

### Skill 3. Empathy – Part I

Listen with your head and your heart.

Empathy is sensing another's feelings and attitudes as if we had experienced them ourselves.

It is our willingness to enter another's world, and being able to communicate to that person our sensitivity to them.

It is not blind sentimentality; it always retains some objectivity and distance.

We do not lose our own identity, though we discover our common humanity.

#### Create empathy by:

- taking seriously others' needs and concerns
- valuing feelings and attitudes
- respecting others' privacy, experience and values
- listening actively
- encouraging further elaboration and clarification
- using open body language and a warm vocal tone
- reserving judgement and blame
- displaying interest in what others communicate
- withholding unsought advice
- supporting others' attempts to find a solution
- making affirming statements and gestures.

uncovers complex  
needs and concerns.

**Empathy**

encourages  
blossoming and growth

improves relationships

supports confidence  
and self-knowledge.



## Active Listening for Different Purposes

<b>SKILLS</b>  <b>PURPOSES</b>	<b>Non-verbal Skills</b>	<b>Following Skills</b>	<b>Reflecting Skills</b>
<p><b>To Gain Information</b></p> <p>to find out the details of what another is saying.</p> <p>to clarify instructions and to gain information.</p>	<p>Use appropriate body language – nodding, noting, recording, watching.</p> <p>Focus your concentration, block out distractions.</p>	<p>Ask many questions.</p> <p>Write notes.</p> <p>Use memory joggers.</p> <p>Avoid interrogating and pre-judging.</p>	<p>Confirm your understanding by repeating key points.</p>
<p><b>To Give Affirmation</b></p> <p>to show empathy and give acknowledgement.</p> <p>to help the speaker hear and understand his or her own meaning.</p>	<p>Choose a non-distracting and comfortable environment. Is privacy needed?</p> <p>Remove inappropriate physical barriers e.g. large desk</p> <p>Consider moving closer to the speaker.</p> <p>Adopt an open, encouraging posture with welcoming gestures, and appropriate eye contact to show attention and involvement.</p>	<p>Use minimal verbal encouragers – such as "mm" and "ah hah".</p> <p>Ask only occasional questions.</p> <p>Allow attentive silences.</p>	<p>Reflect back both feelings and content.</p> <p>Use your own words to feed back your understanding of the speaker's meaning.</p> <p>Summarise the major concerns.</p> <p>Use a tone of voice that shows warmth and interest.</p>
<p><b>To Respond to Inflammation</b></p> <p>to let the speaker know you've heard the complaint, the anger and/or the accusation.</p> <p>to defuse the strong emotions.</p>	<p>Avoid defensive or aggressive posture and gestures.</p> <p>Consider extra distance to make you feel safe.</p> <p>Use attentive eye contact and an assertive stance.</p>	<p>Use obvious verbal indicators that you've understood – a clear "yes", a strong "OK".</p> <p>Ask questions to understand the basis of the attack.</p>	<p>As for listening to affirm (above).</p> <p>In reflecting back, stay emotionally present. Your tone of voice should not be flat.</p> <p>Once the dust has settled, a contributions conversation may help to rebuild empathy.</p>



### **More active listening hints**

- Put the focus of attention totally on the speaker. Avoid talking about yourself. Don't introduce well intentioned comments at that time.
- Repeat conversationally and tentatively, in your words, your understanding of the speaker's meaning.
- Feed back feelings, as well as content. Perhaps you will ask: "*How do you feel about that?*" or "*How did that affect you?*")
- Reflect back not only to show you understand, but also so the speaker can hear and understand his or her own meaning.
- Try again if your active listening statement is not well received.
- Allow silences in the conversation. Resist filling in every space with your talk. Respond to them by waiting. Then, perhaps ask: "*How does it all seem to you now?*"
- Allow the conversation topic to change once the speaker is ready to move on or leave it for a while.