

■ Listening Skills

The do's and don'ts of good listening

☑ DO

Ways to be an engaged listener:

- Give your peer your full attention.
- Tell your peer that you care and are glad that s/he is talking with you.
- Share your concern for your peer's safety. Help him /her feel more safe and in control. Encourage the person to talk about her/his feeling.
- Validate your peer's feelings.
- Repeat back in your own words what you heard your peer say.
- Ask helpful questions.

It is essential to:

- Validate your peer's feeling by indicating that you understand them.
- Normalize her/his feelings by explaining that other people sometimes feel like s/he does.
- Let your peer know that s/he is not bad, weak, or selfish because s/he has these feeling.
- If your peer expresses suicidal thoughts, acknowledge that these feelings are important to talk about, be clear that you don't want your peer to harm her/himself and stress that you are here to help.

☒ DON'T

Barriers to communication:

- Do not interrupt.
- Do not judge.
- Do not say the person's feelings or actions are unimportant, overreacting or wrong.
- Do not tell the person what to do.
- Do not try to solve the person's problems.
- Do not provoke guilt about how family and friends might feel.
- Do not offer false hope.