

Getting to know your partner: Using the concepts of behavioral interviewing.

The basic premise of behavioral interviewing is that past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior. Understanding your partner's past behaviors will allow you to help them think about what they are likely to do in the future when a similar situation or conditions presents itself, if this is the best and most productive approach, and what they might want you help in developing alternative ways of behaving. You are "interviewing" them to better understand, facilitate their understanding and build a foundation for ways of helping them to choose to continue or change the way they behave by exploring alternatives.

The best way is to have them related their past experiences in story form using a three step process, SBO's:

Describe the situation (S)

How did they behave (B)

What were the outcomes (O)

As a mentor your job is to listen carefully, and probe further for more depth or detail such as "What happened that was unexpected?" or "Walk me through your thought process."

Some examples:

1. Describe a situation where you set challenging goals for yourself and accomplished them.

What was the situation that lead you to set this goal?

What did you hope to accomplish and why was this important to you?

In what way did these goals represent a stretch or challenge for you?

How did you go about achieving this goal? What specific things did you do?

What level of effort did you have to put in to achieve you goal?

How did others feel about your actions?

What was the result?

2. Which of your accomplishments have been the most fulfilling or rewarding for you?

Where did the idea or assignment come from?

What obstacles did you overcome in carrying it out?

What aspects of this accomplishment gave you the most satisfaction or sense of fulfillment?

How did your efforts pay off?

Your goal is to create as a legitimate part of your mentor-partner relationship a time for discussing past situations as an illumination to the future. Whether you simply want to understand more about your partner or your partner feels at a loss about how to behave in a new situation or would like to think about potential alternatives, look to the past, and ask for a story using SBO's.

Helping your partner understand "Who Am I", is a life long definition process. You can help by reflecting on their past behaviors as a good indicator of who they are, what they value and thus the choices they will make and the behaviors they are likely to exhibit in the future. Modeling this approach will teach them a lesson that will go beyond your relationship.