

Active Listening Learning Resource

Self-Paced Learning Modules to Improve Your
Ability to Communicate Effectively



U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences

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Getting Started

Active listening skills are powerful in serving as the foundation for establishing and sustaining interpersonal relationships. Often, nonverbal or verbal messages can be misinterpreted or dismissed, resulting in unproductive work environments and unhappy relationships with family, friends, and neighbors in which individuals feel unheard or misunderstood. In the military, engaging in effective active listening is critical as information is communicated during missions, feedback is provided during developmental counseling, and crisis situations are identified. Developing one's own active listening skills supports the Army leadership requirements model (Department of the Army, 2015; FM 6-22 *Leader Development*, p. 1-4) and is an integral component to the Army's guidelines when conducting developmental counseling (Department of the Army, 2014; ATP 6-22.1 *The Counseling Process*, p. 2-2).

How to Navigate Through the Active Listening Skills Modules

- Each module is designed to allow you to go through each skill at your own pace.
- Each module is a stand-alone. You may proceed through the modules in any order. However, we encourage you to go through the modules in the order they are presented as the skills tend to build on one another.
- There is a *Check on Learning* section starting with Module 2 that allows you to test your own knowledge of each skill. The Check on Learning tests are only for your own knowledge and practice. There is not a certain score that is necessary to “pass” each section. If you feel you need to re-do a section, you may do so as many times as you feel is necessary for your own development.

Module 1: Active Listener Characteristics

The Active Listening Skills Curriculum is based on the Three-Stage Model of Interviewing

Stage 1: Exploration

Exploration involves establishing a working relationship with others and discovering what their problem is. You are assisting the other person to identify their experiences and to explore any concerns or issues that may exist. Specific skills needed in this stage include:

- Attending behaviors
- Effective questioning
- Reflection of content
- Reflection of feeling

Stage 2: Clarification

Clarification involves helping the other person clarify their experiences and establish goals. During this stage, you help facilitate the definition of the other person's problems, help them determine which problems require further action, and redefine the problems into attainable goals. Specific skills needed in this stage include:

- Reflection of meaning
- Confrontation
- Immediacy
- Self-disclosure

Stage 3: Action

Action involves assisting the other person with identifying an optimal action plan for each goal, working with the other person to implement and complete the chosen action plan, and terminate (if necessary) the relationship when the goals are attained. Action involves providing feedback, emphasizing strengths, reframing behaviors, and providing instructions. The following sections of Action include:

- Information giving
- Enlisting cooperation

There are 10 characteristics of an effective active listener

- Trustworthy
- Emotionally stable
- Self-aware, willing to “own” their stuff
- Courageous
- High tolerance for ambiguity
- Empathetic, caring, non-judgmental
- Positive self-esteem
- Self-acceptance
- Creative, willing to do something different, “think outside the box”
- Well-versed in knowledge related to cultural issues

Module 2: Attending Behaviors

Attending behaviors are the most basic skills used in active listening and should be mastered before other active listening skills.

Attending behaviors pertain to the way you orient yourself to others—both physically and psychologically—as well as the way you respond to what the other person is communicating to you. Your attending behaviors should encourage the other person to talk, because attending behaviors convey empathy and let the other person know that you are listening to them. Additionally, your attending behaviors should be individually and culturally appropriate.

According to Evans et al. (2016) in their textbook *Essential Interviewing: A Programmed Approach to Effective Communication*, attending behaviors include the following skills:

Eye Contact

- When you are talking to others, it is important to look at them.
- Notice when there are breaks in eye contact—others may look away when thinking carefully or when discussing uncomfortable topics.
- Remember to be natural and to be culturally appropriate.

Nonverbal Behavior

- Your nonverbal behaviors should include attentive body language—your body posture, hand gestures, and facial expressions.
- Your body language should be appropriate to the discussion and should be responsive to the other person's message.

- What is your own natural listening style? How does your listening style come across to others? The basic attentive style involves slightly leaning forward with a relaxed easy posture. Find a posture that feels right to you: Face the other person, adopt an open posture, use head nodding.
- A natural, authentic posture is likely to be the most effective. However, it is important to be able to adapt according to the communication needs of the other person. Adopt the **SOLER** method:
 - **S** = Squarely face the other person
 - **O** = Use an open posture
 - **L** = Lean toward the other person
 - **E** = Use eye contact
 - **R** = Relax, keep it natural
- Observe the other person's body language. Individuals will tend to lean toward you when they are interested in a topic and to lean away from you when they are bored or are scared.
- As you continue to work on your attending skills, look for small indicators of tension in your body, including in your facial expressions (e.g., frowns, tight jaw) and in your body posture (e.g., clenched fists, arms crossed).
- Overall, becoming aware of your own body language and your other nonverbal skills can impact your interactions with others.

Verbal Response

- Your verbal response includes your tone, pace, and focus. Are you talking fast? Are you loud? Are you high-pitched?

- When establishing a relationship with others, your tone should be warm and expressive. Try not to talk too slow or too fast.
- Notice the vocal characteristics of the other person. Emotions can become apparent through one's voice. Focus on what the other person is communicating to you.

Silence

- Are you comfortable with silence? Silence can be extremely useful. Silence can serve as a form of support and can give the other person time to think and process the topic or feedback.
- Tracking the other person's topic is a way to encourage effective communication and collaboration. There are times when it is appropriate to redirect attention. However, try to stay in the present moment and to avoid switching topics.

Check on Learning

Question 1

Effective active listeners maintain intent eye-to-eye contact at all times during the discussion.

- True
- False

Question 2

An effective active listener is comfortable with brief reflective silences.

- True

False

Question 3

An effective active listener is more attentive to verbal cues than to nonverbal cues during the discussion.

True

False

For correct answers, see the [Module 2 Check on Learning Answers](#) section (p. 51).

Module 3: Effective Questioning Techniques

An effective style of questioning is important to facilitate communication. There are three types of questioning techniques that are often used within discussions:

- Closed questions
- Open questions
- Minimal encouragers

Closed Questions

Closed Questions are designed to obtain specific information as they limit responses to a “yes,” “no,” or other simple response. Closed questions can also identify parameters of a problem or issue, narrow the topic of discussion, and interrupt an overly talkative person.

Examples of Closed Questions:

- How old are you?
- Are you married?
- Are you happy with your job?
- Are you concerned about what you will do if you fail the PT test?
- Do you have a good relationship with your NCO?

Open Questions

Open Questions are designed to promote free communication, where the other person is encouraged to elaborate on their thoughts and feelings related to the specific issues, problems, or situations at hand. Open Questions can also be used to begin an interview, elicit specific examples, and motivate the other person to communicate.

Examples of Open Questions:

- **What:** Elicits factual data.
 - What do you enjoy about your job?
 - In your opinion, what makes a good leader?
 - What do you think you might do if you fail the PT test?
- **How:** Encourages a personal or subjective view.
 - How do you feel about the task?
 - Tell me about your relationship with your NCO.
- **Why:** Try to avoid this type of question as it can be perceived as accusatory, and the other person may feel a need to defend themselves.

Minimal Encouragers

Minimal encouragers are also effective techniques as they tell the other person that you are listening to their responses. Minimal encouragers include both verbal and nonverbal indicators that can encourage the other person to continue speaking.

