapport Based Interviewing

*Science Based Interviewing
Symposium*

Emily Alison & Laurence Alison

Dr. Frankie Surmon-Bohr

www.orbitinterviewing.com



Field Data & Ground Truth

- Research which resulted in ORBIT is based on over 2000 hours of interviews with convicted terrorists.
- The model itself is drawn from over 70 years of interpersonal, social psychological research from personality and counselling domains.
- Funded by the High Value Detainee Interrogation Group (HIG) in the aftermath of the CIA's Enhanced Interrogation Program.



**COUNTER
TERRORISM
POLICING**

ORBIT: What does it stand for?

Observing

Rapport-Based

Interpersonal

Techniques

What is it based on?

Personality and interpersonal psychology

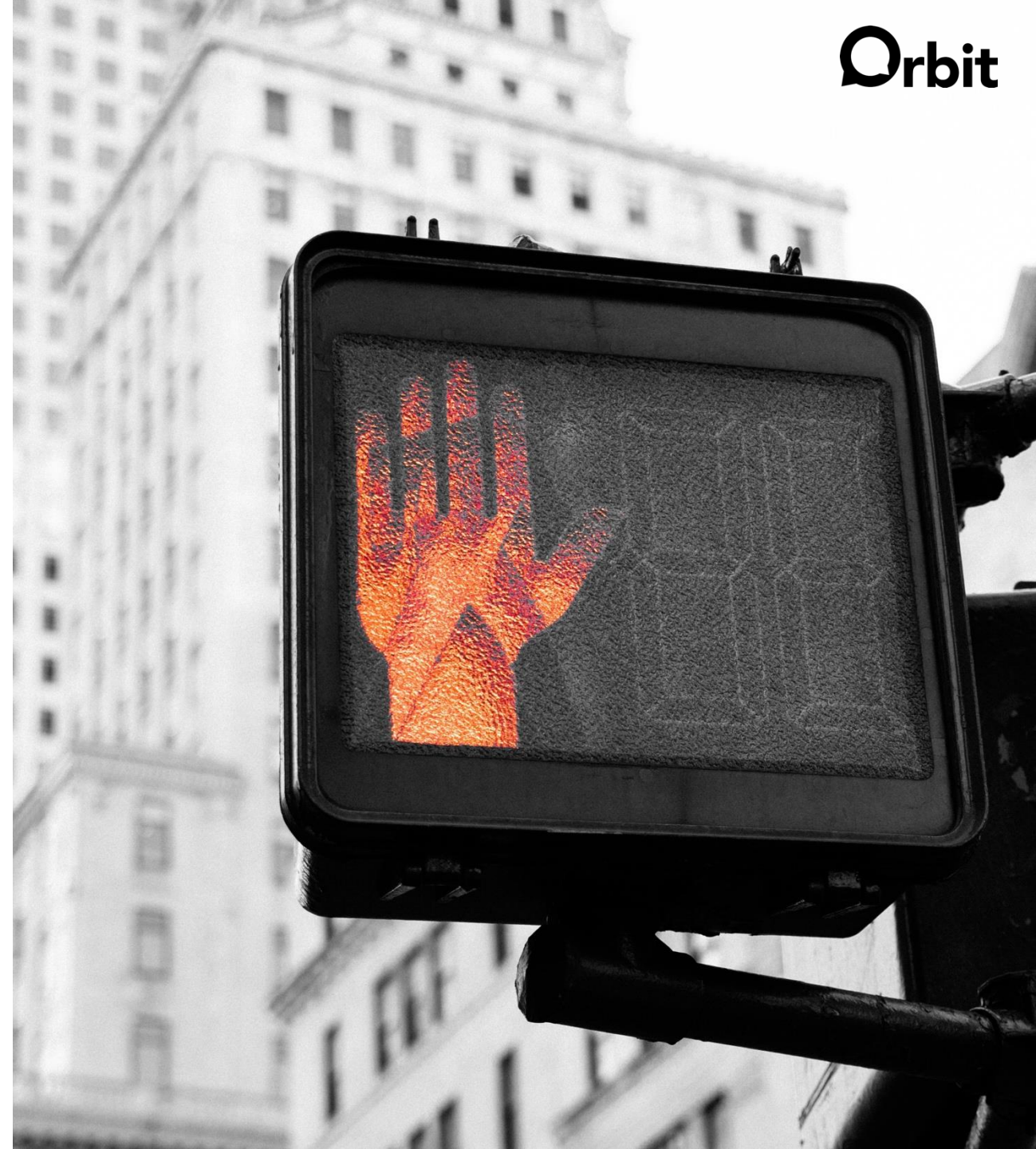
- Timothy Leary's interpersonal circumplex
- John Birtchnell's theory of relating

