Reflective Listening

Three Levels of Reflective Listening

1. **Repeating or rephrasing:** Listener repeats what was said or uses synonyms.
2. **Paraphrasing:** Listener infers meaning by paraphrasing the essence of what was said or makes a restatement in which the meaning is inferred.
3. **Reflection of feeling:** Listener emphasizes emotional aspects of communication through feeling statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example Conversation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student:</strong> Tanisha keeps saying things about me and it’s getting on my nerves...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mentor:</strong> Tanisha repeatedly says things about you and it gets on your nerves. <em>(repeating or rephrasing)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student:</strong> During class on Monday, Tanisha told everyone in the class that I’m stupid. I called her stupid and got in trouble by Mrs. Jones. It’s not fair – she started it but I’m getting in trouble.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mentor:</strong> You don’t think it’s fair that you were the only one who got in trouble for name calling, when Tanisha called you stupid first. <em>(paraphrasing)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your feelings were hurt by Tanisha calling you stupid and now you are upset with Mrs. Jones because you were the only one who got in trouble for name calling. <em>(reflection of feeling)</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Types of Paraphrasing

- **Acknowledge and clarify content and emotion**
  - You are thinking that...
  - So, you’re concerned...
- **Summarize and organize by offering themes to organize several statements or break up muddled issues**
  - You are mostly concerned about...
  - You have two concerns...
- **Shift focus to a higher or lower logical level**
  - Shifting to a higher level names concepts and goals out of details.
    - So a goal here would be to...
  - Shifting to a lower level grounds big concepts by specifying details.
    - So “fair” might mean...

---


**Practice Instructions**

In triads, assign roles of mentor, mentee, and critical friend:

**Mentee**
- Share a story of a recent problem you encountered (e.g., being cut off in traffic, not being able to find something in the grocery store, child not following rules).
- Keep the story somewhat short, approximately one minute.

**Mentor**
- Listen to the mentee’s recent problem without commenting or questioning during his/her story.
- When mentee is finished with his/her story, reflect back what he/she said (repeating/rephrasing, paraphrasing, reflection of feeling).

**Critical Friend**
- Listen to both the mentee and the mentor. Provide feedback to mentor on his/her use of reflective listening skills.
  - Did the mentor repeat/rephrase or paraphrase?
  - Did the mentor reflect feeling?