

EMPATHETIC LISTENING

"The most basic of all human needs is the need to be understood." – Ralph G. Nichols

EMPATHETIC / ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS

Fully engage in the conversation by focusing on the speaker with the intention of understanding their message and responding thoughtfully. This includes using warmth, genuineness and empathy to:

- Paraphrase their message
- Validate their emotions
- Summarize their message
- Listen without interrupting
- Show engaged body language
- Ask clarifying and open ended questions

Examples:

- "You really want the popsicle. I hear how frustrated you are that you can't have it."
- "It's understandable you felt disappointed when that happened."
- "You said you felt ignored when I didn't respond to your text and phone call."
- "It sounds like you felt dismissed during the meeting."
- "It seems like you are feeling lonely and sad. Is that correct?"

ROAD BLOCKS TO CONNECTION

When someone expresses something to us, we commonly respond in ways that don't really help them feel fully understood or honored. It helps to be aware of roadblocks to true listening. Examples include:

- Advice giving* or giving warnings*
- Reassurance* or toxic positivity
- Changing the subject
- Telling our own similar experience* or one upping them
- Making a joke, or making light of it
- 4 horseman (defensiveness, contempt, stonewalling, criticism)

Some of these* might make sense to use at some point during the conversation, but as a first response to an expression that has emotion, these responses can often be roadblocks to the person feeling heard.