

## **Exercise 6b: Basic interview skills**

Interviewing people to get information is not hard, but, there are a few things you can do to make the interviews go well.

You'll need to do this exercise with someone else, preferably a trusted teacher, counsellor or other adult in your life.

### **The first impression**

The truth is, you made your first impression with the person who you'll be interviewing when you called or met him/her to request the interview.

But how you present yourself at this meeting, from the moment you walk in the door, will be important to your start-up success. Consider the people you interview as possible cheerleaders for you and your new business. If you impress them, they'll tell their friends, family and maybe even their own customers about you and your new business.

So treat this exercise seriously, even if it feels funny to pretend you are meeting your practice partner for the first time!

1. With your practice partner in a different room, walk into their room and practice your entry.
2. Enter the room and smile at your practice partner. Be sure to look him or her in the eye.
3. If the person you'll be interviewing does not know you, say, "hello, I'm <your name>."
4. Extend your arm to shake your interviewee's hand.
5. If you can shake hands, be sure your handshake is firm but not crushing.
6. Say, "thank you very much for taking time to meet with me. I really appreciate it."

And now you've made a good first impression. On to building your credibility now!

### **Building credibility**

1. Dress like yourself, but make an effort to look your best.
2. Maintain eye contact throughout the interview.
3. Be attentive.
4. Show that you're listening by occasionally nodding your head and saying things like, "right," "that's interesting," "what did you do then?"
5. Don't play with objects like a pen, your cell phone, or your hair.
6. On that point, make sure your cell phone is set to silent. If you want to keep your phone on to keep track of time, that is okay. But do not, under any circumstance, read text messages or answer calls while you're meeting.
7. Don't sit with your arms folded across your chest.

### **After the interview**

1. Ask for a business card from the person you interviewed.
2. Send a thank you note to each person you interviewed.
3. Handwritten notes are better than email.
4. In your letter, mention something that you learned that will help you in starting your own business.
5. Try to write your note the same day you have the interview and mail it or drop it off within 2 days.