TRAINING OUTPOST
Addressing Reluctant Interviewees

D·PREP
SAFETY DIVISION

Acknowledge Their Resistance

While you may conduct these types of interviews frequently, the student you are working with may never have experience it before. If we are to build a connection with our interviewee and address any reluctance or defensiveness for them answering our questions, this must start with acknowledging their resistance and attempting to better understand their concerns.

Build Rapport

Continuing to ask questions and conduct an interview without rapport and connection with the interviewee is like building a house when the foundation isn't level. Before the interview continues, we should address the reason for their reluctance and make some effort to resolve this conflict.

Listen to Their Concerns

When confronted with someone who is frustrated, angry, non-compliant or disengaged, we should pause our questions and ask them to elaborate on their feelings. If we skip past this and continue with our questions, the answers will likely be guarded and have questionable validity. While it takes more time on the part of the interviewer, address the reasons for their reluctance and engage in empathetic listening, particularly if you feel as if you heard all of this before and disagree with the interviewee. Allowing them some time and space to get their frustrations off their chest will often yield an opportunity for them to return the favor by responding to your questions in a more engaged manner.

The Up River Story

Recall the story of a man who, one after the other, rescued several people from drowning in a river. Eventually, he walked upstream to investigate, where he observed a bully pushing people into the water. He struggled with the bully, who was eventually arrested and taken away. The problem of the drowning people was solved by his "upstream" work.

Attending to reluctance early in the process is the equivalent of this upstream work. Once the bully is subdued, we are in a better position to proceed.

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