

A. The Keys to Compassionate Interviewing

Active Listening

“Compassionate interviewing”—caring about the feelings of the people you’re talking to—is best shown by **active listening**, meaning you indicate your **interest, attention, and engagement** through:

- **Physical Actions:** Lean toward your client, keep a relaxed position, make eye contact, smile, and nod.
- **Conversational Actions:** Verbally acknowledge client’s statements (“I see,” “I understand,” etc.), restate what client has said, add sympathetic words.



Listener Orientation

As an interviewer, strive for effective **listener orientation**, which is defined by these characteristics:

- **Empathy:** Put yourself in the other person’s shoes. Express your empathy through positive verbal statements like, “I understand.”

- **Respect:** Treat each client with unconditional courtesy and regard.
- **Acceptance:** Do not make value judgments about the client.
- **Congruence:** Do not send any mixed messages to the client during your conversation (for example, saying, “I’m interested in your situation,” then yawning).
- **Concreteness:** Provide the client with specific, factual information and give direct, concise answers to any questions.
- **Undivided Attention:** Be organized and prepared for a client meeting. Choose a location with no distractions, have your information on hand, and don’t bring any negative emotions to the interview.

Knowledge and training are your best tools for facilitating a productive interview. With a strong command of information, you will be more relaxed and confident, your delivery will be smooth and direct, and your client will be more at ease.