## Listening Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Listening Response</th>
<th>Overview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Silent Listening</strong></td>
<td>Being attentive and non-verbally responsive without offering verbal feedback. Non-verbal Responses include nodding your head, providing eye contact, facial expressions. Short encouraging sounds such as mmm-hmm are used to help assure the speaker they are being listened to. Uses: When the best response is to say nothing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Questioning** | Using questions while listening to gather additional information. (Uses) Reasons to ask questions include:  
- To clarify meanings.  
- To learn about other’s thoughts, feelings and wants.  
- To encourage elaboration.  
- To encourage discovery.  
- To gather more facts and details.  
Keep in mind that not all questions are genuine requests for information. Be sure that your intentions are genuine by avoiding: questions that lead or trap the speaker, questions that make statements, questions that carry hidden agendas, questions that seek correct answers, and questions based on assumptions. |
| **Paraphrasing** | Feedback that restates what you think the speaker said using your own words. Paraphrasing responses include:  
- Changing the speaker’s wording.  
- Offering an example of what you think the speaker is referring to.  
- Reflecting the underlying theme of the speaker’s message. Uses: When you want to know if what the speaker said is actually the message that they intended, when you may want additional information from the speaker and when you are in a heated discussion and you want to demonstrate that you are listening to the speaker. You can paraphrase factual information or you can paraphrase the speaker’s thoughts, feelings or wants. |
| **Empathizing** | Responses that demonstrate you identify with the speaker. Responding with empathy requires perspective-taking and genuine concern for the speaker. Types of responses may be brief (such as, “My goodness!” or “Wow”) or expressed in statements (such as, “I can see that really hurts” or “I can tell you are really excited about that.” Be cautious and avoid these non-empathizing behaviors:  
- Denying others the right to their feelings.  
- Minimizing the significance of the situation.  
- Self-defending or avoiding blame.  
- Raining on the speaker’s parade. Uses: When you want to identify with the speaker and make them feel like they are not alone. |
| **Supporting** | Responses that demonstrate the listener’s support for the speaker’s situation. Types of Supportive Responses include: Agreement, Offers to Help, Praise, Reassurance, and Diversion. Uses: When you know the speaker requires emotional and mental support. Be aware that some people may not be ready for the different types of supportive responses. When providing support be sure to be sincere and focus on the present. |
| **Analyzing** | Responses that offer an interpretation of a speaker’s message for the purpose of helping the speaker see other alternative meanings of a situation. Guidelines for Analyzing:  
- Offer your interpretation in a tentative way because you don’t know for sure if you are correct.  
- Your interpretation should be reasonably correct or don’t offer an interpretation until you have more info.  
- Make sure the person is seeking alternative meanings to a situation otherwise they may get defensive. |
| **Evaluating** | Responses that evaluate the speaker’s thoughts or behaviors in a favorable or unfavorable way. These types of responses are also known as constructive criticism. Before providing an evaluative response determine if the speaker have requested an evaluative response from you. If you don’t they may get defensive. Be sure to be sincere and truly constructive in your response. |
| **Advising** | Responses that offer the speaker a resolution to their problem or situation. Advising is the most common listening response but should generally be used only when:  
- The speaker asks for advice by asking a question or when they announce a problem.  
- The speaker is willing to listen and consider your advice.  
- You are confident in the advice that you are giving.  
- You won’t be blamed if the advice taken doesn’t work out as planned. |