

**Transformational Solutions to  
Stylistic Roadblocks to  
Communication (SRCs): Theory  
and Practice**

Speaker: Shawn Christopher Shea, M.D.

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**About the Speaker**

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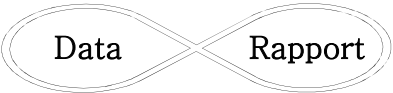
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**Person-centered Interviewing: Twin Skills**



The diagram consists of two ovals, one on the left containing the word 'Data' and one on the right containing the word 'Rapport'. These two ovals are connected by a horizontal infinity symbol (∞) formed by two parallel, slightly curved lines that cross in the middle.

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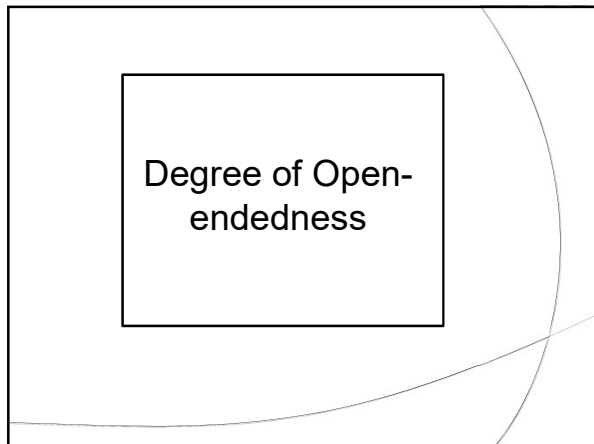
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| Degree of Open-endedness Continuum (DOC) |                 |               |
|--|-----------------|---------------|
| <u>Open</u>                              | <u>Variable</u> | <u>Closed</u> |
| $Q_O$                                    | $Q_{SW}$        | $Q_C$         |
| $S_{GC}$                                 | $Q_Q$           | $S_C$         |
|  | $S_I$           |               |
|  | $S_E$           |               |
|  | $S_F$           |               |

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**Open-ended Questions**

Always Begin with "How" or "What" & Have a Broad Set of Potential Answers

- "What are some of the stresses you are coping with recently?"
- "How would you handle the divorce differently if you could do it again?"
- "What are some of the problems with your boss?"

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## Gentle Commands

Always Begin with words like “Tell me about . . .” or “Describe your . . .” & Have a Broad Set of Potential Answers

- a. “Tell me something about your brother.”
- b. “Describe your initial reaction to me.”
- c. “Tell me what some of your hopes are about your marriage.”

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## Closed-ended Questions

The question asks for a specific bit of information, is easily answered by one word or a short-phrase, is multiple choice, or can be answered with a simple ‘yes’ or a ‘no’.

- a. “What medication is your son taking?”
- b. “Are you feeling happy, sad, or angry?”
- c. “Do you think your son will be held back this year in school?”

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### Closed-ended Statements

Statements that do not suggest that any response is expected from the client and frequently are of an explanatory, educational, or directional nature.

- a. "I read the letter that your previous therapist sent."
- b. "Panic attacks can be helped by cognitive behavioral therapies."
- c. "Please sit in whatever chair looks most comfortable to you."

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### Swing Questions

These questions are characterized by the quality of asking the client whether he or she wants to answer. They often begin with words such as, "Can you tell me . . . ?" or "Can you describe what . . . ?"

- a. "Can you say something about what your boss is doing that you don't like?"
- b. "Can you tell me what type of action is going down with drug use back on your cell block?"
- c. "Could you describe your feelings about Mary?"

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### Transforming Swing Questions

Could you tell me some of the things that your wife finds upsetting about your drinking?

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### Transforming Swing Questions

~~Could you~~ Tell me some of the things that your wife finds upsetting about your drinking?

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### Qualitative Questions

They inquire about the quality of the state of the client, his symptoms, his relations, or activities. They frequently begin with the words, "How is your . . .?" Theoretically, they can always be answered with the words, "Just fine."

- a. "How's your appetite?"
- b. "How are things going in your job recently?"
- c. "How is John adapting to retirement?"

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## Statements of Inquiry

Statements of inquiry are complete sentences followed by a question mark. They are intended to stimulate a response from the client, but structurally they are statements not questions. By definition they are leading questions.

- a. "So you left the marriage after three years?"
- b. "You used a lot of drugs back in college?"
- c. "So you're not really having suicidal thoughts?"

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## Empathic Statements

Interviewer attempts to communicate that he or she understands the patients feelings or thoughts or situation. Often begin with words such as, "It sounds like . . . ."

- a. "It sounds like it's a lonely place to be."
- b. "It's a lonely place to be."
- c. "It looks like you are feeling very sad right now."