Examples of Minimal Encouragers:

- Verbal responses such as simple words (e.g., “yes,” “okay,” “go on”) or encouraging sounds (e.g., “uhm-hmm,” “uh huh”)
- Nonverbal behaviors (e.g., head nodding, leaning forward, open-handed gestures) and other attending behaviors (e.g., appropriate eye contact and smiling)
- Showing interpersonal warmth
- Repeating key words uttered by the other person during the discussion
 - Repeating one to three words spoken by the other person and staying very close to that person’s language, typically changing “I” to “you.”
 - For example, the other person says “I feel so homesick, I miss my mom.” You then say “You're homesick.”

Tips for Using Effective Questioning Techniques

- Set your own personal goal to ask open questions. Open questions can be used to introduce topics, to encourage elaboration from the other person, to clarify the other person’s thoughts, and to promote clear, concrete responses.
- Before you can adequately respond with a question, you must listen carefully to what the other person says.
- Questions that follow a subordinate’s response encourage collaboration and cooperation.
- An open question can be utilized to ask for specific examples of behavior.
 - **Example:** Tell me about the last time in which you felt satisfied with your job.
- Ask closed questions as infrequently as possible, or only when necessary (e.g., when the other person is going off topic).

- If you do need to ask closed questions, try not to continuously ask closed questions. The repetitiveness of closed questions can feel like an interrogation.
- Try asking one question at a time, allowing the other person to answer, then asking the next question. If you ask multiple questions in a row, it can confuse the other person on what exactly is being asked, and to which question they should respond.
 - **Example:** What makes you feel like you are doing poorly? What would make you feel better about your performance?
- Avoid asking leading questions. Leading questions can impose your values, beliefs, and assumptions onto the other person.
 - **Example:** What about getting a loan for all your debt?

Check on Learning

Question 1

Effective active listeners tend to use more closed questions during developmental counseling.

- True
- False

Question 2

Minimal encouragers are both verbal and nonverbal indicators that encourage others to continue speaking on the topic.

- True
- False

Question 3

Indicate which of the following is NOT an open question/statement:

- What do you enjoy about your new promotion?
- How are you handling your new responsibilities?
- When did you join your new unit?
- Tell me about your new position.

For correct answers, see the Module 3 Check on Learning Answers section (p. 52).

Module 4: Reflection of Content

Reflection of Content involves listening attentively to what the other person is saying and—in your own words—stating back to the other person the essence of what they just said.

When reflecting content, you shorten and clarify the other person’s comments by rephrasing—not parroting—the content of the other person’s message. This requires using some of your own words plus the important main words used by the other person.

Two skills are used when reflecting content: **Paraphrasing** and **Summarizing**.

Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is a skill that is used to reflect the main content of what the other person just said with the following purpose:

- To convey that you understand the other person.
- To help the other person simplify, focus, and crystallize what they said.
- To encourage the other person to elaborate.
- To provide a check on the accuracy of your own perception.

An accurate paraphrase consists of a short statement with four dimensions

- Uses a sentence stem
 - “It sounds like...”, “I hear you saying...”, “You think...”
 - Can use the other person’s name: “Tom, sounds like...”

- Contains the key words from the other person
 - Use the other person’s language.
- Has the essence of what the other person has said
 - Transform the other person’s sometimes confused statements into succinct, meaningful, and clarifying statements.
 - Keep true to the other person’s ideas but do not repeat them verbatim.
- Has a check-out for accuracy
 - Ask the other person for feedback on whether the paraphrase was relatively correct and/or useful.

Effective paraphrasing steps

1. Identify the key content of the other person’s message.
2. Select an appropriate beginning.
3. Translate key content in your own words.
4. Confirm the accuracy of the paraphrase.

Example of effective paraphrasing

The other person—a 30-year-old woman—says to you “How can I tell my commander that I want to get out of the Army? He’ll think I’m crazy. I guess I’m just afraid to tell him.”

Effective Paraphrasing Steps:

1. *Identify the key content of the other person’s message*—She wants to leave the Army but hasn’t told the commander because he will think she is crazy.
2. *Select an appropriate beginning*—“It sounds like ...”

3. *Translate key content in your own words*—“Wants to leave” translates to “break off,” “split,” “new goals.”
4. *Confirm the accuracy of the paraphrase*—“It sounds like you haven’t found a way to tell your commander you have new goals in your life that are away from the Army because of his possible reaction. Is that right?”

Summarizing

Summarizing is a skill that is used to reflect the important content of several statements provided by the other person. Summarizing can be a collection of two or more paraphrases that condense the other person’s messages or the session. Therefore, summarizing covers more material and covers a longer period of the other person’s discussion compared to paraphrasing.

Goals of summarizing

- To reflect more information over a longer period
- To tie together multiple elements of the other person’s message
- To identify a common theme or pattern
- To start or end a session
- To pace a session
- To review a session
- To serve as a transition when changing topics during a session

Summarizing is an excellent technique to use at the beginning of the session and at the end of the session.

Steps of summarizing

1. Recall key content and emotion (affect).
2. Identify patterns or themes.
3. Use an appropriate sentence stem and verbalize the summarization response (e.g., “I sense...” or “you are feeling...”).

Summarizing example

At the beginning of conversation:

Subordinate: “I’m sorry I’ve been late to PT. I’ve had so much going on. My wife had surgery, and I’ve had to wake up in the middle of the night to take care of the baby. By the time I get the baby to bed and I am asleep, my alarm goes off and I sleep right through it.”

In the middle of the conversation:

Subordinate: “I really do like PT. I feel like I’m a good runner, but I just haven’t been on my game. I feel like I’m letting everyone down. I feel like I’m letting myself down.”

Leader summarizing: “You’ve had to balance numerous responsibilities with your family this past week. Your wife and baby have both needed your attention, and you are tired and worn out. You feel as if PT is a strength of yours, but with your current family responsibilities, PT has taken a backseat.”

Check on Learning

Question 1

Effective active listeners use reflection of content to elaborate on and to interpret another person's comments.

- True
- False

Question 2

Read the following scenario:

You: "I noticed that you have been late for PT every morning this past week. What has contributed to this change?"

The other person: "I'm sorry. I've been having to take my kids to school every day because my husband is visiting his family."

Indicate which of the following is an example of paraphrasing:

- "I hear you saying you may have too much on your plate right now. What do you think?"
- "It sounds like you've been busy balancing responsibilities with your family. Is that right?"
- "Perhaps you need a break from your family. What do you think?"

Question 3

Read the following scenario:

During a developmental counseling session regarding a subordinate's lack of motivation and completion of tasks over the past couple of months, the subordinate made the following comments:

(Beginning of conversation) Subordinate: "I'm sorry. I've had so much going on. My husband and I took on my sister's kids because my sister recently got arrested. The kids are pretty young and have been keeping us up at night."

(Middle of conversation) Subordinate: "I really do like my job. It's just that sometimes I find it hard to find the energy during the day to complete my work on time. I feel like I'm letting everyone down, which makes everything worse."

Indicate which of the following is an example of summarizing:

- "You are feeling extremely overwhelmed with all the responsibilities you have taken on lately."
- "I sense you've had many life changes lately and had to balance many responsibilities lately. Your family needs you, and you sound extremely tired and worn out. Does that seem right?"
- "I sense you've had many life changes lately and had to balance many responsibilities lately. Your family needs you, and you sound extremely tired and worn out. You enjoy your job, but it seems maybe the stress at home is impacting your productivity at work. Does that seem right?"

