

Rapport

Rapport is important in life. The meaning of this word is “a relation of harmony, conformity, accord or affinity” – this indicates its importance in communication. Rapport is actually a process we engage in. Without rapport – no one will get what they want. Rapport is an ability to relate to others in such a way that a climate of trust is established.

How do you know when rapport is present in a relationship? Rapport is that feeling you get when you look at someone and think “I will get on well with this person.” Or it is a feeling of having a certain level of comfort – a sense of ease and/or shared understanding. Rapport is what bonds us, in the first instance. When rapport is missing, it becomes the top priority in any communication.

Establishing rapport seems to be a natural process amongst humans. Rapport can be instantaneous (when we just click) ; it can also be built up over time ; and rapport can be broken – accidentally or consciously by using NLP. Rapport building was one of the first NLP approaches, and the skill of building rapport, even with others who are ‘difficult’ is a key skill that a Mentee may be seeking assistance with. So let’s find out how it’s done.

The first thing to understand is that mind and body are one system. Secondly communication is constant and it is two way, and it begins from the moment of connection. Thus, when we consider rapport – first impressions are important. First impressions are filtered through our representational systems, what they are :

- Saying
- Doing
- How they look

And everything that happens subsequent to first impressions will either reinforce or contrast with that impression. As humans we like people who seem to be like us, and we’ve all had experiences where we’ve for some reason taken an instant dislike to someone. Whether we ‘like’ or ‘dislike’ another probably happened in a few seconds and was quite unconscious to us.

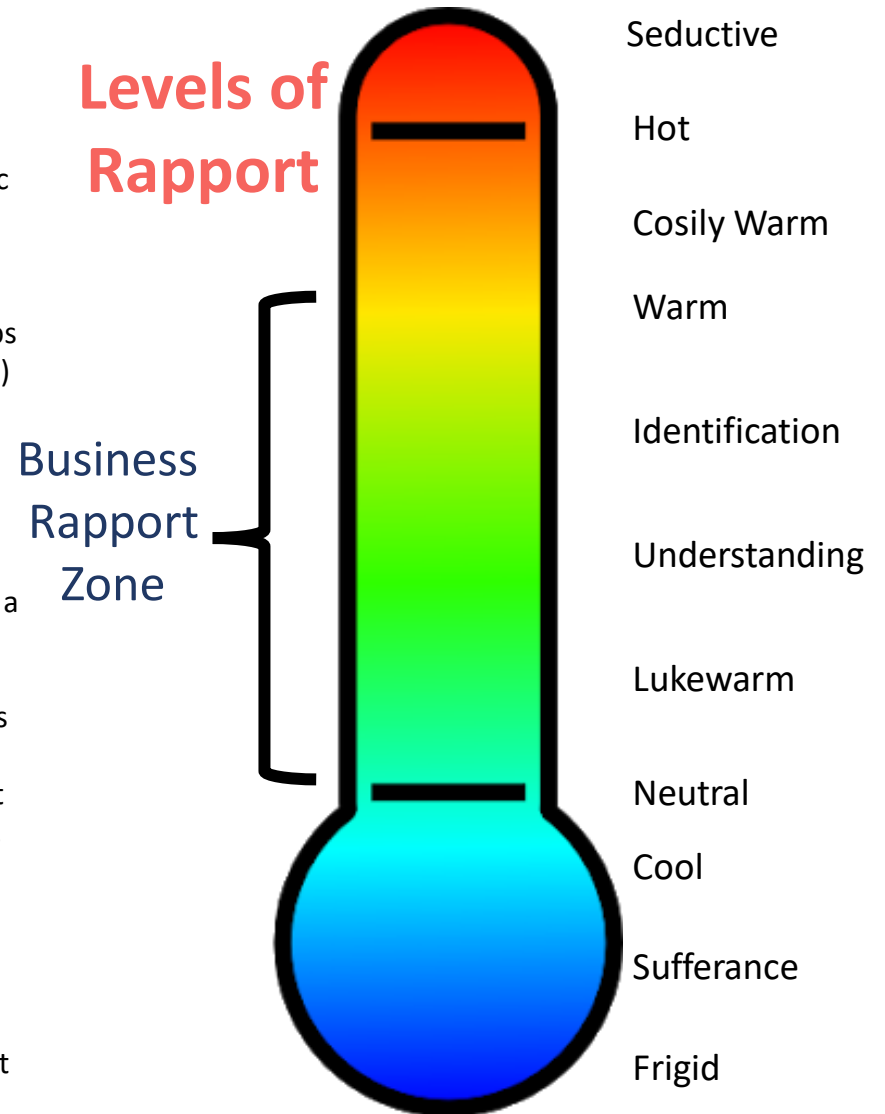
There are people who seem to be able to get on with everyone, even people they have little or nothing in common with. People skilled at rapport building are able to quickly put others at ease when in their company. We might refer to this ability as having charisma or gravitas – but it’s actually an ability to create rapport very quickly and it is a learnable skill. Rapport is a kind of influence, and when you have it, it won’t have your attention, you’ll just be at ease - like a dance where one leads and the other follows.

