

Reflective Listening

"What people really need is a good listening to."

Mary Lou Casey



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4VOuBV84CTU>

reflection (n.)

late 14c., in reference to surfaces, from Late Latin reflexionem (nominative reflexio) "a reflection," literally "a bending back," noun of action from past participle stem of Latin reflectere, from re- "back" (see [re-](#)) + flectere "to bend" (see [flexible](#)). Meaning "remark made after turning back one's thought on some subject" is from 1650s.

Reflective statements

- Make a reasonable guess about person's meaning, thoughts, feelings, values, hopes
- Guess what might come next – "continue the paragraph"
- Sometimes overstate or understate what person says
- Skillful reflections move past what the person has already said, but not *too* far ahead.

Why a statement?

Consider the difference

You don't see your drinking as a concern?
You don't see your drinking as a concern.

You're not sure you can trust me?
You're not sure you can trust me.

You're still upset?
You're still upset.

"Responding with a well-formed statement rather than a question is less likely to evoke defensiveness and more likely to encourage continued exploration."

MI, 3rd edition

Key steps in providing reflections

Hear what the person is saying
Make an educated guess about the underlying meaning
Choose a direction for your reflection
Share your guess as a concise statement (not a question)

Common sentence stems

It sounds like...
As I listen to you, it seems...
For you...
You're wondering...
You're concerned...
You're feeling like...
It's really important to you...
You're hoping...
You...

Using reflections for strategic emphasis

Convey empathy
Explore ambivalence
Highlight change talk

"Sometimes I'd rather be back living outdoors in my tent. It's nice having my own place, but there's others who deserve housing more than me."

Convey empathy
Explore ambivalence
Highlight change talk

Possible statements

It sounds like you miss some things about living outdoors.
Living indoors has its challenges.
You're having mixed feelings about being here.
This has been a big change.
You're feeling uncomfortable living indoors when others are still out on the streets.
You care a lot about others who are still out there.
You wish everyone could have their own place.

"I know all the reasons why I should take these meds, but the side effects are so unpleasant. Sometimes I think about not taking them at all."

Convey empathy
Explore ambivalence
Highlight change talk

"I'd like to be healthy enough to get a part-time job, but who's gonna hire somebody like me."

Convey empathy
Explore ambivalence
Highlight change talk

Summaries

Summaries

"Let me see if I understand thus far..."

Useful anytime in conversation
Help to ensure clear communication
Are basically reflective paragraphs
Three common types: collecting, linking, transitioning

Common Elements

Begin with statement indicating you are making a summary

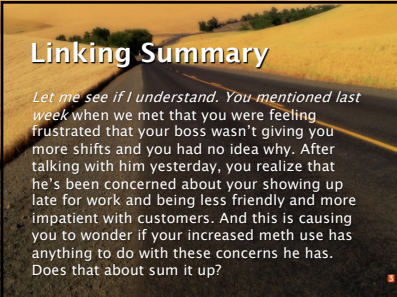
Often focus on:

- Expressing empathy
- Reflecting both sides of ambivalence
- Accentuating change talk

End with an invitation

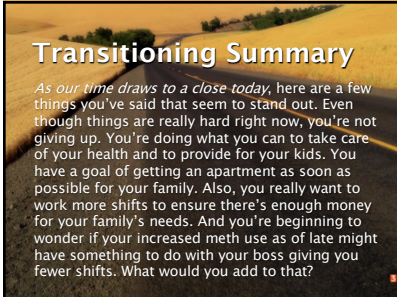
Collecting Summary

The gist of what I'm hearing is that your life feels pretty overwhelming. Money is tight and you can barely afford to meet your kids' basic needs. You want to work more shifts than your boss is giving you. That's a frustration. You'd also like to be able to get your own place to live, which would make it easier to manage your life, including your depression and diabetes. While you've begun using meth again to help cope with everything, you're wondering whether it might be hurting more than helping. How does that fit with how you see things?



Linking Summary

Let me see if I understand. You mentioned last week when we met that you were feeling frustrated that your boss wasn't giving you more shifts and you had no idea why. After talking with him yesterday, you realize that he's been concerned about your showing up late for work and being less friendly and more impatient with customers. And this is causing you to wonder if your increased meth use has anything to do with these concerns he has. Does that about sum it up?



Transitioning Summary

As our time draws to a close today, here are a few things you've said that seem to stand out. Even though things are really hard right now, you're not giving up. You're doing what you can to take care of your health and to provide for your kids. You have a goal of getting an apartment as soon as possible for your family. Also, you really want to work more shifts to ensure there's enough money for your family's needs. And you're beginning to wonder if your increased meth use as of late might have something to do with your boss giving you fewer shifts. What would you add to that?