

“Being listened to and heard is one of the greatest desires of the human heart. And those who learn to listen are the most loved and respected.” – Richard Carlson, author of “Don't Sweat the Small Stuff ... and It's All Small Stuff: Simple Ways to Keep the Little Things From Taking Over Your Life”

ACTIVE/REFLECTIVE LISTENING

Level 1-- REPETITION: this is simple parroting of the person's statement. This type of reflective listening is most useful for “Administrative Meeting” conversations, when details are critical. In other situations, simple parroting is likely to be annoying.

Speaker: "I hate my job."

Listener: "You hate your job."

Level 2-- REPHRASE: repeats the same message but the words are rearranged. This demonstrates that you're paying attention, but it does little to facilitate understanding or connection. Most useful for Informal Conversations and Administrative 'Meetings.'

Listener: "Your job is something you hate."

Level 3-- PARAPHRASE: takes the original message and puts it into different words. This is the first level of reflection that requires the listener to mentally and emotionally engage with the speaker. Paraphrasing can be effective for Challenges and for Life-Giving conversations. The listener may be mistaken in his/her interpretation, but paraphrasing helps to clarify some of the feelings of the speaker.

Listener: "Your work is not very rewarding for you."

Level 4-- EMPATHY: the listener helps to develop the speaker's understanding of his/her experience by “guessing” at the feelings that seem to be at the base of what he/she is saying. This is the level of reflective listening that we strive for with Challenges and with Life-Giving conversations.

Listener: "This is not what you were hoping for when you went to college. There has to be more to life."

FORMING AN EMPATHIC RESPONSE for Level 4

1. Listen intently to the other person and try to understand what is going on for him/her internally. Listen for underlying feelings.
2. Project yourself into their place and ask yourself, If I were the other person: a) What would I be feeling? b) What would I be wishing? c) What conflicts would I be experiencing?
3. Present your new insights to the other in non-judgmental and non-threatening terms. Do this in a brief but understanding way.
4. Realize that you may be incorrect. Make it easy for the other to correct misconceptions when they hear your attempt to understand them.