As a Mentor, being able to build rapport is a critical success factor for the relationship with your Mentee, AND it is a precursor to being able to apply any other NLP techniques with your Mentee.

Reflection on Rapport

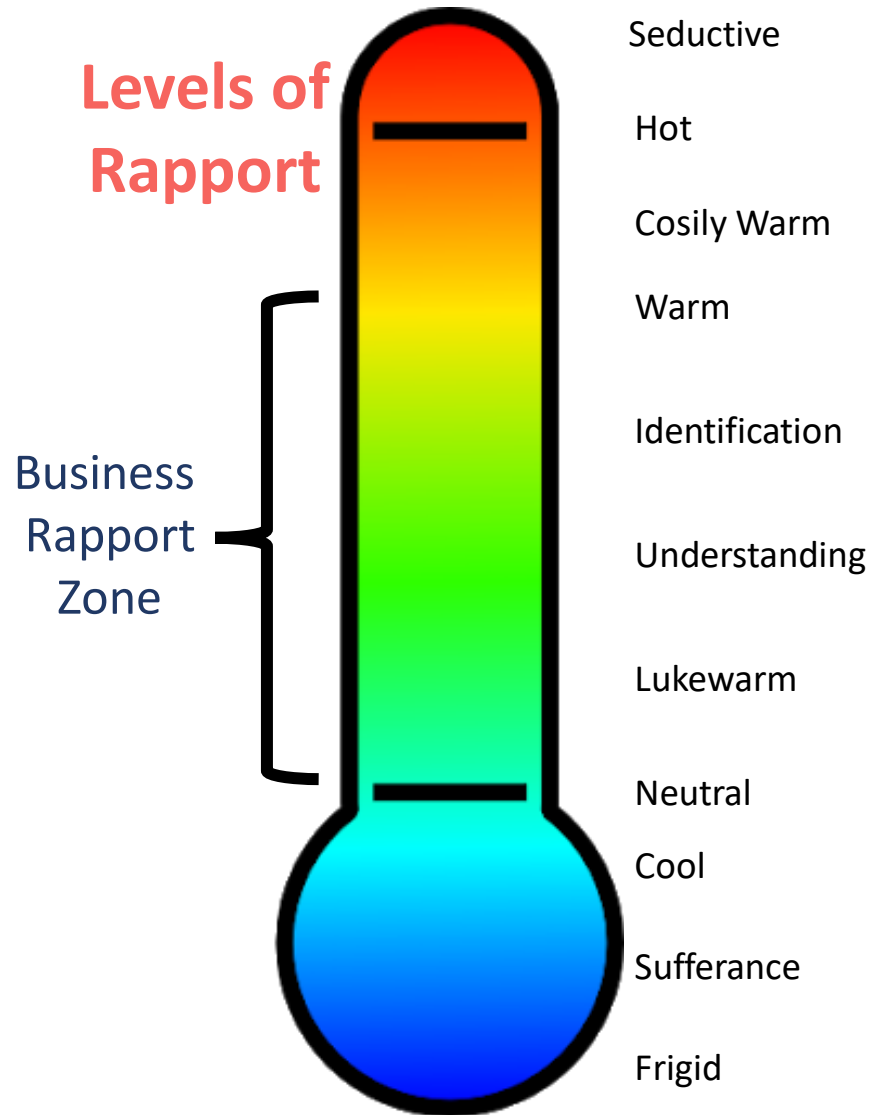
We are going to take a moment to reflect on levels of rapport we have with others in our life.

