



PLC 104 Activity 3 Mirroring Technique

Researchers at the Boston University Medical School studied films of people having conversations. The researchers noticed that the people talking began (unconsciously) to co-ordinate their movements (including finger movements, eye blinks and head nods). As the conversations progressed, these people were getting into a deeper level rapport with each other, and didn't even have a clue to what was going on, this is because we communicate our ideas and concepts at this 93% unconscious level.

And NLP rapport skills teach us how to communicate at that unconscious level. NLP teaches how to mirror and match that 55% physiology, 38% tonality and 7% predicates or process words.

The key to establishing rapport is an ability to enter another person's world by assuming a similar state of mind. The first thing to do is to become more like the other person by matching and mirroring the person's behaviors.

When done correctly, mirroring can build rapport and a strong connection with others.

1. Build Your Connection

Your key to building rapport and a strong connection is to first feel that connection yourself. If you aren't feeling it, they aren't feeling it.

Here's how:

- **Fronting:** To start, you want to give the other person your complete attention. Start by fronting the other person, that is, squaring your body so you are directly facing them. They need to literally be the center of your universe.
- **Eye Contact:** A funny thing about eye-contact, too little and you will seem tentative and too much you might seem creepy. Go for the middle ground (see tip#1 in this post for more info!). This not only demonstrates your interest level in the other person through your undivided attention, but according to Dr. Kerstin Uväs-Moberg in his book *The Oxytocin Factor*, making eye contact releases Oxytocin, the

hormone that creates those warm feelings we feel when making a close connection.

- **Triple Nod:** The triple nod does two important things. First, research shows when you do the triple nod, the other person will speak 3 to 4 times longer making them feel listened to and important. And second, when you nod, you are basically agreeing with what the other person is saying and this builds what scientists call a “yes set”. It is like when a salesperson asks you a couple of simple questions like “Is it still June?” or “It sure is warm today isn’t it?” you say yes (even if only in your mind) and research shows once you start saying yes, the more likely it is you will continue to do so. Yes sets build connections. So when you nod, you build your own yes set and further strengthen the connection you are making.
- **Pretend, then stop pretending:** At this point, you are fronting the person, making appropriate eye contact and using your triple nod. Likely you are already feeling a very strong connection, but to fully complete it, use the power of your imagination. Do this by pretending the person you are with is the most interesting person you have ever met. Really imagine it and act accordingly. Then stop pretending.

Throughout all of this, a lot of mirroring is likely happening naturally on its own, but here are some mirroring techniques you can now use to build and amplify their connection to you.

2. Pace and Volume

Many times, people think of mirroring as mimicking physical actions, but mirroring refers to all non-verbals. Start with mirroring the pace and volume of the other person’s speech. If they are a super fast talker and loud, increase your volume and animation. If they are soft, slow and more relaxed, match them at this level instead. Pace and volume matching is easy to do and much less obvious than physical mimicry.

3. Identify their Punctuator

Because you have been carefully paying attention to the person you’re mirroring with the entire time, you will have noticed a favorite punctuator

that the other person uses to make a point. It could be an eyebrow flash (quick raise of the eyebrows) or some type of hand gesture like politicians often use. Here is story of how I used a punctuator: Earlier this year when I was having lunch with a physician who was pitching a public, private and institutional partnership, I noticed that when he was particularly adamant about an issue, he would bring both hands in front of his body and thrust them vigorously up and down. As he spoke, I prompted him on by nodding in pace with his plea and when he came to his conclusion, I mimicked his double-handed gesture as he made it himself. He stopped, looked at me, cocked his head and said “Yes! You understand it completely!” and smiled with a nod. The thing is, I hadn’t said a single word.

4. Testing the Connection

This last part is optional, but if you really want to test your connection, make an overt action unrelated to your conversation and see if it is mirrored back.

During the break following a keynote speech I had given, an audience member came up to me and we discussed the similarities that he and I had with our fathers who had both been in World War II. At one point while he was talking, I had an irritating itch on my nose which I quickly scratched but then I noticed he reached up and scratched his own nose all the while continuing on with his story. It seemed so out of place, I decided to test this to see if it was a fluke. A moment later, I scratched my head and he suddenly did exactly the same thing. It was so odd I almost laughed out loud.

Warning: Do not do repeated testing as this will quickly break the connection!

One final word of caution: When you mirror, make sure that you are mirroring positive non-verbals and nothing negative like turning away, blocking with your arms folded, closing your eyes or looking away.