Therapeutic approaches

- Carl Rogers and person-centred approaches
- Miller & Rollnick's Motivational Interviewing

The following are not rapport:

- ⚠ Being nice
- ⚠ Being weak
- ⚠ Being a push over
- ⚠ Being their friend
- ⚠ Using psychological tricks on people
- ⚠ Something you do only at the introduction
- ⚠ Offering water, cigarettes or a break

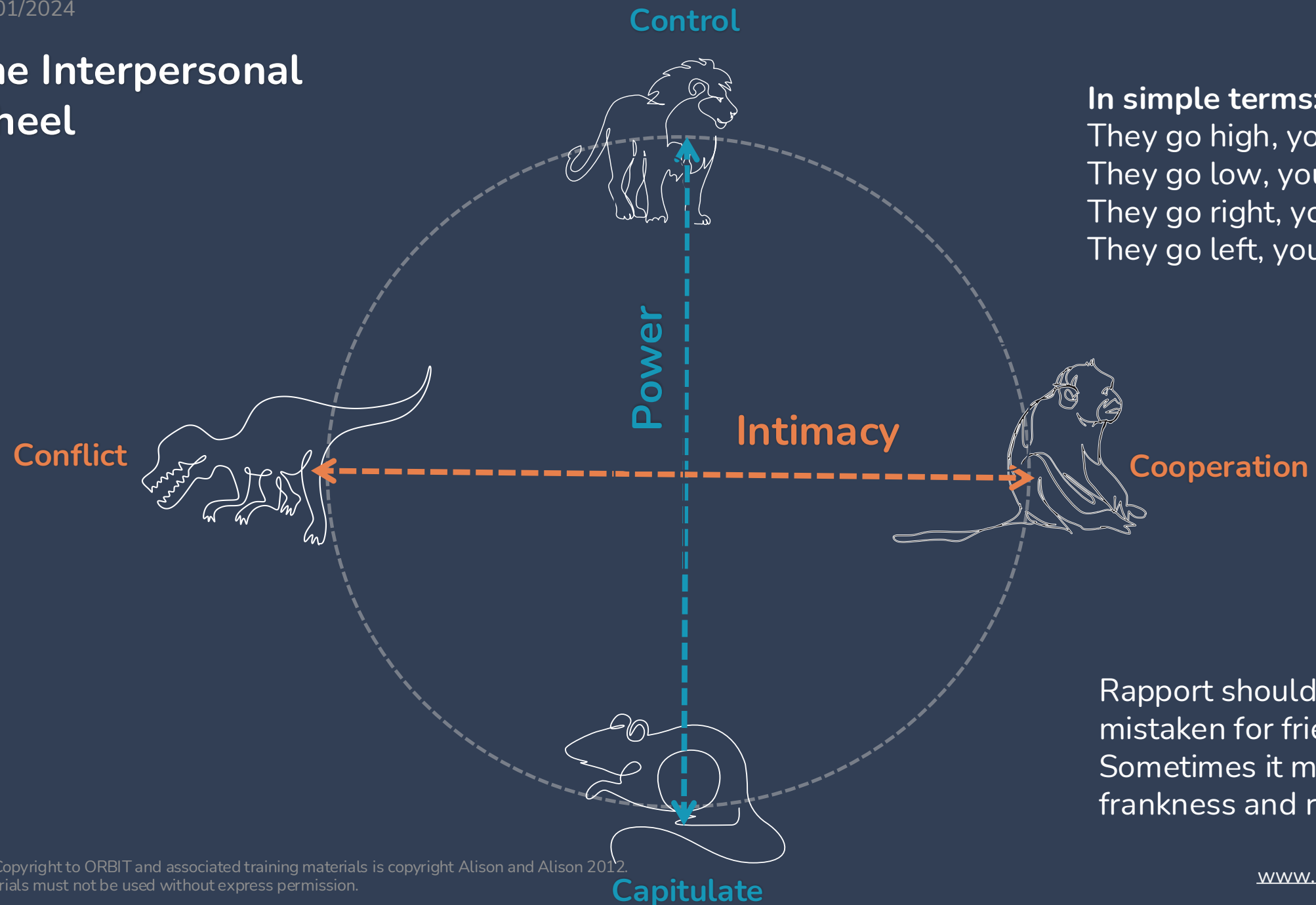


Rapport

A persistent, effortful, fluid and responsive approach that is about maintaining respect, dignity and integrity.