1. Think of someone in your life that you feel you have a good healthy and positive rapport with.... what is it about them? About you? About the dynamic between you that is present that creates that rapport? Make a note of these factors.
2. Think of someone in your life that you can take or leave, that you have perhaps a passing connection with, but it's not one way or the other.... (It's a bit 'meh!) what is it about them? About you? About the dynamic between you that is present that generates this level of rapport? Make a note of these factors.
3. Now bring to mind someone either in your life at present, or in the past that you really had the 'hots' for, what is or was it about them? About you? About the dynamic between you that creates or created this level of rapport? Make a note of these factors.
4. And finally, think of someone in your life, either past or now for whom there is no connection what so ever, that your response toward is beyond neutral and has headed into the freezer. What is or was it about them? About you? About the dynamic between the two of you that resulted in this level of rapport? (IE. none at all) Make a note about these factors.
5. Review the notes you have made and see what is similar or different about these various levels of rapport.
6. Then, continue to click forward on this same page to see the Levels of Rapport presented in diagrammatic form.



Rapport Audit

Levels of Rapport



Using our Rapport Thermometer, take a few moments to review those individuals who are important, or critical to you life, the achievement of your goals, you need to influence in business, or another life arena. Write their names against the level of rapport you currently have with them. Are there any that you need to acknowledge are not as high on the barometer that you would like? Are there some that you are too chummy with or close to for what needs to be done? For these two groupings draw an arrow to where you feel it would be healthy for them to be, in order for the relationship and the outcome you seek to be delivered. And the invitation is to use the approaches in the following pages to shift the amount of Rapport. For those who are in the right place – that's great.

Rapport Mode : Facial Expression



This is action hero Jackie Chan. Pretend you've never seen him before. Look at his face for ten seconds. What do you think he's like, as a person? Do you think you'd get on with him? Try to guess, from looking at his face as it is expressing in this image, if he's a nice guy. What kind of emotion is going on within him? Chances are, you will think he's a nice guy. Very approachable and open – contented perhaps, comfortable in himself. Look at his head, how he carries it in a humble, slightly-downward angle, yet the slight tilt shows warmth and kindness. His smile is mostly with his eyes, and he shows his teeth which tells us he's genuine.



This is no one famous. Like the image above his head is slightly down-turned, he is smiling. Look at his face for ten seconds. What do you think he's like, as a person? Do you think you'd get on with him? Try to guess, from looking at his face as it is expressing in this image, if he's a nice guy. What kind of emotion is going on within him? Did you pick up on his smugness? The raised eyebrows that are slightly whimsical, slightly crooked smile – closed mouth. The smile is almost a smirk – as if there is an internal joke going on that you're not let in on. The hand on the chin – indicating a sense of superiority



This is also no one famous. Unlike the images above her head is looking directly ahead. Look at her face for ten seconds. What do you think she's like, as a person? Do you think you'd get on with her? Try to guess, from looking at her face as it is expressing in this image, if she's a nice woman. What kind of emotion is going on within her? Did you pick up on the contempt? The lip is tightened and raised on just one side of the face. The mouth is closed - and even a bit 'clamped'. The eyes have no warmth but seem to look directly through or are focusing behind the person looking.



Our final woman's eyes are looking directly at the person looking at her. Look at her face for ten seconds. What do you think she's like, as a person? Do you think you'd get on with her? Try to guess, from looking at her face as it is expressing in this image, if she's a nice woman. What kind of emotions is going on within her? She's just happy is she not? The corner of the mouth is turned up, she is showing lots of teeth. Her head is tilted slightly to the side and upward – in an older person there would be crow's feet at the side of the eyes. The cheeks are pushed up cherry like.

