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# Applying First Nations' Yarning: Good practice for everyone

Video audio transcription



The  
Right  
Direction

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Working together on positive  
behaviour support (PBS)

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Applying First Nations' Yarning: Good practice for everyone



**Doug Payne**, Senior Clinical Consultant, Behaviour Support Practitioner  
(SAL Consulting – Darwin, Northern Territory)

So today we're going to talk about Yarning. Meeting up with families. So what do you think is a benefit from a Yarning-type model?

**Hanna Lewis**, Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB) Practitioner,  
Behaviour Support Practitioner  
Descendant of Larrakia / Jawoyn / Torres Strait Islander (Mabuiag  
Island) Groups  
(SAL Consulting – Darwin, Northern Territory)

It's making it a bit more a relaxed environment for the people who we're Yarning with and making them feel more comfortable to be able to open up and tell us more about themselves, their family, their way of living.

I also think it's a bit better than sitting there with a notepad and pen and having direct questions.

It's sort of having that narrative approach when we're having our Yarn and I think we find out a lot more information through Yarning than we would going in with that pen and paper and going through a checklist.

**Doug Payne**

And Mike?

**Michael Manski**, Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB) Practitioner,  
Behaviour Support Practitioner  
Uwynmil Clan Group; McKinley, Mary River Region  
(SAL Consulting – Darwin, Northern Territory)

Yeah, I guess building that connection with the locals out at remote communities. One of the benefits is gaining trust, also opening doorways and opportunities and having that mutual connection to the mob out at community, seriously isolated where there's not much services, not much providers, and being consistent and maintaining a good connection with the communities that's remote.

### **Doug Payne**

Yarning is integral to what we do. It's the most, probably the most important thing.

That's my view, and I think that's mostly because to come in and do things very formally, particularly in remote communities, is they're not comfortable with that. And I think people are more comfortable sitting and talking.

So if you take a 'Yarning approach', which is sitting and chatting, it's just more natural and comfortable for people. That's my view.

## **Hanna Lewis**

Like you were saying, it's about building that trust and not just with the participant, just having that holistic approach where we're involving family and community members that should be involved in those conversations.

And I think it's important because when it comes to behaviour support, it's a person-centred approach and I guess to build an individual's plan and tell their story, that's how we're going to get it, is through those Yarns and yeah, connecting with them the proper way. Yeah.

## **Doug Payne**

So from my view, I think whether you're working with Indigenous or non-Indigenous people, sitting and talking is important.

That's what humans do, sit and talk, and I think sometimes behaviour support practitioners use tools like assessments and, and when they go in and talk with families, it's very clunky because you've got a form in front of you and as the person's talking, you're ticking boxes or writing things down and it distracts from the conversation.

So, my view – I'd be interested to hear what you think, a good behaviour support practitioner just sits and talks.

Beforehand you have a bit of an idea where you want to steer the conversation, the type of information you want. But it's not formal, it's not checklists, and you say stop to someone, hang on a second, I've got to write that down and the flow of the conversation has gone.

### **Hanna Lewis**

You get a lot more information out of a Yarn, sitting there and just having a Yarn than you would sitting there with a checklist and it's not about asking a million questions or trying to keep the conversation going.

It's, you know, you talk a bit and you might be sitting in silence for a bit and then you might make a comment about the surroundings and then that could start a new conversation or a story and then, you might sit there for a bit again and it might be a bit quiet.

And I think just being comfortable in that space where they may not be talking for a while because you're still building that connection with that person, even though you're not necessarily talking the whole time.

### **Michael Manski**

Sometimes Yarning may not even be Yarning, it could just be sitting there in the presence of an individual and just having that connection

around that area, you know, slowly building that trust, slowly building their confidence as well, you know, to open up and speak more around, you know, their worries. You know, their commitment to their family.

### **Doug Payne**

So what you're saying, Yarning is more than talking it's sitting, it's sitting with people.

### **Hanna Lewis**

Sitting and being yeah.

### **Michael Manski**

Yeah, yeah.

### **Doug Payne**

Which is one of the things I find interesting because a lot of behaviour support practitioners are uncomfortable in silence. They feel like they've

got to take the initiative and fill the space. And I think sometimes and what I've learnt is sitting and being with someone in silence is important. And sometimes that's very uncomfortable for practitioners to sit in that silence.

### **Hanna Lewis**

And it might just look like sitting there and having a cup of tea or coffee with the participant and not saying anything. Just being with them and keeping them company and you might play some music as well or nothing, just silence, just enjoying the serenity.

### **Doug Payne**

Yeah.

### **Hanna Lewis**

Just being there with them. And I think that means a lot to our participants as well. Just having that company of someone else who, I think in that moment they're feeling like, 'Oh, this person wants to sit



here, I'm not talking to them, I'm not interacting to them, but they're still here. So they must really want to get to know me and be here.'

### **Doug Payne**

Thanks, Hanna and Michael for chatting with us about Yarning and how important it is when you go out into community, particularly remote communities, and we hope that it helps other behaviour support practitioners feel a bit more comfortable going out into community and gives them advice and maybe some skills and knowledge.

### **Michael Manski**

No worries Doug. Thanks for having us here today.

### **Closing credits** (text presented on screen)

How will you use these ideas to improve engagement in your behaviour support practice?

Web address: [therightdirectionpbs.com](http://therightdirectionpbs.com)



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