

Listening Skills

1. NONVERBAL AND MINIMAL VERBAL ATTENDING

- Eye contact
- Body posture
- Concerned facial expression and tone
- Minimal verbal encouragers
- Head nodding

2. ASKING OPEN QUESTIONS

- Begin with “how” or “what”
- Encourage expression rather than yes/no answers
- Can be used for clarifying, elaborating, working with feelings, problem solving
- Should be kept clear and simple
- Should not begin with “why” or be leading questions

3. PARAPHRASING

- Essence of what person said
- Brief and tentative
- Checking perceptions
- Giving perceptions
- Giving accurate empathy

4. WORKING WITH FEELINGS

- Ask feelings questions and *get* feeling answers
- Paraphrase spoken feelings and reflect unspoken feelings
- Defining and clarifying feelings

5. SUMMARIZING

- Larger paraphrase that capture the essence of what has been said
- Puts material into a logical and usable order
- Brief and tentative: “Is that right?”
- Good for closure



Twelve Roadblocks to Effective Communication

1. DIRECTING, ORDERING, OR COMMANDING.

Giving an order provokes defensive or retaliatory communication.

"Stop complaining." "You must be more honest with your husband."

"You have to give your ex another chance." or "You will be direct and straightforward with them."

2. WARNING, THREATENING, OR ADMONISHING.

This produces resentment, anger, resistance, or rebellion.

"You will be sorry if you don't stand up to your boss soon."

"If you don't stop crying, I am going to have to leave you alone for now."

3. MORALIZING, PREACHING, SHOULD, OR OUGHTS.

This invokes outside authority as accepted truths, and communicates a lack of trust and creates guilt.

"You shouldn't act like an immature person."

"A person your age ought to be self-sufficient."

"It is your responsibility to provide for your family."

4. ADVISING, RECOMMENDING, PROVIDING ANSWERS OR SOLUTIONS.

This makes a person feel you don't understand. Even if your suggestions are sound and helpful, you deprive the person of the opportunity to work out their own solutions, and they are likely to depend on you or others for help in future difficulties.

"What I would do is call him and apologize"

"Why don't you call her up and tell her how you feel?"

"Let me suggest that you forget about her."

"It would be best for you to go back to college."

5. PERSUADING WITH LOGIC, ARGUING, INSTRUCTING, OR LECTURING.

This makes a person feel wrong or stupid and elicits resistance.

"When you are concerned about your weight, you should start exercising and watching what you eat."

"Research supports the fact that men are usually not interested in their partners' feelings."

6. JUDGING NEGATIVELY, CRITICIZING, DISAPPROVING, STEREOTYPING, LABELING, OR BLAMING.

Criticisms and disapproval elicit feelings of inadequacy, inferiority, or incompetency. It makes a person feel unworthy, bad, or unloved. If the judgment is about other people, perpetuating stereotypes may endorse the person's inflexible world view, thereby furthering their interpersonal problems. Other times, you may be affirming their false beliefs or even delusions.

"Your roommate sounds like a stuck-up spoiled princess."

"You are acting foolishly."

"Your parents sound terribly intrusive! Don't they have better things to do than prying into your private matters? I'd be upset too if my parents try to listen to my phone conversations like that."