These, so subtle mannerisms of facial expression, and many more help make up the concept of rapport, which we take in unconsciously. For more information about micro-expressions, you may explore this at <https://www.slideshare.net/Savipra/microexpressions-62633492>. We recommend you take a little bit of time to look in the mirror at your own expressions as a way of building your conscious awareness of others, and how you do look with different emotions as well as the actual facial feel for yourself.

Rapport Mode: Mirroring (Matching and Pacing)

A process called mirroring is very powerful as a process when we want to gain rapport with another person, particularly if trust in competence is already established. Mirroring is the conscious matching of certain of the other person's behaviours. Mirroring does in fact occur naturally when rapport is high.

Activity: Notice as you are out and about in your everyday – how people who are together sit, or hold themselves – when they are engaged or engrossed. Don't be obvious about this. What do you notice?

Experiment: Test this for yourself. Notice with someone you have high rapport with, and when in conversation or doing work together, pause for a moment from the action going on, and just observe where your behaviours or body position might be matching each other. You may see examples like the images below – where the individuals are quite naturally echoing each other's position.



There are five kinds of Mirroring we are going to explore of the next few pages.

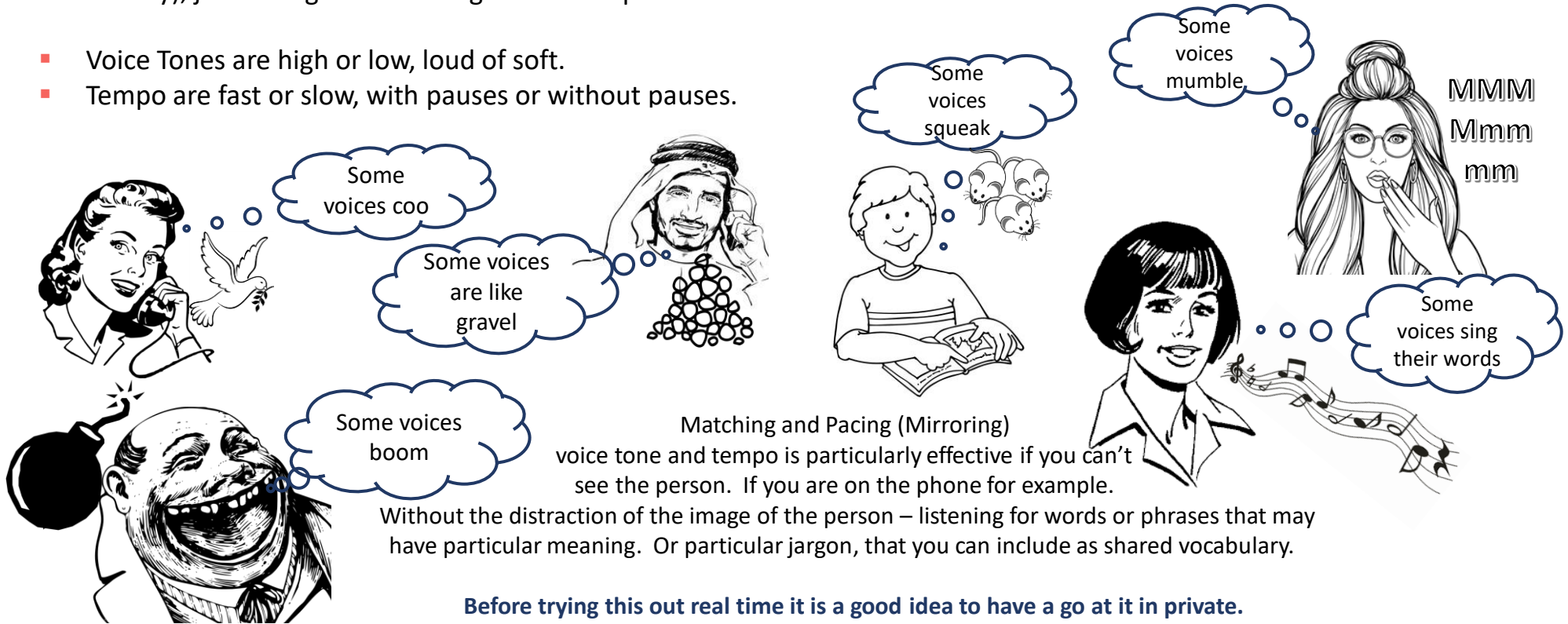
- Matching Voice and Tempo
- Matching Breathing
- Matching Body Posture (as we see in the examples above)
- Matching Pacing, Leading
- Breaking Rapport and Mismatching
- Matching Language (VAK) – covered elsewhere in this module