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## Empathic Valence (Shea, 2017)

Represents the intensity of the empathic statement to either be powerfully effective (with reasonably engageable clients) or distinctly counterproductive (wary or paranoid clients)

Two axes of empathic valence:

- b. Degree of certitude implied by the interviewer
- c. Degree of intuition demonstrated by the interviewer

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## Facilitating Statements

These statements include the wide range of single utterances or short phrases used to signal that the interviewer is carefully listening. They metacommunicate that the interviewer wants to hear more.

- a. "Uh-huh."
- b. "Go on."
- c. "I see."

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## 3 Types of Stylistic Roadblocks to Communication (SRCs)

- 1) Wandering Interview (the client presents with tangential speech and loquaciousness)
- 2) Shut-down Interviews (the client answers tersely and seems disinterested, guarded, or mildly hostile)
- 3) Rehearsed Interview (the client attempts to dominate the interview by enthusiastically discussing only topics he or she chooses.)

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TABLE 1 INTERVIEW TYPOLOGIES

| Interview Type      | Characteristics of Patient  |                             |   | Characteristics of Interviewer                          |                     |   |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|---|---|---------------------|---|
|                     | Duration of Utterance (DOU) | Response Time Latency (RTL) | Natural Body Language such as Eye Contact | Ratio of Open-Ended Questions to Closed-Ended Questions | Focusing Statements | Facilitating Maneuvers, Empathic Statements |
| Shut-down interview | ↓                           | ↑                           | ↓   | ↓   | ↑                   | ↓   |
| Wandering interview | ↑                           | ↓                           | ↑   | ↑   | ↓                   | ↑   |
| Rehearsed interview | ↑                           | ↓                           | ↓   | ↓   | ↓                   | ↑   |

KEY: ↑ = increased, ↓ = decreased, ↓ = either increased or decreased.

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## Role-Play

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### Transforming Wandering Interviews

Rely on simple, strategic structuring techniques

- 1) Use closed-ended questions
- 2) Avoid use of open-ended and variable responses
- 3) Employ focusing statements
- 4) Cut-offs (appropriately interrupting a client's train of speech)
- 5) "Piggy-back Cut-offs" (interrupting the train of speech by using an empathic statement immediately followed by a focusing statement)
- 6) Non-verbal interventions

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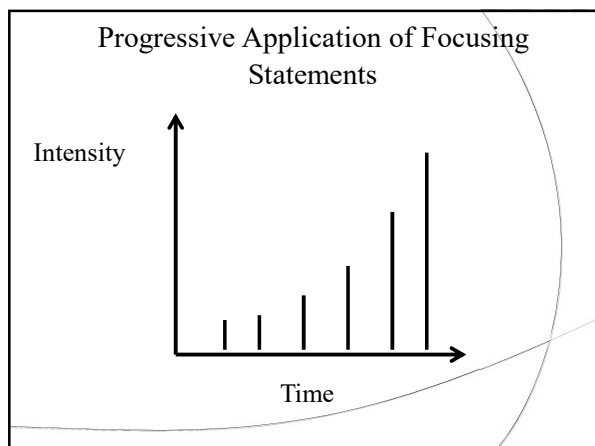
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## Role-Play

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| TABLE 1. INTERVIEW TYPOLOGIES |                             |                             |   |   |                     |   |
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| Rehearsed interview           | ↑                           | ↓                           | ↓   | ↓   | ↓                   | ↑   |

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| Transforming Shut-Down Interviews I |
|-------------------------------------|
| 1) Use Open-ended Reponses          |
| a) Open-ended questions             |
| b) Gentle Commands                  |
| 2) Avoid Closed-ended Response      |
| a) Closed-ended questions           |
| 3) Avoid Variable Responses         |
| a) Swing questions                  |
| b) Empathic statements              |

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| Degree of Open-endedness Continuum (DOC) |                 |                |
|--|-----------------|----------------|
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| Q <sub>O</sub>                           | Q <sub>SW</sub> | Q <sub>C</sub> |
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|  | S <sub>I</sub>  |                |
|  | S <sub>E</sub>  |                |
|  | S <sub>F</sub>  |                |

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## Transforming Shut-Down Interviews II

- 1) Use a string of at least 7 Open-ended techniques

Q<sub>O</sub> Q<sub>O</sub> Q<sub>O</sub> S<sub>GC</sub> Q<sub>O</sub> S<sub>GC</sub> Q<sub>O</sub> Q<sub>O</sub>

- 2) Choose an affectively loaded topic that the client wants to talk about.

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## Role-Play

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| Rehearsed interview | ↑                           | ↓                           | ↓   | ↓   | ↓                   | ↑   |

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### Transforming Rehearsed Interviews

- 1) Effective use of “phantom gates”  
(abrupt transitions which may interrupt a rehearsed interview by catching the client off-guard)
- 2) Affective interjection  
(a technique of breaking through resistances by discussing affectively charged issues)

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### Examples of Affective Interjection

- 1) What impact has your drinking had on your family?
- 2) What could you have done differently that might have changed things?
- 3) With all your pain, so deep, so powerful, what has kept you going?

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### About the Speaker

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