

Reflective Listening

This includes showing interest in what the client has to say, and respect for the client's inner wisdom. It is critical to attempt to understand the gist, the real meaning of what client is communicating. Types of reflective statements include **simple (rephrase, paraphrase), reflection of feeling, and double-sided reflection**. Reflective statements often begin with "So you feel..." "It sounds like you..." You're wondering if..." "On the one hand..."

Types of Reflective Statements

Simple Reflection: Stay close to what the client is saying by taking some part of what the person says and rephrase in your own words.

Client: I really want to leave my board and care. Everybody's smoking weed and they're not getting kicked out.

Reflection of feeling: This is the deepest form of reflection. It is a paraphrase that emphasizes the emotional dimension of the message.

Client: I really want to leave my board and care. Everybody's smoking weed and they're not getting kicked out.

Double-sided reflection: This acknowledges and amplifies the ambivalence.

Client: Everyone said my life would be so much better off crack. Sure, I'm not on the street, but there's nothing to do, nothing to get up for.

Exercise: Statements for Reflective Listening Exercise

1. **Simple Reflection.** "My parents are control freaks. I can't have a cell phone, and if I want to use the computer, I have to do it in the living room when they're home."
2. **Double-sided Reflection.** "I don't like it that I have to be in counseling. You're a nice person, though."
3. **Reflection of Feeling.** "It's not the job I'm worried about losing. It's my health insurance."
4. **Reflection of Feeling.** Yay!! I get to go to see my kids next week."
5. **Simple Reflection.** "I blew my job interview. I got nervous started talking stupid."
6. **Double-sided Reflection.** "I want to quit smoking. Trouble is I like it too much."
7. **Simple Reflection.** "I know myself. If I take this job I'll get bored after two weeks, and I'll quit."
8. **Reflection of Feeling.** "She called the cops, and now I have a domestic violence case."
9. **Double-sided Reflection.** "I want to work, but who would take care of my kids?"
10. **Simple Reflection.** "I had a fight with my girlfriend. She thinks I should be working and buying her presents."
11. **Reflection of Feeling.** "I don't think my sister likes me anymore. She's stopped returning my phone calls."
12. **Double-sided Reflection.** "She's nice and all, but she always wants to have her own way."
13. **Simple Reflection.** "Everyone on that job interview was so much younger than me."
14. **Simple Reflection.** "I don't know what I want to do with my life."
15. **Reflection of Feeling.** "My foster kids act up in ways my own children wouldn't have dreamed of doing."
16. **Double-sided Reflection.** "I need help, I admit. But you're young enough to be my granddaughter."
17. **Reflection of Feeling.** "How does the doctor expect me to eat well if I don't have a refrigerator?!"
18. **Simple Reflection.** "I just heard from my doctor that I may need to go on dialysis."
19. **Reflection of Feeling.** The principal has it out for me. He's got it in his mind I'm a bad kid."

20. **Double-sided Reflection.** “If I want to get my kids back, I have to get my own place. Which is what I want, but it means my boyfriend can’t live with me.”
21. **Reflection of Feeling.** “When it gets really intense at school, I start skipping. I can’t handle people getting on my case.”
22. **Simple Reflection.** “I want to be a good role model for my niece and nephew.”
23. **Double-sided Reflection.** “My husband says terribly mean things to me, but he’s a good father.”

Exercise: Is this an Open or Closed Question?

1. What do you like about not working?
2. Where did you go to school?
3. What do you want to do about your drinking: quit, cut down, or stay the same?
4. Are you willing to attend the group?
5. What can I do for you today?
6. What are you getting out of this relationship?
7. Have you ever thought about walking as a simple form of relaxation?
8. What does having a meaningful life mean to you?
9. In the past, how have you managed stressful events?
10. Will you make an effort to look for work this week?
11. In what ways is your anger a problem for you?
12. Do you care about your family?
13. What are the most important reasons why you want to manage your emotions?
14. What do you want to set as your quit date?
15. What's going on with your job lately?
16. What do you see yourself doing when you get out of school?
17. What do you want to be when you grow up?
18. What do you think will happen if you lose the friends you have now?
19. Did you have a good life before you started smoking weed?
20. What is a close-ended question?

Thomas Gordon's Roadblocks to Listening

The roadblocks are common responses that get in the way of good listening. They are not necessarily wrong, but they are not listening. They interrupt the person's own exploration, and in order to get back to his or her own process, the person must go around them.

1. **Ordering, directing, or commanding (this has some form of authority)**
 - Don't say that.
 - You have to face up to reality.
 - Go right back there and tell her you're sorry.
2. **Warning or threatening (these are similar to directing but also carry a threat of negative consequences).**
 - If you don't start treating him better you'll lose him.
 - You better listen to me or you'll be sorry.
3. **Giving advice, making suggestions, or providing solutions (we draw on our knowledge and experience to recommend a course of action)**
 - What I would do is... Have you tried...?
4. **Persuading with logic, arguing, or lecturing (the underlying assumption is that the person has not adequately reasoned it through)**
 - The facts are that...
 - Yes, but...
 - Let's think this through.
5. **Moralizing, preaching, or telling clients what they "should" do (the implicit communication is instruction in proper/moral conduct)**
 - You should...
 - You really ought to...
6. **Disagreeing, judging, criticizing, or blaming (the common element is an implication that there is something wrong with the person or with what they have said)**
 - It's your own fault.
 - You're being too selfish. You're wrong.
7. **Shaming, ridiculing, or labeling name calling (the disapproval is more overt, and is directed at the individual in the hopes of correcting a behavior or attitude.)**
 - That's really stupid.
 - You should be ashamed of yourself.
8. **Agreeing, approving, or praising (this one is surprising. It gives sanction or approval to what is said. It stops communication and may imply an uneven relationship)**
 - I think you're absolutely right.
 - That's what I would do.

9. **Reassuring, sympathizing, or consoling there, there, it's not all that bad (the intent is to help the person feel better. Nothing wrong with that except it's not listening)**
 - I'm sure things are going to work out all right.
 - Don't worry you'll look back on this in a year and laugh.
10. **Withdrawing, distracting, humoring, or changing the subject, let's talk about that some other time. (This takes the person's mind off of it. It diverts communication and implies that what the person was saying is not important or should not be pursued.)**
 - That reminds me of a time...
 - I hear it's going to be a nice day tomorrow.