

# Research Report

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A recent report on the subject of rapport says that there is one simple way to make the client feel that a counsellor is really understanding them, and that is to lean forward. But not just any amount of lean will do. It must be 41 degrees or more — quite a lot of lean. And the findings are that a lesser degree of lean — 16 to 40 degrees — is much less effective in ensuring high rapport, as experienced by the client. No lean at all is even less effective.

The research method itself is of interest. A counselling psychologist was trained to be a 'standard client'. First of all a real interview around a felt concern was recorded. Then sixteen key biographical, environmental and emotional statements were taken from that interview and printed in large type on cards. These cards were then placed behind the head of the person conducting the interview. They were used during the course of the session,

verbatim and in order. The 'standard client' had a five button device, hidden from the counsellor, and at intervals suggested by a bug in the earpiece of the device she recorded her level of rapport. The intervals were one minute apart. At the same time three video cameras recorded side and front views of both client and counsellor. Forward lean was determined by applying a protractor to the video screen.

The authors suggest that the training of counsellors could be improved by teaching them to lean forward more, because the extreme lean 'appeared to be most effective if maintained fairly steadily during the whole of the present interviews'.

Christopher F. Sharpley and Anastasia Sagris, 'When does counsellor forward lean influence client-perceived rapport?' *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling* 23/3 387-394, 1995

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## CONFERENCE REPORTS

### *Beyond the Brain*

Cambridge, August 1995

Richard House

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In recent years there has been a minor explosion of interest in what is termed 'consciousness research'. This impressive

conference was organised jointly by the Scientific and Medical Network and the Institute of Noetic Sciences (Sausalito,