

## The SOLER Model – how to use it in consultations

The SOLER model was devised by Gerard Egan, and first published in his book, the Skilled Helper (1975).

The SOLER model focuses on body-language, and suggests that this is just as important as the words we use when communicating with our clients. The components of the SOLER model can also be considered as the fundamentals of “active listening”.

SOLER stands for:

- Sit Squarely
- Open Posture
- Lean forward
- Eye-contact
- Relax

### Sit squarely.

Sitting, as opposed to standing is an important first step. You need to be on the same level as the person you are talking to, so that you don't appear to be towering over them, as if you are trying to assert a dominant position. Try to position your body so that there is enough of you facing the client, making you seem open and attentive, but not so straight that you might appear intimidating.

### Open posture.

Body-language experts often claim that crossed arms and legs can be a sign of hostility, conflict or disinterest. Keep your body “open” to avoid appearing defensive.

### Lean forward.

By leaning towards the client, you are showing that you are interested in them and what they have to say. By contrast, leaning back can make you seem distant or uninterested. Of course, you should be careful not to lean too far forward, so that you do not invade personal space.

### Eye-contact.

Egan stresses the importance of using eye-contact to show interest and attentiveness towards the other person in the conversation, while also finding a balance, so you do not end up staring.

However, you must remember that in different cultures around the world, making direct eye-contact can signify very different things.

### Relax.

By showing relaxation in your body language, you are showing the client that you have time for them, and you are not in a rush. It can also convey a sense of confidence which in turn can make your client feel more relaxed (i.e. they are in safe hands).