

# ■ Listening Skills

## The basics

### Active listening

Restate or paraphrase what you have just heard without interpretation.

*What I hear you saying is....  
Do you mean...*

### Open-ended questions

Communicate to your peer that you are interested in hearing about his/her experience. These questions elicit descriptive responses (versus yes/no answers). Allow the individual to speak freely and encourage exploration.

*What were your thoughts when...  
Tell me more about ...*

### Clarifying questions

Gain a fuller understanding of your peer's experience. The purpose of this is not to learn the details of the event but to assist you in understanding your peer's needs and how you can help.

*Is there anything else you can tell me to help me better understand what this means for you?*

### Encouragers

Let your peer know that you are listening.

*Please go on.  
It's okay.  
I hear what you are saying.  
M-hum.*

### Feedback

Help pull together any disjointed thoughts or offer an interpretation of what you've heard.

*(Peer describes the event and the after effects in detail, tearfully.)  
You: It sounds like this has been very difficult for you.*

### Reframing

Help your peer see the experience in a different light and/or integrate new knowledge.

*I know that this experience has been very difficult for you and has transformed your life, but you are now using your experience to reach out and help others...*

### Normalizing

Break the isolation that the individual may feel while sharing such a personal experience. It helps your peer to realize that his/her feelings are not unusual and that he/she will be able to work through any pain or trauma.

*It's not unusual to have that kind of response...  
It's normal to feel (angry, betrayed, sad, etc.) after an experience of this kind.*