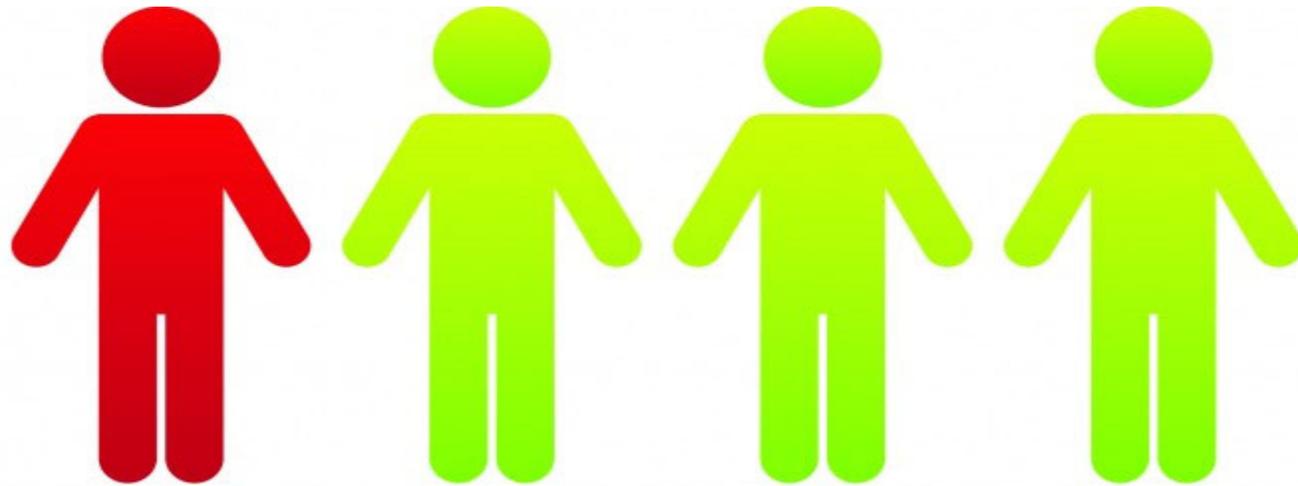


# Active listening

by Eileen Abrams, Psy.D.

414-225-5602



One in four people has a **mental illness**.  
You can be the **one** that helps.

# Stages of Crisis

- Stages:
  - Recognition: The person realizes that they are not coping well
  - The person struggles to solve the problem and may ask others for help
  - Not being able to solve the crisis the person is overwhelmed by emotions including fear, anger, confusion, and inadequacy.

# Deal with the feelings

- The emotions are blocking the persons ability to think and cope
- Help the person look for their own solutions rather than telling them a solution
- Needing to have answers provided all of the time lowers the person's self esteem
- Appear calm and in control, and be flexible with your approach. Individualize

# Active Listening



# Active Listening

- Active listening is listening not only to the content but also the emotions being communicated to you
- It is the emotions behind the content that tell us the most about the person
- It is an opportunity to display understanding

# Active Listening

- Is important because it provides feedback to demonstrate that you are understanding the story and the feelings that are being told to you
- You are restating the other person's position and emotions in a way that the other person hears as non-judgmental and accurate.

# Feedback to Demonstrate Understanding



# Feedback

- Brief Statements of Observations
  - Generally not questions
    - Questions are more intrusive
    - Can create pressure and provoke defensiveness
    - Can diminish rapport
    - May prompt denials which can create barriers

# Feedback

- Brief Statements
  - Encourage them to go on
  - Make them feel listened to and respected
  - Can help diffuse negative feelings and create positive ones
  - Appears non-judgmental to the person

# Active Listening Skills

- Emotional Labeling
- Paraphrasing
- Mirroring/Reflecting
- Summary
- Open-Ended Questions
- Minimal Encouragers
- Effective Phrases
- “I” Messages

# Listening Skills

- Emotional Labeling
  - Stated observation of the emotion heard, “you sound...” “you seem..”, “I hear....”
  - Excellent way to begin and very effective
  - Easy to back off from:
    - “I didn’t say you were angry, I said that you sound angry.”
  - If possible label a lot of feelings it helps someone to feel understood.

# Nonjudgmental Attitude is the Key

- Feelings are Universal, Experiences are not
- It is possible to demonstrate understanding of feelings without having gone through the same experience
- You can ask clarifying questions such as “What I think I hear you saying is ..... Is that what you mean?”
- Even if you are wrong the person will know that you are trying

# Listening Skills

- Paraphrasing

- Put the meaning into your own words

- Restatement

- Example:

Inmate: He doesn't pay attention to what I say  
and it makes me angry

Officer: He doesn't listen to you

# Listening Skills

- Mirroring/Reflecting

- Brief follow along, the “gist” of the statement, repeating the last few words

- Example:

- Inmate: He doesn't pay attention to what I say to him and it makes me angry

- Officer: It makes you angry

# Listening Skills

- Summary

- Periodically covering the main points

- HIS STORY + HIS FEELINGS

- In your words

- Example:

- O.K. what you've told me so far is this ...

- and as a result you feel ... Do I understand this correctly?"

# Listening Skills

- Open Ended Questions or Sentences
  - “What else?”, “How?”, “When?”
  - “Tell me more about ...”
  - “I’d like to hear more...”
  - Benefits:
    - Conveys your interest in listening
    - Gives more freedom of response
    - Limits feelings of interrogation

# Listening Skills

- Minimal Encouragers
  - Indicate your presence... “Uh-huh”, “O.K.” etc.
  - Best used when the person is talking for an extended period of time or telling a longer story
  - Best used in combination with another skill such as paraphrasing or mirroring/reflecting

# Listening Skills

- Effective Pauses
  - Immediately before or after saying something meaningful
  - The “Effect” desired is to help focus thought and interaction

# Listening Skills

- “I” Messages

- Used to confront subject about a behavior that is counterproductive, without being accusatory

- Examples:

- “When you yell, I feel frustrated because it stops me from listening to you.”

- “I can’t hear you when you yell at me.”

# Phrases that Damage Rapport

- “You should”    “You shouldn’t”
  - These are advice giving statements that create feelings of being “put down”
- “I understand”
  - This is a phrase used to silence people
  - You may not completely understand their experience
- “Calm Down”
  - This may be perceived as an order statement which can provoke intense anger
  - Instead speak calmly and slowly

# Empathy

- Identification/Understanding of another's situation, feelings, and thoughts
- It is neither Opposition or Agreement
- It is not necessary to actually feel what they feel to provide empathy
- Empathy is not Sympathy
  - Sympathy is an expression of pity or sorrow for the distress of others
  - Pity and sorrow are not productive here