For correct answers, see the [Module 4 Check on Learning Answers](#) section (p. 53).

Module 5: Reflection of Feeling

Reflection of feeling is responding to the underlying feeling or emotional aspects of another person's response, not to the cognitive aspects or to the content. Reflection of feeling requires capturing the other person's emotionally charged words and phrases and repeating the words and phrases back to the other person.

Reflection of feeling is a way of showing that you are aware of the emotions experienced by another person and it helps to increase your sense of understanding of the other person's issues (Evans et al., 2016, *Essential interviewing: A programmed approach to effective communication*).

When the skill is performed well, reflection of feeling indicates an accurate sense of the other person's world, thereby resulting in a more effective working relationship. When you reflect the other person's feelings, the other person can explore their emotions in greater detail.

Reflection of feeling involves identifying the other person's emotions and then restating them back to the other person. Emotions or feelings may be found in direct communication or inferred from nonverbal forms of communication.

Reflection of Feeling Steps

1. **Identify the expressed emotions.**
2. **Use a sentence stem.** (e.g. "Sounds like...", "I hear you feeling...", "I get the sense that you are feeling..."). These sentence stems are designed to capture the feeling.
3. **Add more descriptive emotional words** to the identified emotions. Your goal is to capture the tone and the emotion of the story by adding more depth to the reflection. This step helps the other person explore their experience further by adding words to

something that may be challenging to discuss. “I hear you are feeling frustrated, but I also get the sense that you are angry.”

4. **Add context.** What is the emotion about? “John, you seem to be feeling angry about...”
5. Is the context in the **past, present, or future?** The emotion felt and expressed can be in the present but sometimes the event can be about something in the past or about a future event. “I sense you are feeling pain about losing your wife last year.”
6. **Check for accuracy.** “Am I hearing you correctly? What did you hear from my comments?”

Tips for Effective Reflections of Feeling

At times, an individual will express **multiple feelings**. Work to remember or be aware of as many feelings as possible. However, utilizing more than two feelings in the reflection can become too cumbersome for reflections. In these cases, work to combine the feelings into one word. For example, feeling lost, confused, and discouraged could combine into feeling overwhelmed.

Build vocabulary. Most individuals communicate with simple, often used words when describing feelings (e.g., frustrated, upset, stressed). Assuming this to be the case, work to expand an understanding of what overused words could also mean. To increase understanding, try to be accurate and specific with the emotion discussed.

Limit length of reflections. Reflections should be simple phrases, not long-winded sentences. The aim of reflections is to communicate understanding in a succinct way.

Avoid telling someone they feel something because of an event. For example, saying “You feel that” will describe an event, not an emotion. “You feel that you are being singled out” does not contain an emotion. Instead respond by including a feeling word and avoiding “that” in reflections.

The typical reflection includes “you feel,” which becomes confining and redundant. Try using “That’s a (feeling word) feeling...” or “It’s got you feeling...”

Ask yourself what you really want. Sometimes we hear something we don’t want to hear from the other person, especially if it is negative feedback about ourselves. If you find yourself getting emotional, take a breath and ask yourself what you really want and work towards it. For example, if your motive for speaking to the other person is to understand their lack of motivation at work, focus on that motive, and don’t let other motives, such as saving face, sidetrack you (Grenny et al., 2021, *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High*).

Reflection of Feeling Examples

- “I get the sense that you feel unhappy about that.”
- “You seem quite relieved to know you passed.”
- “You sound bewildered at the moment.”
- “This has got you feeling shocked.”

Check on Learning

Question 1

Effective active listeners use reflection of feeling to elaborate on and to interpret another person’s comments.

- True
- False

Question 2

Read the following scenario:

Leader: “During the last sync meeting, you seemed distracted and nonattentive. What’s going on?”

Subordinate: “I’m sorry. My A/C stopped working over the weekend and the estimate I got to fix it is more than what I can afford.”

Indicate which of the following is an example of reflection of feeling:

- “You may be feeling like you have too much on your plate right now. What do you think?”
- “I am guessing that you have been upset about your A/C being broken. Is that right?”
- “I am guessing that you have been worried about the possibility of going into debt. Does that sound right?”

For correct answers, see the [Module 5 Check on Learning Answers](#) section (p. 55).

Module 6: Empathetic Listening

Empathy is the ability to understand what another person is feeling during their unique life experience. With empathy, you can focus on the other person's point of view without necessarily agreeing with it. Therefore, empathy allows you to communicate understanding to another person in a powerful way since it requires you to join in the unique experience of the other person.

Empathy involves listening, understanding the other person's concerns, and communicating this understanding back to the other person in a different way to increase awareness and perspective.

Having an **Empathetic Listening Style** communicates respect for and acceptance of the other person and their feelings. It encourages a nonjudgmental, collaborative relationship while allowing you to be a supportive and knowledgeable consultant for them. When you use empathy, you listen rather than tell, you sincerely compliment rather than denigrate, you gently persuade with the understanding that the decision to change solely belongs to the other person, and you provide support for the other person during the process.

Three Levels of Empathy

Basic Empathy

Your responses are equivalent to what the other person stated and do not add to or detract from the emotional aspects of the discussion. Your responses are roughly interchangeable with those expressed by the other person. There is little to no paraphrasing, you are accurately repeating back what the other person said—you are showing basic understanding.

Additive Empathy

Your responses give back more than what the other person stated. Your responses accurately portray the other person's emotional experience and your responses add to what the other person said. You could link the past to the present, you could discuss other present circumstances, or you could provide words to the discussion regarding the emotional experience of a situation that the other person could not or did not say.

Subtractive Empathy

Your responses give back less than what the other person stated and can even distort what has been said. Using subtractive empathy might indicate discomfort or other negative reactions to the listener. Remember, if you find yourself getting emotional, ask yourself what you really want and work towards it.

Three Levels of Empathy Examples

Someone says to you "I haven't been included in any activities with the others. I get so upset when I'm left out."

Using **Basic Empathy**, you might say: "You seem to feel forgotten and left out."

Using **Additive Empathy**, you might say: "I'm hearing you say that you feel alone and maybe rejected in some way."

Using **Subtractive Empathy**, you might say: "That's too bad. It happens though."

Using Subtractive Empathy is never recommended!

Steps for Using Empathy

1. Listen carefully to the other person's statements.
2. Identify key experiences, behaviors, and feelings the other person is conveying.
3. Pull them all together in a core message statement.
4. After finishing, ask the other person for accuracy of your understanding.

Verbalizing Empathy Examples

- "What I hear you saying is..."
- "If I'm getting this right, you're saying..."
- "It sounds like..."
- "On one hand I hear..., on the other I hear..."
- "When I put myself in your shoes, I can see why you would feel that way..."
- "When I look at this from your viewpoint..."
- "That must feel..."
- "I can begin to imagine how much that would (hurt)..."

People express feelings in a variety of ways. Your task is to listen to all that is said and use it to convey more thorough understanding. The following are some ways people express feelings:

- **Single words:** I feel good. I feel trapped. I'm angry.
- **Phrases:** I'm sitting on top of the world. I feel down in the dumps. My back is against the wall.

- **Behavior/action statements:** I feel like giving up. Now that it's over, I feel like throwing up.
- **Implied through experience:** I feel like I'm being stereotyped. I feel like I'm being dumped on.

