

## GUIDELINES FOR LISTENING

1. Listen with undivided attention, without interrupting.
2. Don't take notes at this stage (but you will need to create a record of the meeting later).
3. Listen to, and for, the 'bass' line – what is not openly said, but is possibly being felt.
4. Watch for non-verbal clues to help you understand feelings.
5. Listen to yourself and how you might feel in a described situation, as a way of further understanding – empathy.
6. Try to tolerate pauses and silences that are a little longer than is usual in conversations (and avoid asking lots of questions to break silences).
7. Help yourself and the other to feel comfortable and relaxed with each other; keep calm, even when you don't feel calm.

## GUIDELINES FOR RESPONDING

1. Describe your impression of the other's feelings – 'You seem sad, upset, pleased, worried' – take time to be as accurate as possible.
2. Use your empathic understanding (not sympathetic, as you get pulled in when you need to stand back). Again make this accurate, but remember that you may be wrong, so leave a chance to be corrected.
3. Keep questions to a minimum, unless
  - a. You need precise information (in which case, ask precise questions)
  - b. You want to open up an area (e.g. perhaps you would like to tell me; I'd find it helpful to know, etc.)
  - c. To prompt (e.g. and so; what happened next?)

Avoid 'why' questions, e.g. 'Why are you depressed?' – because they invite answers like: 'If I knew, I wouldn't be here.' Too many of these can feel like an interrogation.

4. Use minimal prompts: 'mm', 'yes' or the last few words.
5. Paraphrase what you have heard – it shows you are listening, prompts the speaker, and test your understanding.
6. Avoid making judgements or loaded remarks.
7. Avoid changing the subject or interrupting unnecessarily.
8. *Avoid speaking too soon, too often or for too long.*
9. After responding, return to listening mode, watch and listen for the reaction to your response, as well as anything new that emerges.