

## SOLER

Gerard Egan defined the acronym SOLER as part of his “Skilled Helper” staged approach to counselling. It is a non-verbal listening process used in communication, and a key skill taught to counsellors as part of their training. But what is it?

**SOLER** stands for:

**S:** Sit SQUARELY on to the client, preferably at a 5 o'clock position to avoid the possibility of staring.

**O:** Maintain an OPEN posture at all times, not crossing your arms or legs which can appear defensive.

**L:** LEAN slightly in towards the client.

**E:** Maintain EYE CONTACT with the client without staring.

**R:** RELAX. This should in turn help the client to relax.

---

**S:** Sitting squarely says “I’m here with you, I’m available to you.” Turning your body away from another person while you talk to him or her can lessen your degree of contact with that person. If, for any reason, facing the person squarely is too threatening for them, then an angled position may be more helpful.

**O:** Adopt an open posture. Crossed arms and/or crossed legs can be a sign of lessened involvement with or availability to others. An open posture says you are open to the client and what he or she has to say. It is non-defensive in nature.

**L:** It is possible to lean in towards the client. It says, “I’m with you, I’m interested in you and what you have to say.” Leaning back can suggest the opposite. Remember not to lean too far forward, or this may be seen as placing a demand on the client. He or she may find it intimidating.

**E:** Maintain good eye contact. It’s another way of saying, “I’m interested, I’m with you.” Remember this is not the same as staring. You will need to look away every so often, in order not to stare, but monitor the amount you look away. It could say something about your own level of comfort/discomfort.

**R:** Be relaxed or natural. If you are fidgeting nervously it will distract the client. Being relaxed also tells the client that you are comfortable with using your body as a vehicle of personal contact and expression. It helps put the client at ease.