



# Building Rapport in Investigation Interviews



**Investigators who build rapport with interview subjects develop trust and credibility and are able to get better information from interviews. Two important skills investigators can use to build rapport are mirroring and developing shared experiences.**



# Mirroring

Subjects in investigation interviews are more likely to identify with and trust people who are like them.

Investigators can encourage this through mirroring, a technique that involves a subtle method of shared rhythm, matching language and tone of voice and assuming similar body positions as the subject. The following three tips can help investigators to mirror successfully:

- 1. Learn as much as you can** about the interviewee. Investigators must understand the emotive state of each interviewee in order to mirror them successfully. Conduct background research on the interviewee's culture, habits, hobbies and attitudes before the interview.
- 2. Don't mimic or mock.** Be similar to the person you are interviewing without making it obvious. Don't copy their movements too quickly. Be as subtle as possible to avoid detection, which would likely offend the subject and jeopardize your chance of getting the truth.
- 3. Proceed slowly.** If someone appears closed at the outset of the interview, mirror the closed demeanor and slowly begin to open up. Often, the subject will see that you are more relaxed and will begin opening up as well.

## Some additional tips:

- Dress in a similar style and level of formality as the interviewee.
- Sit at the same level as the subject.
- Listen actively by maintaining eye contact and making encouraging sounds.
- Be aware that the interviewee may be nervous or unwilling to cooperate with you.

## Developing Shared Experiences



Developing shared experiences allows the interviewee to identify with the interviewer. A brief discussion about a common interest or experience – sports, weather, traffic, etc., can help open the doors to a conversation and relax the interviewee.

1. **Get a conversation going.** Ease into interviews by asking subjects about themselves, their jobs and outside interests.
2. **Ask follow-up questions** and demonstrate a genuine interest in what the interviewee has to say. Use the interviewee's name during the conversation and, most importantly, let the subject do the talking.
3. **Establish a baseline.** Pay attention to the interviewee's tone of voice, pace of speech and physical movements (or lack of) during the initial, rapport-building conversation. This allows an investigator to establish a baseline of speech and behavior that can be used to evaluate future responses, as some people change the way they speak or act when they aren't being honest.



## Maintaining Rapport

In order to maintain rapport with the interviewee, an investigator needs to be flexible and reactive, and may need to make subtle adjustments throughout the interview, based on the subject's responses and behavior.

Should the interviewee start to become closed off as the interview progresses, the techniques of mirroring and shared experiences can be used to get a subject to open up again.