

Successful communication is key



One of the most fundamental Practitioner Proficiencies identified by NLP coach **Mark Shields**, director of the Life Practice Group, is the art and science of successful communication with our clients.

Although there are so many excellent courses available today to improve our knowledge and skill I've come to the conclusion that, good as all these courses are, most of them are missing some very basic yet fundamentally critical points.

Most courses will do a great job in teaching you the "what", and then support this with great principles, case studies and extra knowledge. But, if you take yourself forward to your graduation and visualize yourself with your first client...for the first time you are in the real world with a live client and a need to make a living. Something that, all of a sudden with your first client facing you, becomes very apparent and perhaps a little daunting. Most practitioners are just not prepared for that moment.

There are a number of interpersonal skills that will be fundamental to your success as a practitioner and we begin today by introducing you to the most important of all of them.

Just to remind you, research suggests that 10% of alternative medical practitioners practice full-time and 33% of this 10% earn a comfortable living. This highlights the need for real and meaningful training when it comes to interpersonal skills.

These skills have a proven track record in helping practitioners not only to dramatically improve the performance of their business, but also to help practitioners' own levels of confidence and motivation.

The art of building rapport

Rapport is the ability to join someone in their "reality" or "map of the world" and to make them feel comfortable, that you have a strong common bond and that you understand them. These are the things that put people at ease,

make them more responsive to you, let down their guard and trust, like and befriend you. Essentially, rapport is the most important skill that you can develop as a therapist – and for that matter in your everyday life. Rapport is the ability to communicate successfully. Rapport is the ability to make someone understand that you can fulfill their needs as well as allowing you to get the insights that you need from them to fulfill your own.

The saying goes "people like people who are like themselves". The old cliché that "opposites attract" is actually just a misunderstanding of the depth and subtlety that rapport goes to. When "opposites attract" it must be that the so-called opposites both have the commonality of being excited by the new and different, the sense of specialness and uniqueness of being "opposites"; in fact you will inevitably see in so-called "opposites" that the underlying similarities, value systems etc will be very alike.

How is rapport created? First and foremost by finding things in common.

The most effective ways of doing this are by mirroring and matching – two concepts that originated in NLP. Mirroring and matching are essentially the ability to pay close attention to someone's language, beliefs, values and physiology and copy them either overtly or covertly, consciously or unconsciously.

7% of communication is transmitted through the words themselves;

38% via how the words are said (tone of voice); 55% through non-verbal communication (body physiology)

Mirroring and matching

Mirroring is essentially copying without causing offense and without being obvious: reflecting

back a client's physical patterns of behavior. Matching is almost identical as a concept but normally includes the person's personal perception, language, beliefs etc as well as the physical mannerisms

Matching enables a high degree of control and influence over the individual that you are matching, in that it can make them feel totally at ease and fully responsive to what you have to say. This happens every day in our "normal" lives.

Pacing and leading

Once rapport is created we then use it to "pace and lead" the client in the direction that we want – what is most beneficial to them. It is also a barometer to let us know when rapport has been broken. Pacing and leading is the process in which we pace (continually match) the client and lead them to more resourceful, constructive and beneficial states, behaviors and beliefs etc.

Summing up

In my opinion building effective and meaningful rapport is the most important skill you can master as a practitioner. It will help you in all areas of your practice. NLP skills are excellent for learning how to improve client relationships through building better rapport and developing stronger and more meaningful practitioner client relationships. www.lifepractice.co.uk



About the author

Mark Shields, Life Coach, Author, Media Expert and Motivational Speaker, is Managing Director of Life Practice UK, specialists in Personal and Business Coaching. Contact: 01462 451473, www.lifepractice.co.uk, info@lifepractice.co.uk