A Simple Response Strategy

Use a simple starting sentence to get the empathy process moving—You feel (correct emotion) because (key experiences or behaviors connected to the emotion).

Next, recast a second response in your own words while still identifying both feeling and experience/behaviors connected to the other person's emotion. Do not give advice—just offer a deeper perspective.

Finish with a question of accuracy—“Am I understanding you correctly?”

Simple Response Strategy Example

Someone says to you “I showed up in the wrong gear, and there I was, totally embarrassed. It's just typical of me.”

You might respond with “I hear you feel embarrassed because you showed up in the wrong gear. It also seems like you are hard on yourself because you think you make mistakes often. Do I understand you right?”

Check on Learning

Question 1

Effective active listeners use empathy to convey respect and acceptance for a person's feelings while encouraging a collaborative, nonjudgmental relationship.

- True
- False

Question 2

Which of the following is true when it comes to using an empathetic listening style?

- You listen to the other person without really trying to understand their point of view.
- You tell the other person the best course of action for them to take.
- You go into detail about the character flaws the other person has and how those flaws impact the person's job.
- You provide support for the other person, understanding that the decision to make changes is completely up to them.

Question 3

Read the following scenario:

During a developmental counseling session regarding someone's lack of motivation and completion of tasks over the past couple of months, the other person made the following comment:

Other person: “I’m sorry. When I first got promoted, I was excited, but lately I’ve had so much going on. I’ve had to get used to my new schedule and to get up to speed on my new responsibilities. There are some days I feel like giving up.”

Indicate which of the following is an example of additive empathy:

- “You are feeling extremely overwhelmed with all the responsibilities you have both at home and at work. Am I understanding you right?”
- “It sounds like you have looked forward to this new position and have placed a lot of importance on your performance, and maybe the added responsibilities of this new promotion have been overwhelming. Am I understanding you right?”
- “I sense you’ve had many life changes lately, and you’ve had to balance many responsibilities lately. Your family needs you, and you sound extremely tired and worn out. You enjoy your job, but it seems maybe the stress at home is impacting your productivity at work. Does that seem right?”
- “That’s too bad. We all have bad days and have to push through them.”

For correct answers, see the Module 6 Check on Learning Answers section (p. 56).

Module 7: Reflection of Meaning

Meaning is at the core of one's experiences. All our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors have meaning to understand and to explore. As an active listener, you are searching for the hidden value, goal, desire, and/or vision of the other person. These things can be unstated as people will rarely share freely what something means to them. So, a part of the discussion is to bring that meaning out and encourage the other person to find new ways to examine and express those elements in their life.

Reflection of meaning attempts to capture those hidden messages that are underneath the other person's thoughts, behaviors, and feelings. These messages are often broader human experiences: what are their values, what is important to them, what are their goals, etc. At any given time, meaning will be connected to the other person's behaviors, thoughts, and feelings. In a sense, these outwardly expressed items often come from something. That something is meaning.

Steps in Reflection of Meaning

1. **Identify the meaning expressed.**
2. **Use a sentence stem.**
 - Similar to using a paraphrase or reflection of feeling, you can use "sounds like," or "I get the sense that this has meaning for you" as good sentence stems designed to capture meaning.
 - The goal is to identify vision, purpose, value, and importance among others.

3. Add more words to the identified meaning.

- A goal is to capture deeper issues from past, present, and future. This helps the other person explore their experience further by adding words to something that may be challenging to discuss.
- For example, “What does ____ mean to you” is a simple way to start a meaning conversation. Once answered, you begin to note the meaning expressed.

Tips to Elicit Meaning

Use questions to help elicit meaning:

- “What does this mean to you?”
- “What sense do you make of (event, behavior, thought, feeling)?”
- “What values do you have regarding...?”
- “What is important or unimportant about...?”
- “What has given you the most satisfaction?”
- “What is the purpose of your feelings of anger?”
- “What gifts do you want others to know about you?”
- “When in your life...?”
- “Where are you heading now?”

Reflections of meaning can be verbatim or can be additive in nature. They can also be as simple as changing “I get the sense that you feel...” to “I get the sense that this means...”

Reflection of Meaning Examples

- “I get the sense that this holds a great deal of importance to you.”

- “I’m hearing how much that means to you.”
- “I hear you saying how the experience was hurtful, but I also hear you saying how valuable the experience was to you.”

Interpretation/Reframing

An *interpretation/reframing* is the expression of a hypothesis about an issue when confronting the other person. This skill helps you look at the problem/concern from a new, more useful perspective. Often, people see the situations in their lives only from their own perspective. Using interpretation/reframing provides another point of view on the other person’s experiences, feelings, thoughts, and behaviors, and the current situation (Haney & Leibsohn, 1998, *Basic Counseling Responses: A Multimedia Learning System for the Helping Professions*).

Interpretation/reframing also helps to challenge others with the goal to move away from a much too negative focus on the self and/or others. It encourages them to focus more on their strengths and/or the positives within the situation.

Interpretation/reframing is a more challenging and more advanced way to explore meaning. However, interpretation/reframing comes from your point of view, not from the other person’s point of view. So, use interpretation/reframing with caution.

Interpretation/Reframing steps

1. Identify the other person’s implicit message.
2. Present the other person with a different, more positive perspective about the message. You can also offer an alternative explanation or interpretation of some area of focus. You can also draw on the other person’s personal experiences to provide alternative meaning or perspective.

Example: “You say that you hate how you get so angry when people don’t listen, but it seems that you are passionate about having your voice heard.”

Simple areas of interpretation and reframing

- **Experience:** “I wonder if this can be seen as an opportunity to make a change.”
- **Feeling:** “You say anxiety, but another word may be excitement.”
- **Thinking:** “You say that you haven’t learned anything from this experience, but you have learned how to survive.”

Check on Learning

Question 1

Effective active listeners use the skill reflection of meaning to identify the other person’s vision, purpose, values, goals, and to identify what is important to the other person.

- True
- False

Question 2

Effective active listeners use interpretation/reframing to encourage the other person’s positivity during the discussion.

- True
- False

Question 3

Read the following scenario:

Leader: “I noticed that you have been late for PT every morning this past week. What has contributed to this change?”

Subordinate: “I’m sorry. I’ve had so much going on. My wife had surgery, and I’ve had to wake up in the middle of the night to take care of the baby.”

Leader: “It sounds like you’ve been busy balancing responsibilities with your family. You are feeling overwhelmed and tired. I am guessing that you have been feeling worried about your wife’s recovery too.”

Subordinate: “Yes, I’m so overwhelmed. By the time I get the baby to bed and I am asleep, my alarm goes off and I sleep right through it. My wife is doing okay. Since she has some incisions, she can’t lift the baby.”

Which of the following is an example of reflection of meaning?

- “I get the sense that maybe you have a lot going on at home right now.”
- “I get the sense that your family means everything to you. You want to be a good father to your baby and a good husband to your wife by taking care of them.”
- “I get the sense that you feel overwhelmed with all your responsibilities at both work and home, does that sound right?”

Question 4

Read the following scenario:

During a developmental counseling session regarding a subordinate's lack of motivation and completion of tasks over the past couple of months, the subordinate made the following comment:

Subordinate: "I'm sorry. When I first got promoted, I was excited, but here lately I've had so much going on. I've had to get used to my new schedule and get up to speed on my new responsibilities. I don't feel like I'm doing a good job, and I'm letting everyone down. There are some days I feel like giving up."

