

## Active Listening

### Be Attentive to show respect

- **Make eye contact**, being sensitive to cultural differences.
- **Face the speaker** and avoid moving around.
- **Ignore distractions** such as phones and others around you.
- **Encourage the speaker** with nodding and short responses like “mmm-hmm” or “Wow!”

### Ask Questions to clarify information

- **Put your assumptions aside** and ask closed-ended and open-ended questions to understand the situation the speaker is telling you.
- **Closed-ended questions** are good when you need a specific piece of information.
- **Open-ended questions** are helpful when you are looking for an explanation or root cause.

**Example:** If a staff member tells you, “The new process for X will never work,” the manager may respond with several questions, listening after each. For example:

- What are your concerns about it? (open-ended)
- Do you understand why this change was made? (closed-ended)
- What other options do you see? (open-ended)
- How about you give it a try for the next week, then we can discuss again? (closed-ended)

### Paraphrase to confirm understanding

A paraphrase is a summary of what someone else just told you. Good paraphrasing is:

- **Short**, usually a few words or 1-2 sentences at most.
- **Prioritized** on the essentials of the message, not the details.
- **Informational**, not emotional.
- **Stated in the listener’s own words** to show that you have actually understood the point of the message, not just heard the words.

**Example:** A staff member says, “There is one problem after another with patient Z. Last week she came an hour late due to transportation challenges. Her blood pressure was elevated, and last weekend she ended up in the ER. She has not seemed her usual self the last month or so. And now she is late for her appointment today. I wonder what’s going on in her family.”

The manager may respond with, “So it sounds like you think there’s an issue at home ... ?”

### Empathize to de-escalate and show care

Empathizing is relating to and acknowledging someone’s emotions. A high level of emotion can cloud logical thinking and prevent progress. Acknowledging others’ emotions makes a connection and allows the emotion to dissipate. Keep it simple—just name the emotion!

**Example:** A staff member says, “It seems like everything is going wrong! We have had three patients come at the wrong time today, the shared computer is down, the new procedure for the x process is taking a lot of time, and we have two subs here from other centers!” The manager may respond with a gentle, “Sounds overwhelming! Let’s see what we can do ... ”