

Responsible Listening Model

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The Responsible Listening Model offers the listener five responses:

1. **Restatement:** ensures we have heard what the speaker says.
2. **Clarifying:** asks the speaker for more information to gain understanding.
3. **Describing:** the listener describes what he/she observes of the speaker.
4. **Sharing:** offers the listener the opportunity to respond or relate to the speaker.
5. **Resolving:** used when it is clear the speaker wants to do something positive about responsibly resolving the issue they have presented.

While practicing this model, listeners and speakers become more aware of themselves, their reactions, and responses.

Responsible listening responses are accepting, understanding, and, at times, confronting, which encourages further exploration and communication.

They say to the speaker:

"I value you...I trust you...I am 100% responsible for more life; I hold you 100% responsible for your life."

Notes

Responsible Listening Model Continued

Restating Responses—Ensure that we have heard and understand what was said.

Restating responses are the most basic and least risky of all responses. They are a verbal restatement of what is heard by the listener. Three responses involve little personal risk by the listener and the speaker and therefore are helpful in building trust. Restating is less threatening to both parties and are beneficial when two people are in conflict over an issue.

When the speaker finishes making their comments, the listener restates in their words what they heard the speaker say. A response beginning with: “What I heard you say is...” allows the speaker to verify that what was heard is correct or to offer further clarification.

“If I’m hearing you correctly, you’re saying... So you’re saying... What I’m hearing you say is... Here’s how I take what you just said...”

Clarifying Responses—Help the listener better understand what the speaker said, wants or thinks.

These responses provide the listener with more information not only on what the speaker has said but how they feel and what they think about their feelings.

“What do you think about... When you say ‘xyz’, do you mean... What are your thoughts on... I need more information about...”

What you think is a question can be perceived as a statement of advice, attack or denial—which are negative listening responses. Asking too many questions may appear to the speaker that the listener (you) aren’t listening or are interrogating them.

Responsible Listening Model Continued

Describing Responses

Describing responses involve more personal risk because the listener gives their personal and honest observation of the speaker's behavior. These responses involve truthfully telling others what you are observing. This is necessary in order to have a healthy, loving, co-committed relationship with another person. In a co-committed relationship, both parties are interested in being responsible adults and resolving hurts. To do this, the listener must be honest and willing to offer feedback on the speaker's behavior.

Once you have restated or clarified what the speaker has said and the speaker confirms that what you heard is what they meant, a describing response can be very helpful to the speaker.

Describing responses are valuable if we truly want to know ourselves as others see us. Describing responses help the speaker see their behavior and answer the question *“what am I doing to keep me from knowing or getting what I want?”*

“I hear you blaming... I can see you are angry by the way you are... I hear you explaining...”

Sharing Responses

Sharing responses gives the listener the opportunity to show (verbally or nonverbally) that the speaker is accepted for themselves and the listener can relate to the speaker's present circumstances. Sharing responses tell the speaker they are not alone in their way of thinking, such as *“I would feel that way too.”* Sharing often involves responding with empathy and compassion towards the speaker by offering self-disclosure by the listener of their similar life experiences such as *“What I did when I was in that situation was...”*

“When I experienced _____, I felt... When I hear you say _____, I feel...”

Sharing responses are hurtful if used too often or if the sharing is untrue or insincere. Sharing too much personal experience may result in dominating the conversation and taking the focus away from the speaker. Being untruthful or insincere may result in the loss of trust between you and the speaker.

Responsible Listening Model Continued

Resolving Responses

Resolving responses involve honest feedback by the listener, which involves considerable risk on the part of the listener and the need for a high level of trust between listener and speaker.

These responses help the listener clarify the level of responsibility of the speaker by finding out if they want to resolve the problem. Resolving does not necessarily mean fixing the problem for the speaker or making their pain go away. It can mean the speaker recognizes they have an issue and may want to resolve it.

Resolving responses are what distinguishes the person who is being 100% responsible for themselves and defining the erroneous self-defeating thoughts concerning the issue. It allows the speaker to make a commitment to make the changes necessary to improve.

“What have you done about this in the past?... Are you willing to do whatever it takes?... What will you do right now to change this and how can I help?”

Notes
