

Effective Listening/Helping Skills

Remember: Everyone wants to be heard, to feel “listened to” and understood.

- Express concern and desire to help
- Ask about feelings and thoughts
- Suspend judgment
- Try to develop trust (provide environment of warmth and acceptance)
- Use person’s name
- Let the person know you are listening (attending behaviors):
- Communicate undivided attention; resist distractions
- Nod
- Paraphrase or repeat essence of person’s messages
- Agree when genuine
- Repeat or summarize main ideas (“facilitative listening”)
- Listen “between the lines” for the underlying “feeling” message
- Empathize with and “reflect” their feelings (“I understand what you’re saying,” “I think I know what you’re feeling.” “I can understand that you’re feeling angry; It must be very frustrating.”)
- Acknowledge concerns and fears, without supporting misperceptions
- Discourage discussion of any delusion and focus on the “here and now”
- Problem-solve (only when the person is ready)
- Explore ways (options) for person to have their needs met
- Break down concerns into manageable problem-solving steps (non-judgmental, solution-oriented approach)
- “Brainstorm” together
- Try to provide a face-saving solution; explore acceptable compromises
- Do not: argue, interrupt, scold or lecture, offer false reassurances, be overly logical and rational, or try to “fix” the problem before thoroughly understanding, trivialize the circumstances or feelings, try to convince them of their irrationality, overly challenge or confront, or invade physical space.
- Body language (non-verbal behavior) communicates important messages. The following may be helpful in reducing others’ anger and assisting an individual in calming themselves:
 - Eye contact (not too intense)
 - Interpersonal distance (not too close); Respect personal space; do not move toward an agitated person
 - Restrict body movement to a minimum; Minimize sudden behaviors
 - Maintain an “open” position (do not cross arms or legs, hands unclenched)
 - Maintain same eye level (sit or stand depending on student’s position)
 - Speak softly and reassuringly