This list is extensive, and you may already notice that some come easier to you than others. The idea is to choose those that come less naturally, practice them when you are an observer, and don't make it obvious.

Rapport Mode : Mirroring Voice Tone and Tempo

We all speak differently! Most people are completely unaware of their own vocal tones or tempos and when you undertake a matching they will not be aware that you are doing it. Voice matching doesn't have to be (in fact shouldn't be) exact (that would be mimicry), just enough to encourage the other person to feel understood.

- Voice Tones are high or low, loud or soft.
- Tempo are fast or slow, with pauses or without pauses.



Before trying this out real time it is a good idea to have a go at it in private.

What follows are three practice activities that will help you attune and build your skills in this element of Mirroring.

Practical Exercise 1: Make a recording using your phone of a range of people speaking on the radio, or from a clip, or you can use audio books. Listen to the voice and seek to match and pace both in tone and tempo what they are saying. We are not looking for mimicry – but to align our own voice to theirs.

Practical Exercise 2: Find famous people on you-tube or people giving TED talks, or verbal blogs. Take a blindfold and play the clip, listen to the voice and practice matching and pacing. You can record yourself and play it back. Listen. Stop, Speak and record, review and adjust.

Practical Exercise : Find a partner to work with. Stand back to back. One says a couple of sentences. The other then attempts to restate this phrase whilst matching the other person's tone, volume and tempo. After a couple of goes, you'll be able to match the other person's voice in a spooky way.

Rapport Mode : Mirroring Breathing

The second way to establish rapport to to match the other person's breathing rate.

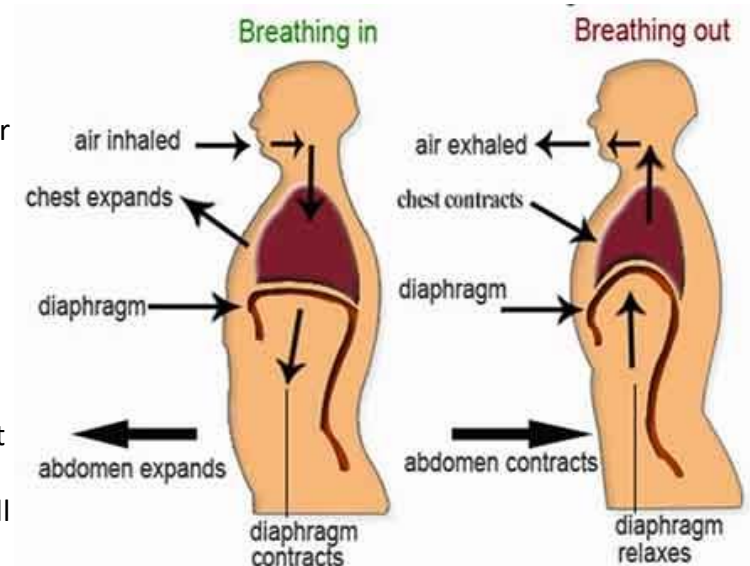
For most people the breathing rate can be detected easily with a little practice. However, if the other is wearing several layers of clothing it will prove harder to see the movement in the chest or belly. Many people have very shallow breath with little outside movement. In these cases the edge of the shoulder silhouetted against any background will show a rise and a fall. We can always count on another's breath. If you are persistent in watching you can find their rhythm, and then pace yourself to it. To do this breathe:

- at the same depth,
- at the same speed,
- same intensity, and
- from the same location.