Indicate which of the following is an example of an interpretation and reframing:

- "You are feeling extremely overwhelmed with all the responsibilities you have both at home and at work. Am I understanding you right?"
- "It sounds like you have looked forward to this new position and have placed a lot of importance on your performance, and maybe the added responsibilities of this new promotion have been overwhelming. Am I understanding you right?"
- "You say you are feeling overwhelmed with all your new responsibilities, but maybe you are putting too much pressure on yourself and it's holding you back. I wonder if this can be seen as an opportunity to make a change?"
- "That's too bad. We all have bad days and have to push through it."

For correct answers, see the [Module 7 Check on Learning Answers](#) section (p. 58).

Module 8: Confrontation

Confrontation tends to be viewed as hostile or punitive; however, confrontation can help others consider alternative ways to understand their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in relation to themselves, to others, or to situations. Confrontation should not be forceful or harsh. It is best received when statements are made with a calm, even tone and a nonjudgmental stance. Individuals are more likely to benefit from confrontation when a solid, trusting relationship has been established. Try not to use confrontation too early in a relationship.

Confrontation involves bringing discrepancies or contradictory comments/behaviors to the other person's attention. Discrepancies can involve the other person's actions, their words, or can occur between their actions and words. When others are communicating with you, pay attention to discrepancies within the following:

- Self-perception and actual appearance
- Strengths and resources
- Limitations and weaknesses
- Personal and social values
- Unrealistic goals

Often, tentative confrontations can lead to less defensiveness by the other person. Using the following phrases can be helpful:

- "Help me understand..."
- "Could it be..."
- "You tend to suggest..."

- “I’m getting mixed messages...”
- “On the one hand... but on the other hand...”
- “You say... but you do...”

Steps in a Confrontation

1. **Identify conflict** by looking for mixed messages, discrepancies, and incongruity. This can involve any of the following:

- Discrepancies internal to the person:
 - Incongruities between what the other person says and what they do.
 - Discrepancies between verbal statements and nonverbal behavior.
- Discrepancies between the other person and the external world
 - Highlight conflict between people and the other person regarding a situation (e.g., conflict with work, family, a partner).
- Discrepancies between you and the other person
 - Notice your own or the other person’s comfort with possible differences.
 - Work to understand the other person by internally questioning yourself silently and then carefully drawing out from the other person how they experience the situation.
 - Discrepancies should disappear as this greater understanding occurs.
- Resistance
 - The other person protects their internal self from dealing with the obvious contradiction.
 - You should view the resistance as an opportunity not as a problem.

2. **Point out these issues clearly** to the other person and help them work through the conflict to resolution.
 - Identify the incongruity or conflict in the other person’s story or comment clearly.
 - Using questioning and other active listening skills, draw out the specifics of the conflicts or mixed messages.
 - When pointing out the conflict or incongruity, use the following phrases:
 - “Could it be...?”
 - “You tend to suggest...”
 - “I’m getting mixed messages...”
 - “On the one hand... but on the other hand...”
 - “You say... but you do...”
 - Provide feedback giving your opinions and observations about the discrepancies.
3. **Evaluate the effectiveness** of your intervention on the other person’s change and growth.
 - Focus on the other person’s feelings. Frequently, reflection of feeling is useful within confrontation.
 - Formulate your confrontation on statements or observable behavior. Do not make assumptions—stick to factual information (e.g., statements or behavior).
 - Confrontation should not involve any type of evaluation or solution. The purpose is to promote self-awareness of a non-functional behavior.
 - Oftentimes, individuals may use excuses or blame others for their own behavior. Confrontation can be effective at pointing out defense mechanisms.

- Strong emotions can arise during confrontation. Always use this skill in the context of caring and support.
- Do not use confrontation too frequently as trust can be lost resulting in a nonworking relationship.
- Be sure to establish a solid relationship of trust and rapport before engaging in confrontation.
- Confrontation of discrepancies can be highly challenging to any person, but particularly to one who is culturally different from you.
- Be sure to use supportive and empathic confrontation. This requires questioning and elaboration—rather than challenging the other person immediately, select various dimensions of the discrepancy or conflict, and sort out the stories carefully throughout the discussion.
- Try to resolve the confrontation prior to ending your session with the other person. It is important to allow adequate time for processing.

Examples of Confrontation

- “I’m a bit confused. Earlier you said that you had bought a new gaming system, and now I hear you saying that you are worried about money for groceries. It seems as if you might have some difficulties managing your budget.”
- “As you discussed the fight you had with your mother, you said that you were angry. But I noticed that you smiled as you told me the story.”

Check on Learning

Question 1

Effective active listeners use confrontation as frequently as possible.

- True
- False

Question 2

Confrontation should not involve any type of evaluation or solution, as the purpose of confrontation is to promote self-awareness of the other person's nonfunctional behavior.

- True
- False

Question 3

Which of the following is an example of an effective use of confrontation?

- "You say you have a good relationship with your First Sergeant, but then you bad mouth him behind his back to other Soldiers. Why are you lying about your relationship with him?"
- "You say you have a good relationship with your First Sergeant, but when he gives feedback to others you tell them to do the exact opposite after he leaves the room. That's not what we do here in the Army."
- "You say that you have a good relationship with your First Sergeant, but you don't seem to be comfortable trusting him to provide feedback to others."

For correct answers, see the Module 8 Check on Learning Answers section (p. 60).

Module 9: Using Immediacy

Immediacy involves focusing on issues within a relationship that, if ignored, can inhibit the relationship. The issues may pertain to your interpersonal reaction to another person, including your own feelings about your relationship with the other person, your reaction to the other person's comments or behaviors, and your feelings related to nonverbals or meaning implied by the other person. What differentiates immediacy from reflection of feeling is that in immediacy the focus is on you and not on the other person. Immediacy usually occurs in the here and now (the immediate moment).

With immediacy, it is important to focus on both what is said and what is unsaid. Regarding what is unsaid, examine your own feelings, and assess the other person's expressions and nonverbals. Immediacy can result in the other person gaining self-awareness on his or her own behavior and how it impacts others.

Tips for Appropriate Use of Immediacy

- Be aware of the reactions that occur within your body (e.g., clenched jaw; finger or foot tapping; crossed arms; tight stomach; frown, etc.). These types of reactions are physical indicators of your own feelings. The ability to recognize your own feelings increases your ability to identify the feelings of others.
- Maintain appropriate eye contact and a relaxed posture.
- Identify your feelings and monitor them.
- When appropriate, verbalize your feelings to the other person. Communicating feeling is similar to reflecting feeling, except that the emphasis is on your feelings rather than on the other person's feelings.

- Use “I” statements. Using “I” statements allows you to take ownership for your feelings related to the relationship and indicates to the other person that you are taking personal responsibility for the statement.
- Respond in the present tense. Avoid referring to past issues or events as this can derail the current message.
- If you are too direct, the other person may not respond well in the conversation. They may withdraw or become direct in their response to you. It is helpful to approach immediacy from a respectful perspective.
- In response, sometimes others provide feedback to you. This feedback can be a useful opportunity to continue to discuss your working relationship with others.

