

## Using Small Rewards

Richard Nelson-Jones defines *small rewards* as “brief verbal and non-verbal expressions of interest designed to encourage clients to continue speaking” (Nelson-Jones, 2005, p. 99).

They may seem subtle, yet they are powerful tools to encourage clients (and friends, colleagues, and family members) to share their thoughts and feelings and, equally importantly, communicate their internal frame of reference.

Try out the following steps to learn what small reward phrases look like and consider whether you are using them in sessions.

Examples include (modified from Nelson-Jones, 2005):

- *Uh-hmm*
- *Please continue*
- *Sure*
- *Tell me more*
- *Go on*
- *Oh?*
- *I hear you*
- *Yes*
- *Right*
- *So...*
- *Really*
  
- Repeating the last word can also be effective.  
[Client] *I am feeling sad.* [Therapist] *Sad?*

1. **Review a five-minute section of a session** (this works best when replaying a recording but can be practiced with a partner).

2. **Ask yourself:**

- *Were you using small rewards enough?*
- *Could you use them more?*
- *What effect did they have when you used them?*
- *When did you not use them?*

3. **Create a list** – reflect how and when small rewards could be used to keep clients talking, helping them feel respected and understood.

Produce a list of when using small rewards would be helpful and which ones work for you (using the above list and new ones).

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

## References

- Nelson-Jones, R. (2005). *Practical counselling and helping skills*. Sage.

Dr. Jeremy Sutton