It's pretty easy to practice this. People usually breathe out when they talk. Match this action by breathing out when the person talks. When the person breathes in, you take a matching breath too. When you are doing the talking, speak and breathe out when the person is breathing out. Inhale the same time the person takes a breath. By observing the top of the shoulders you can interpret and predict the breathing pattern. The rise of the shoulder will indicate inhaling, while the fall of shoulders will indicate exhaling.

Practical Exercise 1: Whilst sitting watching TV together with a friend or family member, position yourself so you are in the same plane as them – this way you can easily look across and notice the rise and fall of the chest, abdomen or shoulders as they breathe. Change your breath to match theirs – do this for a few breaths, then return to your own pace. Repeat this until it starts to feel comfortable choosing and then doing so. (You may find if you are close friends or intimate partners that in fact your breathing is already synchronised – this is an indication of deep rapport)

Practical Exercise 2: If you are in an intimate relationship, you can practice matching your breathing for a minute or two, to your significant other while they are sleeping. Then slow your breathing down, then match theirs again, then speed up your breathing and notice what happens. This process is useful in all Mirroring and is called 'matching and pacing'. What happens is we match the breath first, then as we change – if the rapport is high, the other will follow and their breathing will shift to match our own.

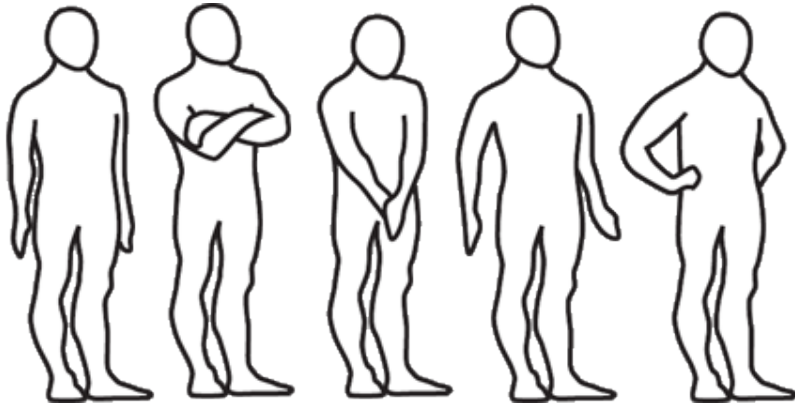


Rapport Mode : Mirroring Body Stance

Matching body stance is the easiest to do but also the most obvious. Mirroring another's body position is useful if you want to establish rapport when you don't have it already. There is as we have said prior in this session, a fine line between mimicry and emulation. So, matching body position must be done with subtlety, otherwise it will be recognised and create irritation – or others will think you are making fun of them.

In the early stages if you decide to try out simple mirroring, do it in a no risk situation. As we saw a few pages back, we can see people mirroring each other's body positions quite naturally and unknowingly when they are out in public. Once you notice natural mirroring – you will see it everywhere.

A lot can be understood about someone just from watching their posture. Here are five examples of posture:



Practical Exercise 1: The legs are identical - all that changes is the position of the arms, shoulders and angle of the head. Can you tell which picture matches which description?

1. Ashamed, shy, not confident
2. Alert, confident, perhaps even aggressively so
3. Neutral, non-threatening
4. Disappointed, bored, uninterested
5. Defensive, threatening, challenging

In order to build rapport, the stance should be alert and confident, with open gestures. Avoid putting the hands on the hips or folding the arms. Don't press the knees or feet together, as this is a defensive posture. Be willing to shake hands with everyone you meet. (Make sure your grip is firm, not crushing and certainly not a limp fish!)

Facing the same direction, either standing or sitting, side by side with someone – results in increased rapport. Both are facing the same direction, seeing the same view (looking at the same wall chart for example) - this is a useful posture to decrease in 'confrontation energy' occurring when facing each other.

Practical Exercise 2: Take some time to just notice the posture of others and their movements – particularly with those you know have high rapport.

Practical Exercise 3: Choose one element per day to notice and pay attention to. EG. the tilt of people's heads, how people shift their legs or arms, stillness or fidgeting etc.