Examples of Immediacy

- “What you’re saying concerns me.”
- “I sense that you are having difficulties explaining to me what happened last night.”
- “I notice that you are constantly apologizing for your statements.”
- “I notice that you are tapping your foot. I’m sensing that you are feeling anxious right now.”
- “I’m overwhelmed. My head is hurting. I feel as if we are talking in circles.” (Notice your own bodily reactions—having a headache.)
- “I’m frustrated. We talked for a long time about what changes need to occur for you to be successful in your position; however, none of the changes were made.”

Check on Learning

Question 1

Effective active listeners use immediacy to help the other person to verbalize their feelings and clarify their thoughts in the immediate moment.

- True
- False

Question 2

Immediacy involves another person's interpersonal reactions to you—their own feelings about the relationship with you, their reaction to your comments or behaviors, and their feelings related to nonverbals or meaning implied by you.

- True
- False

Question 3

Which of the following is NOT an example of an effective use of immediacy?

- Verbalize your feelings to the other person—owning up and communicating your feelings to the other person shows you are taking personal responsibility for them in the relationship.
- Be very direct when communicating your feelings to others—you don't want to leave room for ambiguity during the conversation.

- Be aware of the physical reactions that occur within your body, like your jaw clenching or your foot tapping.
- Use “I” statements when identifying your feelings.

For correct answers, see the Module 9 Check on Learning Answers section (p. 62).

Module 10: Self-Disclosure

Self-disclosure is a technique that is used to promote trust within a relationship, encourage a deeper understanding of an experience, and/or resolve an issue. Self-disclosure involves intentionally revealing personal information to another person in the hope of assisting the other person. This personal information can be about yourself, about your own experiences, and/or about your own feelings.

The technique of self-disclosure should be **purposeful**. There should be intentionality involved with revealing personal information to the other person. You should only disclose what is necessary for the other person to feel supported.

Advantages of Self-Disclosure

- Encourages a deeper understanding of the other person's experiences.
- Creates opportunities for sharing information.
- Can help resolve an issue.
- Increases trust between you and the other person.
- Instills hope—gives encouragement and reassurance.
- Can balance a relationship.
- Can help normalize feelings and challenges.

Disadvantages of Self-Disclosure

- Can change the direction, focus, and flow of the conversation.

- It may be difficult for you to remain neutral.
- You may begin to dominate the conversation.
- It may overwhelm the other person.
- It may be perceived as minimizing/discounting the other person's experience.
- It may be perceived as one-upping the other person.

Tips for Effective Self-Disclosure

- Assess the needs of the other person and determine if a self-disclosure would be beneficial.
- The self-disclosure should be relevant to the discussion with the other person.
- Using “I” or “me” is helpful when sharing your disclosure.
- Monitor your level of self-disclosure—too much or too little may not be helpful. A moderate amount is the most effective.
- Information that you share can involve current experiences or future experiences. Self-disclosures that relate to your current situation are most powerful because they help the other person to focus on a problem and deal with it concretely.
- If the other person is hesitant to share information, your self-disclosure can facilitate trust and mutual understanding. Your self-disclosure can encourage the other person to self-disclose.
- Following your own self-disclosure, it is important to restore the focus to the other person.
- Consider cultural implications and explore differences.

Example of Effective Self-Disclosure

- “You must feel so overwhelmed with all those tasks you need to complete. When I feel overwhelmed, I try to identify one thing I can work on first.”

Check on Learning

Question 1

Effective active listeners use self-disclosure to unintentionally reveal personal information to assist the other person during the developmental counseling session.

- True
- False

Question 2

Which of the following is an advantage of self-disclosure?

- An active listener may dominate the conversation or find it difficult to remain neutral.
- It can be overwhelming for the other person.
- It can change the direction, focus, and flow of the conversation.
- It can encourage a deeper understanding of the other person’s experiences.

Question 3

Which of the following is NOT an example of an effective use of self-disclosure?

- “It must be difficult to think about your experiences when you were deployed. When I am reminded of tough experiences, it is important for me to share my thoughts with those closest to me. Otherwise, my feelings might explode.”
- “You told me about your mother passing away last month. It reminded me about my own mother passing away a couple of years ago. That was really hard, and it took me a long time to get over. I still haven’t gotten over it, to be honest. I have a lot of nights where I don’t sleep well, and sometimes I blow up at my husband when I get angry even when it has nothing to do with him.”
- “In my experience, completing the OER in sections helps me submit it on time. What ideas do you have for completing the OER in a timely manner?”
- “You say that you have a good relationship with your First Sergeant, but you don’t seem to trust him. Whenever I have a hard time trusting my commanding officer, it can sometimes affect my work performance, how about you?”

For correct answers, see the Module 10 Check on Learning Answers section (p. 63).

Module 11: Providing Supportive, Critical Feedback

Feedback, even when supportive, could be met with some resistance. In the experience of receiving supportive feedback, people will often have mixed emotions: they may appreciate the feedback but also feel uncomfortable with it at the same time. Critical feedback will typically be met with resistance. If offered in the context of caring and support, people may be able to receive at least some of the critical feedback.

Tips for Providing Supportive, Critical Feedback

- Establish trusting, collaborative relationships with others. These relationships will help others hear your feedback more effectively.
- Begin feedback with discussing the other person's strength. Say something positive—note an area of improvement—end with something positive. The other person may be more likely to work on a deficiency if the conversation includes positivity. All individuals want to feel valued.
- Provide feedback that is direct and specific. Try to be descriptive about a behavior rather than evaluative. The behavior should be something the other person can change.
- Provide immediate feedback rather than delayed feedback. Feedback can be more powerful in the moment.
- Reinforce major feedback during counseling and development sessions.
- Use a calm presence. If you are highly emotional, odds are the other person will respond with increased emotions.

- After providing feedback, check with the other person to ensure clear communication.
- Allow the other person time to process the feedback. Feedback takes time to internalize, especially if it does not fit a person’s self-image.
- It can be helpful to ask the other person to rate his or her own performance. The other person may identify areas of improvement that will help facilitate the conversation.
- Listen first. Notice the other person’s expressions.
- Be brief and concrete. Share your observations, thoughts, feelings, and/or the other person’s behaviors.
- Use “I” statements.
- Be authentic and nonjudgmental.
- Use appropriate immediacy (here and now).

Check on Learning

Question 1

Which of the following is NOT an example of supportive, critical feedback?

- “I noticed that you haven’t shown up on time for the last two PT sessions. I’m worried you might not be prepared for the next PT test, and I want you to be successful.”
- “You seem overwhelmed with numerous tasks including paperwork, organizing briefings, and scheduling meetings. What needs to happen for these tasks to become more manageable for you?”
- “You seem like you are lacking the motivation you once had, and don’t want to be here anymore. What’s going on?”

- “I noticed that you are not taking as much initiative as you used to when you were a Private. What has changed for you in the past year?”

For correct answers, see the Module 11 Check on Learning Answers section (p. 65).

Check on Learning Answers

Module 2 Check on Learning Answers

Question 1

Effective active listeners maintain intent eye-to-eye contact at all times during the discussion.

- True
- False.** Effective active listeners do not always maintain eye-to-eye contact during the discussion, but rather use eye contact to indicate they are attending to what the other person is communicating to them, signaling understanding and providing feedback. Active listeners don't "stare" at the other person. They also know the other person will often break eye contact for various reasons, so it's important to use eye contact naturally and be culturally appropriate.