It needs to take into account the individual AND the individual circumstances.

The Interpersonal wheel

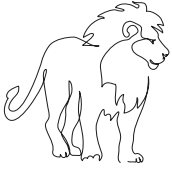


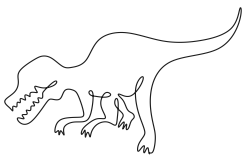


In simple terms:

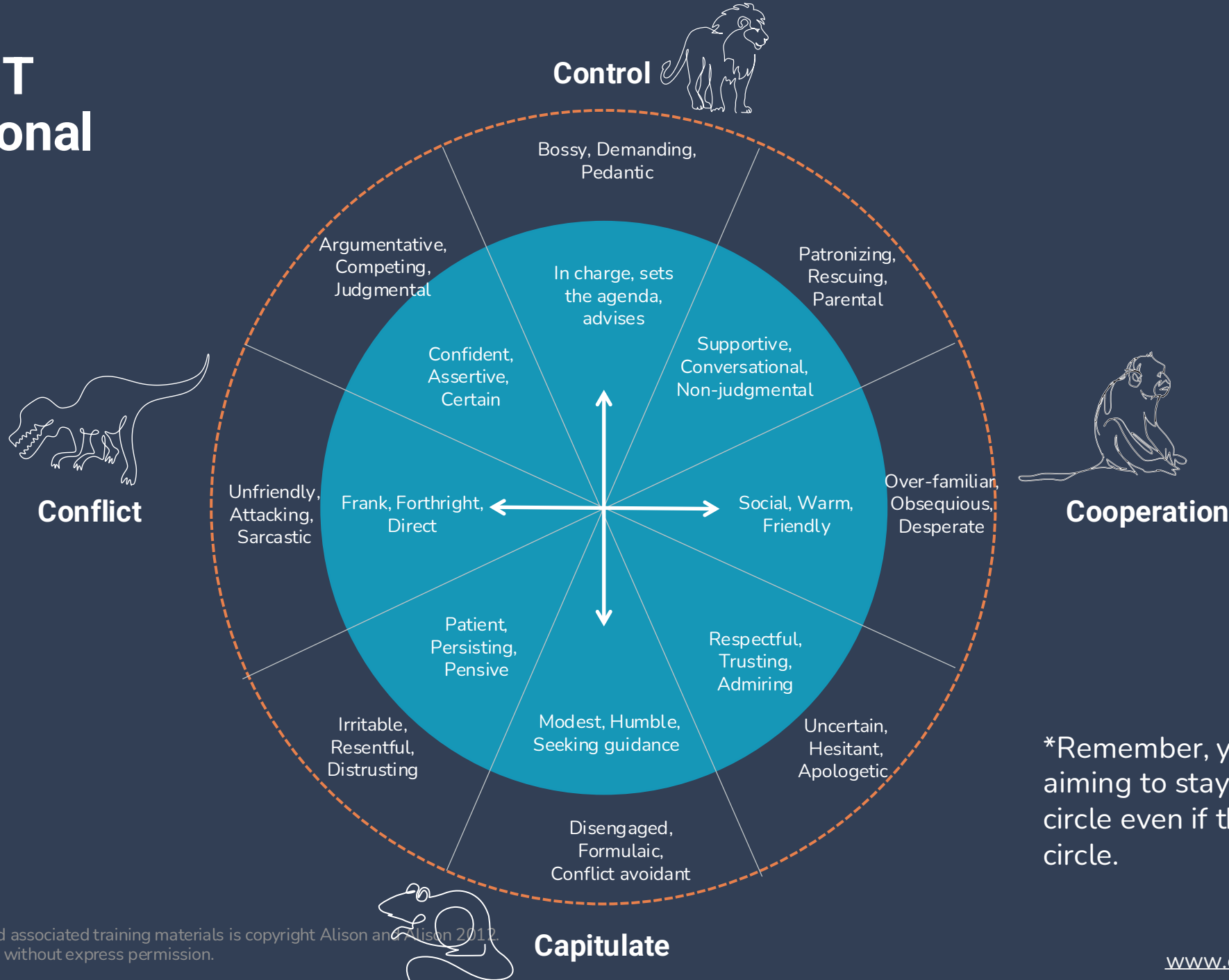
- They go high, you go low
- They go low, you go high
- They go right, you go right
- They go left, you go left.

