

Worksheet 4.4.3: R of OARS – reflections

In our busy and chaotic lives, we are all guilty of not listening carefully to others. When an ED is present, communication is likely to become fraught. Edi's confidence is rock bottom, leading to a distorted understanding of what is meant; where interest is intended, criticism may be assumed; where loving concern is intended intrusion may be assumed. Reflective listening can help to rebuild Edi's self-esteem, fostering the belief that Edi too can be effective in his or her own life.

Reflective listening

A reflection shows that you are listening and seeks to summarise what the person means; if you are unsure it enables you to make a guess. A good reflection is a statement, not a question.

Types and levels of reflection

Simple reflections

Repeat – Direct restatement of what the person said.

Rephrase – Saying the same thing in slightly different positive words.

Paraphrase – Making a guess about meaning (especially emotions behind the words); continuing the paragraph; usually adds something that was not said directly.

Complex reflections

Reflecting emotions – sounds like you are sad/angry/tired/frustrated, etc.

Developing discrepancy – on the one hand... and on the other (things that seem contradictory and reflected back in a neutral tone).

Rolling with resistance and LESS is more – I can see you are not ready to talk about this right now let's...

Empathy – I can see this is difficult/impossible for you, I appreciate how hard you are trying.

Reflective listening: Exercises for carers to consider at home

- a) In pairs have a conversation about what you have planned for the weekend. Take it in turns to describe your plans. The person listening should give lots of clues that they are not listening. How does it feel when the recipient is clearly not listening?

- b) Then replay the conversation and this time the recipient shows that she is interested and clearly listening. How does this feel different?
- c) List as many roadblocks to listening as you can think of. For example:
- i. Dis/agreeing
 - ii. Being distracted
 - iii. Suggesting
 - iv. Too much talking by the listener – the listener should talk less than 50% of the time
 - v. Rehearsing/interrupting – listening to what they are saying with half your head, and planning what you are going to say as they are continuing to speak and not truly listening
 - vi. Dis/approving
 - vii. Arguing
 - viii. Reassuring
 - ix. Judging
 - x. Feeling upset – find another time; can't listen reflectively if you're upset
- d) The importance of body language. Do you think body language can be a roadblock? Posture, voice, tone and volume, gesture, eye contact, personal space, etc.
- e) Consider how reflective listening can help clarify understanding, extend the conversation, and bring out green shoots
 Try to add in positive comments whenever you detect the smallest opening (green shoot)
- Thank you for remembering...
 - It is noticeable that...
 - I really appreciate it when you...
- Be careful not to insert your feelings/needs into your responses as then the conversation will seem all about you and your needs.
- f) Consider how useful certain phrases can be when you are seeking to come alongside your loved one and show that you are really listening, and that you want to understand the emotion underneath, while also checking for accuracy. Some useful phrases:
- It sounds to me like...
 - So you're saying...
 - From your point of view...
 - Let me check I've understood...
 - You're feeling...
- g) Consider how taking a Colombo-like 'one down' position can really demonstrate respect, that you recognise they are the expert in their own feelings/position, and accepting how they feel (almost the opposite of being a rhino). 'Just one more thing, can I check I have got this right?'

Recommended Book: Nick Luxmore, *Essential Listening Skills for Busy School Staff*

Are there some people you, as a carer, avoid talking to? What are the reasons? What is it about those people that puts you off talking to them? Do you think your loved ones' ever feel any of these things? Does your loved one ever say any of these things? This can help you to have a better understanding of the importance of coming alongside Edi and really trying to understand their perspective.

LESS is More

This conveys the spirit of MI. Less talking and telling. More nudging and guiding. See *SBC*, Chapter 8, pp. 95–8.

This is a useful checklist when things seem to be going off track:

Listen; active and reflective listening without judgement
Empathy; Understanding with compassion (not sympathy/pity) Step in to Edi's shoes)
Share; non-eating disorder parts of life – the bigger picture
Support; providing a calm safe environment: The St Bernard's unconditional love
Is MORE

Write down useful phrases or ideas of how you can apply this principle.