Question 2

An effective active listener is comfortable with brief reflective silences.

- True.** Effective active listeners are comfortable with brief reflective silences since others often need time to think. Additionally, silences can be used as a positive form of communication where you can be supportive as the other person processes your feedback or the topic at hand.
- False

Question 3

An effective active listener is more attentive to verbal cues than to nonverbal cues during the discussion.

- True
- False.** Effective active listeners are attentive to both verbal and nonverbal cues during the discussion as these cues communicate important information to the other person, that you are paying attention to what the other person is saying, and that you are providing a supportive environment for them.

Module 3 Check on Learning Answers

Question 1

Effective active listeners use more closed questions during developmental counseling.

- True
- False.** Effective active listeners use more open questions during discussions and use closed questions as little as possible and only when necessary. Closed questions are effective for identifying the parameters of the issue, narrowing the topic of discussion, and interrupting an overly talkative person.

Question 2

Minimal encouragers are both verbal and nonverbal indicators that encourage others to continue speaking on the topic.

- True.** Minimal encouragers can be verbal responses (e.g., “yes, go on, uh huh”) as well as nonverbal behaviors (e.g., leaning forward, appropriate eye contact, head nodding).
- False

Question 3

Indicate which of the following is NOT an open question/statement:

- What do you enjoy about your new promotion?
- How are you handling your new responsibilities?
- When did you join your new unit?** This is a closed question as it elicits a factual and simple response rather than encouraging the other person to elaborate on their thoughts and feelings related to the discussion at hand.
- Tell me about your new position.

Module 4 Check on Learning Answers

Question 1

Effective active listeners use the skill reflection of content to elaborate and interpret on another’s comments.

- True
- False.** Effective active listeners use the skill reflection of content to shorten and clarify the other person’s comments by either summarizing or paraphrasing, not elaborating or interpreting the other person’s comments.

Question 2

Read the following scenario:

You: “I noticed that you have been late for PT every morning this past week. What has contributed to this change?”

The other person: “I’m sorry. I’ve been having to take my kids to school every day because my husband is visiting his family.”

Indicate which of the following is an example of paraphrasing:

- “I hear you saying you may have too much on your plate right now. What do you think?”
- “It sounds like you’ve been busy balancing responsibilities with your family. Is that right?”** This example of paraphrasing identifies the key content of the other person’s message, translates it into your own words, and then checks for accuracy. Paraphrasing does not interpret nor give an opinion, but rather reflects and clarifies the content of the other person’s comments.
- “Perhaps you need you break. What do you think?”

Question 3

Read the following scenario:

During a developmental counseling session regarding a subordinate’s lack of motivation and completion of tasks over the past couple of months, the subordinate made the following comments:

(Beginning of conversation) Subordinate: “I’m sorry. I’ve had so much going on. My husband and I took on my sister’s kids because my sister recently got arrested. The kids are pretty young and have been keeping us up at night.”

(Middle of conversation) Subordinate: “I really do like my job. It’s just sometimes I find it hard to find the energy during the day to complete my work on time. I feel like I’m letting everyone down, which makes everything worse.”

Indicate which of the following is an example of summarizing:

- “You are feeling extremely overwhelmed with all the responsibilities you have taken on lately.”
- “I sense you’ve had many life changes lately and had to balance many responsibilities lately. Your family needs you, and you sound extremely tired and worn out. Does that seem right?”
- “I sense you’ve had many life changes lately and had to balance many responsibilities lately. Your family needs you, and you sound extremely tired and worn out. You enjoy your job, but it seems maybe the stress at home is impacting your productivity at work. Does that seem right?”** This is a summary since it reflects the content of several statements provided by the other person throughout the entire discussion.

Module 5 Check on Learning Answers

Question 1

Effective active listeners use the skill reflection of feeling to elaborate and interpret on another’s comments.

- True
- False.** Effective active listeners use the skill reflection of feeling to identify the other person's emotions and restate them back to the other person as a way of showing that they are aware of the emotions the other person is experiencing. Reflection of feeling does not involve elaborating or interpreting the content of the other person's message.

Question 2

Read the following scenario:

Leader: "During the last sync meeting, you seemed distracted and nonattentive. What's going on?"

Subordinate: "I'm sorry. My A/C stopped working over the weekend and the estimate I got to fix it is more than what I can afford."

Indicate which of the following is an example of reflection of feeling:

- "You may be feeling like you have too much on your plate right now. What do you think?"
- "I am guessing that you have been upset about your A/C being broken. Is that right?"
- "I am guessing that you have been worried about the possibility of going into debt. Does that sound right?"** This example of reflection of feeling identifies the other person's underlying and unspoken emotions regarding what they are experiencing at home.

Module 6 Check on Learning Answers

Question 1

Effective active listeners use empathy to convey respect and acceptance for a person's feelings while encouraging a collaborative, nonjudgmental relationship.

- True.** Effective active listeners use empathy to communicate to the other person that you understand their feelings and experiences to increase awareness and perspective.
- False

Question 2

Which of the following is true when it comes to using an empathetic listening style?

- You listen to the other person without really trying to understand their point of view.
- You tell the other person what is the best course of action for them to take.
- You go into detail about the character flaws the other person has and how those flaws impact their job.
- You provide support for the other person, understanding that the decision to make changes is completely up to them.** When using an empathetic listening style, you listen rather than tell, you sincerely compliment rather than denigrate, you gently persuade with the understanding that the decision to change is solely the other person's, and you provide support for the other person during the process.

Question 3

Read the following scenario:

During a developmental counseling session regarding someone's lack of motivation and completion of tasks over the past couple of months, the other person made the following comment:

Other person: "I'm sorry. When I first got promoted, I was excited, but lately I've had so much going on. I've had to get used to my new schedule and get up to speed on my new responsibilities. There are some days I feel like giving up."

Indicate which of the following is an example of additive empathy:

- "You are feeling extremely overwhelmed with all the responsibilities you have both at home and at work. Am I understanding you right?"
- "It sounds like you have looked forward to this new position and have placed a lot of importance on your performance, and maybe the added responsibilities of this new promotion have been overwhelming. Am I understanding you right?"** This is an example of additive empathy since it both portrays the other person's emotional experience as well as adds to what the other person has stated.
- "I sense you've had many life changes lately, and had to balance many responsibilities lately. Your family needs you, and you sound extremely tired and worn out. You enjoy your job, but it seems maybe the stress at home is impacting your productivity at work. Does that seem right?"
- "That's too bad. We all have bad days and have to push through it."

Module 7 Check on Learning Answers

Question 1

Effective active listeners use the skill reflection of meaning to identify the other person's vision, purpose, values, goals, and what is important to them.

- True.** Effective active listeners use the skill reflection of meaning to capture the hidden message underneath the other person's thoughts, behaviors, and feelings.
- False

Question 2

Effective active listeners use interpretation/reframing to encourage the other person's positivity during the discussion.

- True.** Effective active listeners use interpretation/reframing to challenge the other person to move away from a much too negative focus on the self and/or others and encourage them to focus more on their strengths and/or the positives within the situation.
- False

Question 3

Read the following scenario:

Leader: "I noticed that you have been late for PT every morning this past week. What has contributed to this change?"