Rapport should not be mistaken for friendliness. Sometimes it may require frankness and robustness.

Communication Styles:

Animal	Adaptive Form	Maladaptive Form
Lion 	In charge, sets the agenda, advises	Bossy, demanding, pedantic
Monkey 	Social, warm, friendly	Over-familiar, obsequious, desperate
Mouse 	Humble, patient, seeks guidance	Formulaic, disengaged, conflict avoidant
T-rex 	Frank, forthright, direct	Sarcastic, attacking, punitive

The ORBIT Interpersonal Wheel



*Remember, you are always aiming to stay on the inner 'good' circle even if they are in the bad circle.

Effective Interrogators/interviewers



COMPETENCE

Use no bad behaviours



SENSITIVITY

Know what skills
to use when



VERSATILITY

Able to move around
the whole wheel when
necessary

Animal Quiz: Self-assessment

How intense am I in any given area?

How versatile am I?

Where are my potential weaknesses?

Are my strengths also the weaknesses?

Fundamental Rapport Principles

Honesty

Being direct, clear and objective - not being judgmental or avoidant of asking difficult questions or raising difficult topics

Adaptation

Altering agenda in response to the subject rather than having a rigid adherence to the interview plan

Empathy

Displaying genuine curiosity and a desire to understand the subject's actions or mindset

Autonomy

Respecting or emphasizing the subject's right to choose to cooperate/ speak/ engage or not

Evocation

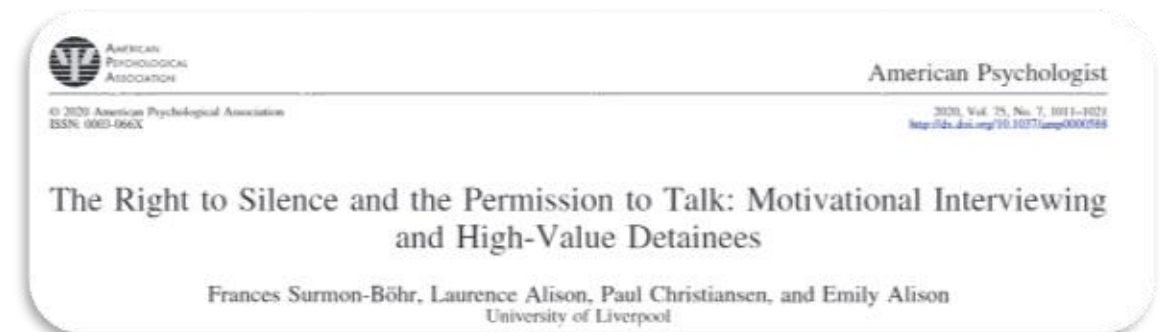
Eliciting statements from the subject about their thoughts, feelings and their underlying core values or beliefs

Reflection

Repeating back strategic elements of what has been said or implied by the subject

Key Findings

- Rapport based strategies (RBS) were associated with **increased engagement and information**.
- RBS were also associated with **reduced subject resistance** strategies including silence and “No comment” responses.
- Even minimal expression of maladaptive behavior by the interviewer was associated with **increased maladaptive subject behavior**, which was directly associated with **reduced information**.



Testing across contexts: Context Validity

- **OTHER TYPES OF OFFENDERS:**
 - Findings replicated in sample of interviews with 25 Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) offenders (Alison et al., 2022; Humann et al., 2023).
 - Found rapport-based strategies associated with increased engagement and yield and found reciprocal effect of adaptive interviewer behavior increasing adaptive subject behavior and vice versa.
- **WITNESSES AS WELL AS SUSPECTS:**
 - Findings replicated in sample of victims of sexual offenses (N=85) in South Korea (Kim, Alison, Christiansen, 2020).
 - Found rapport-based strategies positively influenced adaptive communication between interviewer and victim which led to increased information.

Further reading...

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