



THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS
EVERY PASTORAL CARE FACILITATOR
NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT BUILDING...

Rapport

TIP SHEET

peoplecare.GLOBAL



What is rapport building?

The formation of a healthy working relationship requires mutual trust, affinity and understanding. When the spirit of a relationship seeks other's best interests, an interpersonal 'bond' is formed. This bond transitions two parties from 'you' and 'me', to 'we' (people working together for a common good). Given that the provision of pastoral care is only as effective as the rapport that's established, it is essential facilitators know the best ways to build rapport.

Insecurity

If facilitators don't feel secure, neither will the people they work with. Insecurity is one of the chief reasons discontent forms in a working relationship. Insecurity is evident when facilitators talk too much or too fast, are hesitant or act nervous, use terms that are too complex (trying to impress), become overwhelmed by the complexity of problems, or conversely, resort to being overly confident, dogmatic or judgemental (compensating for insecurity). Insecurities typically surface when facilitators:

Are overly concerned with what people may think	"Do they think I'm capable? What if they question my age or experience? They may think I'm not competent."
Question their own competence	"The last time I tried to help with someone in this area I felt like I let them down. Maybe I don't know enough?"
Rely on their own wisdom, instead of God's	"Communicating areas (demographics/topics/themes) that you do and do not feel comfortable working with."
Become self-focused and compare themselves	"This person/couple/family has previously worked with other facilitators/counsellors. I wonder how I compare?"
Feel they need to solve problems or resolve issues	"They have such high expectations, saying 'I'm their last hope'. I'll try my best, but I don't know if I can deliver?"



Enhancing security

Don't act secure, be secure! Wise pastoral care facilitators are always confident. Despite the diverse (and sometimes desperate) situations they are presented with; they operate with a quiet calm and genuine sense of peace. This is not because they have all the answers. Rather, their confidence comes in knowing 'The One' who does (as well as the most trustworthy source to go for answers – the Holy Bible). When a facilitator's confidence is in Christ (instead of themselves), their priorities change. Instead of focusing on solving people's problems, wise facilitators enhance security by prioritising the relationship and embarking upon a journey to find resolutions together. In this light, there is no challenge that is too great for wise facilitators to walk alongside people with.

First impressions count

When entering into a working relationship, the first 5 minutes of interaction is important for the development of security. The fastest ways to enhance security is to have people feel at ease with you. This can be achieved in a variety of ways.

Identify those you feel confident to apply:

Learn how people like to be addressed; use their preferred name (or nickname)	
Make an emotional connection (ranging from laughter to compassion)	
Ask open ended questions (i.e. what, when, where or how) to get people talking	
In everything you do, operate with a sense of peace and calm (talk slowly)	
Pray with people and invite God's Holy Spirit to lead and guide your conversation	
Ask questions with interest; paraphrase and validate responses to your questions	
Communicate empathy by identifying with people's concerns and feelings	
Talk in ways that people will easily understand (don't try to impress with jargon)	
Convey a level of understanding towards people's challenges and opportunities	
Be well prepared. Know what you're talking about	
Try to connect over things unrelated to pastoral care (e.g. interests/passions)	
Give compliments and offer encouragement for things you like or find interesting	
Where appropriate, use age-relevant humour	
When working with families, ask kids questions (get kids talking, not only parents)	
Present yourself as 'normal' (as opposed to weird, quirky, or 'super-spiritual')	
Engage a short fun activity with kids (parents want to see how well you can relate)	

A personalized experience makes all the difference.

PEOPLE ARE MORE LIKELY TO MAINTAIN ENGAGEMENT WHEN THEY GENUINELY FEEL SAFE, ACCEPTED AND CARED FOR.

IDENTIFY MOTIVATION	SOLUTION FOCUSED	CULTIVATE HOPE
Discover readiness, advantages and/or obstacles for change	Set SMART goals (simple, meaningful, achievable, realistic and timely)	Paint a picture of what life could look like beyond current concerns
CLIENT EXPECTATIONS	CONTINUITY & CONSISTENCY	CREATE ANTICIPATION
Communicate direction, roles/responsibilities and a timeframe to work towards	Schedule meeting times (emphasise importance of regularity and reliability)	Convey what progress should look like and when they should expect it
EVALUATION & REVIEW	COMFORT & REASSURANCE	MAKE IT PERSONAL
Conduct a base-line evaluation by which to measure growth/progress	Offer appropriate physical (i.e. touch shoulder/hand) and verbal encouragement	Following the initial consultation, touch base via phone (to convey care)

Buy in

The people you work with need to be 'on board' for the journey-of-change that you're inviting them to embark on. People who feel misunderstood, pressured or obligated in anyway, will quickly disengage from pastoral care services. Therefore, be sure to regularly 'check in' with the people you work with, to ensure they (a) feel in complete control of the choices/decisions they're making, (b) understand the process/lessons/principles you are sharing, and (c) are still motivated to 'go the distance' together with you.

Consider regularly asking the following questions:

“Is that okay with you?”	“Do you feel comfortable with that?”
“Does that make sense?”	“Can you commit to that?”
“Are you able to follow through on that?”	“Have you got any questions?”
“Do you mind if we do that now?”	“Do you agree?”

Close well

It can take an entire session to establish enough rapport for a person to work up the courage and disclose what they ‘really’ want to talk to you about. When this happens, it can feel like an emotional ‘bomb’ has been dropped (right when the session should conclude). If there’s insufficient time to debrief last-minute disclosures, at best you’ll run the risk of invalidating the person’s concern or at worst, undermining a possible duty of care. This can be detrimental to the pastoral-care-alliance you worked so hard to build. Therefore, when wrapping up your initial consultation, always leave time (15+/- minutes) to both pre-empt and prompt such disclosures. In the absence of last-minute ‘exposes’, use this time to discuss mutual expectations and come into alignment (making sure you’re both on the same page moving forward). Where possible, end your consultation on a positive note, giving people something to look forward to when they see you next.

**Last(ing)
impressions
are equally
as important
as first
impressions.**