Rapport Mode : Pacing and Leading

We can use the term Pacing to describe the conscious application of mirroring to build rapport with another person. Leading is when we are able to shift the state of another, through them following your moves. In order to Lead there are four key steps that need to be put in place:

- Calibrate the other person by observing their physiology, body position, movements, breath, blinking, voice and language
- Notice your own communication, physiology and words
- Pace by choosing and applying a mirror or mirroring elements
- Lead the other person by, whilst still retaining rapport, shifting your own state and notice whether he or she follows and matches you

Following another's body posture is helpful, in order to retain rapport, and you can test rapport by leading with a shift in your own body position to see if the other follows. It's as simple as slightly shifting the speed at which you are speaking, moving your position slightly, slowing your breathing; when the other follows their emotional state will also shift. As you can see this would be very useful if you are in a situation as a Mentor where your Mentee is upset or angry and you want to help them shift their state.

EG. You're having a great day, feeling bubbly and alive – you're pumped!!! Your teenage son returns from school very glum and down as someone has stolen his prized bracelet that he'd trustingly left in the change sheds during PE. (How do you not lose your own mood whilst keeping rapport with your son?) (some ideas)

- express sorrow and deepen your empathy by matching some of the words he is using and stating them back to him
- if he's talking slowly, then slow your own speech ; if he's angry, raise your voice a bit (this doesn't mean you start yelling)
- do NOT try to calm him ... allow the space for venting

Practical Exercise 1: This is a 'felt' experience. Hold a pen with another person. The pen only touches the tip of your index finger, and the tip of the other's index finger on the other side. Move the pen together and feel free to make large movements. After a few minutes, try to follow both. After a few minutes, try to lead both. Note what happens.

Practical Exercise 2: Recognize whose Following and Leading. In all kinds of situations, recognize who is following and leading. Talk shows on TV are great for this, and political debates are useful to see how rapport is broken. Find out who was in charge of the conversation. What the degree of rapport had and what the moderator could have done to make more rapport.

Practical Exercise 3 : Find a partner to work with. A and B sit back to back. B calls A as if on a phone call. B talks about something A likes. Tips: "Tell me more about it. How? What do you like about it?" Person A does not think about NLP and just responds as self. B is to first follow (pacing) for a while, the speaking rate, tonality, volume, etc. Then B leads by talking faster for a minute, then slower, then faster, then slower again. The conscious mind of A won't notice this, only the subconscious. If B has done well, it will be easy to control A's rate of speech in this way and vary it from fast to slow when B does the same. Stop, debrief and switch.

Breaking Rapport and Mismatching

There are times when Rapport can be, and deliberately should be broken. Why would it be useful to break rapport? Here are some examples:

- To signal that a meeting or interview without explicitly saying so
- A tactic with an overly pushy salesperson
- In a negotiation
- If you want to get someone to feel uneasy or uncomfortable for whatever reason.
- To keep distance from someone
- To deal with someone who is in manipulation mode
- To catch your breath and breathe at your own rate
- When there is so much rapport that feelings of overwhelm – experiencing the same emotions as the other, or with counsellors or therapist – as their clients, people in the ‘helping professions’ need to be able to pull back when they need to.

Mismatching occurs when two people aren't in rapport, and they don't match or mirror each other – they are out of sync and there will be disconnection. EG one person is speaking slowly and deliberately whilst the other is speaking loudly and quickly.

By deliberately mismatching, rapport will be broken. So, how do we do this. It is similar to leading but has the opposite outcome. (Even though you may notice the other try to follow)

- Calibrate the other person by observing their physiology, body position, movements, breath, blinking, voice and language
- Notice your own communication, physiology and words (if you are in rapport they will be in sync in some ways)
- Break the ‘shared’ state you are both in by abruptly shifting some aspect of self. EG>. look away, step or push the chair back in order to create spatial distance, look at your watch, ask for time to review what's on the table, make an exaggerated body movement that's out of keeping with the atmosphere, anything that breaks the ‘trance’

Practical Exercise: This one is very simple. You can do this real time when you really want to break rapport. Its generally not a great idea to practice on those you are close to (unless it's your teenage daughter whose managed to get you to agree to something you know isn't appropriate), as it may have unintended consequences due to the sharp nature of the disengagement.