Subordinate: “I’m sorry. I’ve had so much going on. My wife had surgery, and I’ve had to wake up in the middle of the night to take care of the baby.”

Leader: “It sounds like you’ve been busy balancing responsibilities with your family. You are feeling overwhelmed and tired. I am guessing that you have been feeling worried about your wife’s recovery too.”

Subordinate: “Yes, I’m so overwhelmed. By the time I get the baby to bed and I am asleep, my alarm goes off and I sleep right through it. My wife is doing okay. Since she has some incisions, she can’t lift the baby.”

Which of the following is an example of reflection of meaning?

- “I get the sense that maybe you have a lot going on at home right now.”
- “I get the sense that your family means everything to you. You want to be a good father to your baby and a good husband to your wife by taking care of them.”**
When using reflection of meaning, the goal is to capture the deeper issue and help the other person explore their experience further by adding additional words to the topic that may be challenging to discuss.
- “I get the sense that you feel overwhelmed with all your responsibilities at both work and home, does that sound right?”

Question 4

Read the following scenario:

During a developmental counseling session regarding a subordinate’s lack of motivation and completion of tasks over the past couple of months, the subordinate made the following comment:

Subordinate: “I’m sorry. When I first got promoted, I was excited, but here lately I’ve had so much going on. I’ve had to get used to my new schedule and get up to speed on my new responsibilities. I don’t feel like I’m doing a good job, and I’m letting everyone down. There are some days I feel like giving up.”

Indicate which of the following is an example of an interpretation and reframing:

- “You are feeling extremely overwhelmed with all the responsibilities you have both at home and at work. Am I understanding you right?”
- “It sounds like you have looked forward to this new position and have placed a lot of importance on your performance, and maybe the added responsibilities of this new promotion have been overwhelming. Am I understanding you right?”
- “You say you are feeling overwhelmed with all your new responsibilities, but maybe you are putting too much pressure on yourself and it’s holding you back. I wonder if this can be seen as an opportunity to make a change?”** This is an interpretation/reframe since it provides another point of view on the subordinate’s feelings and thoughts about the situation and encourages them to focus on their strengths and the positives of the situation.
- “That’s too bad. We all have bad days and have to push through it.”

Module 8 Check on Learning Answers

Question 1

Effective active listeners use confrontation as frequently as possible.

- True

- False.** Effective active listeners do not use confrontation too frequently, as trust can be lost in a non-working relationship. Additionally, a solid relationship with trust and rapport must be built before confrontation can be used effectively.

Question 2

Confrontation should not involve any type of evaluation or solution, as the purpose of confrontation is to promote self-awareness of the other person's non-functional behavior.

- True.** Effective active listeners who use confrontation should not be forceful or harsh; confrontation is designed to bring discrepancies or contradictory comments/behaviors to the other person's attention.
- False

Question 3

Which of the following is an example of an effective use of confrontation?

- "You say you have a good relationship with your First Sergeant, but then you bad mouth him behind his back to other Soldiers. Why are you lying about your relationship with him?"
- "You say you have good relationship with your First Sergeant, but when he gives feedback to others you tell them to do the exact opposite after he leaves the room. That's not what we do here in the Army."
- "You say that you have a good relationship with your First Sergeant, but you don't seem to be comfortable trusting him to provide feedback to others."** Confrontation includes identifying the conflict and pointing out the incongruity (as well as the actual issue) clearly to the other person. A key part to this effective confrontation is

that it establishes support and understanding while addressing the issue with the other person.

Module 9 Check on Learning Answers

Question 1

Effective active listeners use immediacy to help the other person to verbalize their feelings and clarify their thoughts in the immediate moment.

- True
- False.** Effective active listeners use immediacy to focus on interpersonal issues between themselves and the other person in the immediate moment—things that are said and unsaid, verbals and nonverbals, the active listener’s personal feelings and reactions to the other person’s comments and behaviors.

Question 2

Immediacy involves another person’s interpersonal reactions to you—their own feelings about the relationship with you, their reaction to your comments or behaviors, and their feelings related to nonverbals or meaning implied by you.

- True
- False.** Immediacy is about you and your feelings about the interpersonal relationship with the other person, not about the other person’s feelings. The focus is on you, not on the other person.

Question 3

Which of the following is NOT an example of an effective use of immediacy?

- Verbalize your feelings to the other person—owning up and communicating your feelings to the other person shows you are taking personal responsibility for them in the relationship.
- Be very direct when communicating your feelings to others—**
- you don't want to leave room for ambiguity during the conversation.** Even though it's important to communicate and take ownership regarding your feelings when using immediacy, being too direct may cause the other person to withdraw or cause them to respond too directly in return. Be sure to be respectful when using immediacy.
- Be aware of the physical reactions that occur within your body, like your jaw clenching or your foot tapping.
- Use "I" statements when identifying your feelings.

Module 10 Check on Learning Answers

Question 1

Effective active listeners use self-disclosure to unintentionally reveal personal information to assist the other person during the developmental counseling session.

- True
- False.** Effective active listeners use self-disclosure purposefully—it should not be done unintentionally. You should only disclose what is necessary for the other

person to feel supported, promote trust within the relationship, encourage a deeper understanding of an experience, and/or resolve an issue.

Question 2

Which of the following is an advantage of self-disclosure?

- An active listener may dominate the conversation or find it difficult to remain neutral.
- It can be overwhelming for the other person.
- It can change the direction, focus, and flow of the conversation.
- It can encourage a deeper understanding of the other person's experiences.** The appropriate and relevant amount of self-disclosure can be encouraging for the other person. It is also a method of facilitating trust and mutual understanding—ways of showing empathy as well as encouraging the other person to also self-disclose during the developmental counseling session.

Question 3

Which of the following is NOT an example of an effective use of self-disclosure?

- "It must be difficult to think about your experiences when you were deployed. When I am reminded of tough experiences, it is important for me to share my thoughts with those closest to me. Otherwise, my feelings might explode."
- "You told me about your mother passing away last month. It reminded me about my own mother passing away a couple of years ago. That was really hard, and it took me a long time to get over. I still haven't gotten over it, to be honest. I have a lot of nights where I don't sleep well, and sometimes I blow up at my husband when I get angry even when it has nothing to do with him."** This amount of self-

disclosure is too much, and the active listener is starting to dominate the conversation, where it's more about the active listener's feelings and experiences rather than the other person's.

- "In my experience, completing the OER in sections helps me submit it on time. What ideas do you have for completing the OER in a timely manner?"
- "You say that you have a good relationship with your First Sergeant, but you don't seem to trust him. Whenever I have a hard time trusting my commanding officer, it can sometimes affect my work performance, how about you?"

Module 11 Check on Learning Answers

Question 1

Which of the following is NOT an example of supportive, critical feedback?

- "I noticed that you haven't shown up on time for the last two PT sessions. I'm worried you might not be prepared for the next PT test, and I want you to be successful."
- "You seem overwhelmed with numerous tasks including paperwork, organizing briefings, and scheduling meetings. What needs to happen for these tasks to become more manageable for you?"
- "You seem like you are lacking the motivation you once had, and don't want to be here anymore. What's going on?"** Supportive, critical feedback is descriptive about behavior rather than evaluative, and should be something that discusses what the other person can improve upon—not inherently negative.
- "I noticed that you are not taking as much initiative as you used to when you were a Private. What has changed for you in the past year?"

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