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Reflecting

See also: [Clarification](#).

Public Speaking Tips

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However good you think your listening skills are, the only person who can tell you if you have understood correctly or not is the speaker. Therefore, as an extension of good

Interpersonal Skills:

- › What are Interpersonal Skills?
- › What is Communication?
- › Interpersonal Communication Skills
- › Interpersonal Skills Self-Assessment Test

Core Interpersonal Skills

- › Verbal Communication

listening skills, you need to develop the ability to reflect words and feelings and to clarify that you have understood them correctly.

It is often important that you and the speaker agree that what you understand is a true representation of what was meant to be said.

As well as understanding and reflecting the verbal messages of the speaker it is important to try to understand the emotions - this page explains how to use reflection effectively to help you build greater understanding of not only what is being said but the content, feeling and meaning of messages.

What is Reflecting?

Reflecting is the process of paraphrasing and restating both the feelings and words of the speaker. The purposes of reflecting are:

- ✔ To allow the speaker to 'hear' their own thoughts and to focus on what they say and feel.
- ✔ To show the speaker that you are trying to perceive the world as they see it and that you are doing your best to understand their messages.

- › Effective Speaking
- › Conversational Skills
- › Non-Verbal Communication
- › Body Language
- › Non-Verbal Communication: Face and Voice
- › Personal Appearance
- › Listening Skills
- › Active Listening
- Reflecting**
- › Clarifying
- › Barriers to Effective Communication
- › Improving Communication

Building Interpersonal

✔ To encourage them to continue talking.

Reflecting does not involve you asking questions, introducing a new topic or leading the conversation in another direction. Speakers are helped through reflecting as it not only allows them to feel understood, but it also gives them the opportunity to focus their ideas. This in turn helps them to direct their thoughts and further encourages them to continue speaking.

Two Main Techniques of Reflecting:

Mirroring

Mirroring is a simple form of reflecting and involves repeating almost exactly what the speaker says.

Mirroring should be short and simple. It is usually enough to just repeat key words or the last few words spoken. This shows you are trying to understand the speakers terms of reference and acts as a prompt for him or her to continue. Be aware not to over mirror as this can become irritating and therefore a distraction from the message.

Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing involves using other words to reflect what the speaker has said. Paraphrasing shows not only that you are listening, but that you are attempting to understand what the speaker is saying.

Relationships

- › Assertiveness
- › Building Rapport
- › What is Charisma?
- › The Art of Tact and Diplomacy
- › How to be Polite
- › Persuasion and Influencing Skills
- › Facilitation Skills
- › Giving and Receiving Feedback
- › Conflict Resolution
- › Communicating in Difficult Situations
- › Mediation Skills
- › Constructive Criticism
- › Dealing with

It is often the case that people 'hear what they expect to hear' due to assumptions, stereotyping or prejudices. When paraphrasing, it is of utmost importance that you do not introduce your own ideas or question the speakers thoughts, feelings or actions. Your responses should be non-directive and non-judgemental.

It is very difficult to resist the temptation to ask questions and when this technique is first used, reflecting can seem very stilted and unnatural. You need to practice this skill in order to feel comfortable.

Reflecting Content, Feeling and Meaning



The most immediate part of a speaker's message is the content, in other words those aspects dealing with information, actions, events and experience, as verbalised by him or her. Reflecting content helps to give focus to the situation but, at the same time, it is also essential to reflect the feelings and emotions expressed in order to bring

Criticism

- › What is Empathy?
- › What is Sympathy?
- › The Ladder of Inference
- › Intercultural Awareness
- › Intercultural Communication

Working in Groups and Teams

- › Interview Skills
- › Interviewing Skills
- › What are Groups and Teams?
- › Effective Team-Working Skills
- › Group Life Cycle
- › Group & Team Roles

them into sharper focus. This helps the speaker to own and accept their own feelings, for quite often a speaker may talk about them as though they belong to someone else, for example using “you feel guilty” rather than “I feel guilty.”

A skilled listener will be able to reflect a speaker's feelings from body cues (non-verbal) as well as verbal messages. It is sometimes not appropriate to ask such direct questions as “How does that make you feel?” Strong emotions such as love and hate are easy to identify, whereas feelings such as affection, guilt and confusion are much more subtle. The listener must have the ability to identify such feelings both from the words and the non-verbal cues, for example body language, tone of voice, etc.

As well as considering which emotions the speaker is feeling, the listener needs to reflect the degree of intensity of these emotions. For example:

	Intensity	Emotion
“You feel	a little bit	sad/angry?”
“You feel	quite	helpless/depressed?”
“You feel	very	stressed?”
“You feel	extremely	embarrassed?”

Reflecting needs to combine content and feeling to truly reflect the

- › Building Group Cohesiveness
- › Difficult Group Behaviours
- › Planning and Structuring Effective Meetings
- › Setting an Agenda
- › Conducting a Meeting
- › The Role of the Secretary
- › Mindful Meetings
- › Myers-Briggs Type Indicators (MBTI)
- › MBTI in Practice

Questioning & Negotiation

- › Questioning

meaning of what the speaker has said. For example:

Speaker:

“I just don't understand my boss. One minute he says one thing and the next minute he says the opposite.”

Listener:

“You feel very confused by him?”

Reflecting meaning allows the listener to reflect the speaker's experiences and emotional response to those experiences. It links the content and feeling components of what the speaker has said.



Guidelines for Reflecting

- ▶ Be natural.
- ▶ Listen for the basic message - consider the content, feeling and meaning expressed by the speaker.
- ▶ Restate what you have been told in simple terms.

- › Types of Question
- › What is Negotiation?
- › Negotiation in Action
- › Avoiding Misunderstanding in Negotiation

Problem Solving and Decision Making

- › Problem Solving
- › Identifying and Structuring Problems
- › Investigating Ideas and Possible Solutions
- › How to Complain, Effectively
- › Decision Making

- ▶ When restating, look for non-verbal as well as verbal cues that confirm or deny the accuracy of your paraphrasing. (Note that some speakers may pretend you have got it right because they feel unable to assert themselves and disagree with you.)
- ▶ Do not question the speaker unnecessarily.
- ▶ Do not add to the speaker's meaning.
- ▶ Do not take the speaker's topic in a new direction.
- ▶ Always be non-directive and non-judgemental.



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See Also:

› The Decision Making Process

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