

Reflective Listening

Reflective listening is a listening skill that is meant to build empathy by facilitating further exploration of the speaker's message. Reflective listening helps the listener to better understand what the speaker is trying to say and helps the speaker feel understood and validated. When the listener understands the meaning of the message it reduces the likelihood that a miscommunication will arise. The essence of reflective listening is repeating back the essence of the speaker's message in fewer or different words **without judging or giving advice**.

Below is an example and some standard phrases that can be helpful:

Example (**Friend to Friend**): "I can't believe what I just heard. Professor Jones promised that internship to me but he just gave it to Jessica. She is such a jerk! How can she do this to me? I'm never speaking to Professor Jones again. Sure, I was a few weeks late getting my internship paperwork in but he should have checked with me before giving away my site. I am so upset! What am I going to do?"

REFLECTING FEELINGS

"So you feel..."

Response: **"So you feel** pretty angry."

REFLECTING CONTENT

"It sounds like you..."

Response: **"It sounds like you are wondering** what to do about the professor giving the internship to Jessica that you thought he was going to give to you.

COMBINING REFLECTING FEELINGS & CONTENT

"You're feeling (feeling word) because (content)."

"You feel _____ when _____."

"You feel _____ about _____."

Response: **You're feeling angry because** the professor gave the internship to Jessica that you thought he was going to give to you.

Tips for Success:

- Listen for emotions, content, and meaning in the speaker's message.
- Consider the question: **What is going on with this person right now?**
- **Resists any temptation to make judgements to give advice.** Reflective listening is about understanding and connecting with another person.

Time to Practice

It takes practice to effectively develop an ability to use reflective listening. Throughout the next week, practice reflective listening with at least one person each day. Use the following worksheet to document and monitor your progress.

The person I practiced reflective listening with _____

Day and time: _____

Did this person know that that you were practicing your listening skills: Yes No

Rate how well you think you did as a reflective listener:

	Not Well		Average	Excellent	
Keeping your own “stuff” out of it (advice, opinion, interpretation, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Maintaining good eye contact	1	2	3	4	5
Identifying the content of the speaker’s message	1	2	3	4	5
Identifying the speaker’s feelings	1	2	3	4	5

Notes: How did you feel after listening? What went well? How could you have listened more effectively? You might also comment on anything that you noticed that was not captured in the rating scale above.
