

## **Communication, Facilitation, and Listening Skills**

In order to be an effective support person, communication is very important. The first step to effective communication is being a good listener. Remember that all human beings want to express themselves, and feel heard and understood. Listening in itself can lead to de-escalation and a sense of relief.

### **Listening Skills**

“We were given two ears but only one mouth. This is because God knew that listening was twice as hard as talking.”

#### **1- Make the time to listen**

Everyone is busy. Make sure you set up a time to meet when you have the time to meet. It is always clear when someone is in a rush, even if they are not watching the clock.

#### **2- Listen without interference.**

Things that get in the way of listening:

- You just don't care.
- Turning off the speaker and paying attention to internal distractions.
- Letting a remark of the speaker develop a prejudice which puts a stop to further listening
- Boredom- remember, we hear four times faster than we speak
- Competitive listening: developing your own rebuttal or listening mainly to find an opening to state what you have to say.
- Allowing personal characteristics of the speaker or poor delivery prevent understanding

#### **3- What is active listening?**

- It's a communication skills that involves both the speaker and the listener
- The receiver tries to understand what feelings, thoughts and beliefs are being communicated and accepts it as the person's own
- The listener feeds back only what they believe the sender's message meant. It involves feedback and verification that the listener correctly understood what the sender's message meant.
- The active listener avoids getting stuck in another person's helpless feelings.

#### **4- In active listening you will:**

- Listen for the content of the message
- Listen for the feelings of the speaker
- Listen without making judgment
- Respond to the feelings of the speaker
- Note the speaker's cues, both verbal and non-verbal

- Generally, ask open-ended questions- these are questions that cannot be answered by yes or no. (who-what-where-when-how) However. . .
- Close ended questions have their place (when getting off track, getting necessary info, etc.)
- Don't ask "why" directly (implies judgement)
- Reflect back to the speaker what you think you are hearing (don't worry about getting it right: It's important to show you are trying)

## **5- Active Listening Techniques**

Encouraging, Restating, Reflecting Summarizing

### **Encouraging**

- The purpose is to convey interest and keep the person talking.
- To do this don't agree or disagree. Use noncommittal words in a positive tone of voice ("I see..." "What did you say then?")

### **Reflecting**

- The purpose is to show that you are listening and understand what they are saying.
- To do this restate the other's basic feeling.
- "You feel that..." "This made you angry..."
- Again, you may not have it exactly right, but this shows you are listening and making an attempt at understanding

### **Restating**

- The purpose is to show that you are listening and understanding
- To do this, restate the other's basic ideas using your own words
- "In other words, you are saying..."

### **Summarizing**

- The purpose is to pull important ideas, facts, etc. together, to establish a basis for further discussion and to review progress.
- To do this restate, reflect, and summarize major ideas and feelings.
- "If I understand you, you are feeling..."

## **6- When the emotion is directed at YOU...**

- Hearing out the speaker diffuses the situation.
- Listening to the feelings, rather than jumping to defend yourself, diffuses the situation.
- It may be easier to get angry at you than to deal with underlying anger about other issues

## Non-verbal Communication

Communication is 55% body language, 38% tone, and 7% words.

### Be aware of:

- 1- Behaviors that indicate you are in a rush, have a limited amount of time, etc.  
(looking at your watch, tapping your fingers, etc.)

If you don't have much time, or have to leave at a specific time, say that right from the beginning. This way, the other person won't take it personally when you say you have to go.

- 2- Behaviors that indicate boredom or not caring (no eye contact, etc)

### Practice:

Behaviors that indicate you are listening:

SOLER method:

S- Squarely face the person rather than sitting kitty-corner

O- Open posture (no arms crossed, etc)

L- Lean toward the person

E- Use eye contact

R- Relax. Rigid posture indicates you are not comfortable. If you are not comfortable, the other person won't be able to stay comfortable.

- 3- No note taking!! If you feel you need to remember something that was said, just ask the person.

Be aware of the speaker's body language. It will help you to better reflect their emotions. What is the speaker telling you through:

- Posture
- Breathing changes
- Eye movements
- Facial expressions
- Hand movements
- Hesitancies
- Inflections