



# **MLCPC 104:**

***Basic Helping:***

***Essential Listening Skills and Techniques***

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**Abstract**

This session will explain the ten characteristics of a good listener. Participants will learn how to best connect with clients and the signs that a connection has occurred. Coaches will understand how to use helping skills on the phone to learn more about each client and her situation. This session also discusses the importance of confidentiality when working with clients.

**Learning Objectives**

1. Participants will develop the skills of becoming a better listener.
2. Participants will gain the ability to discern the signs of connection.
3. Participants will be educated in the importance of confidentiality.

## **I. Basic Principles for Helpers and Coaches**

### **A. We are co-laboring with Jesus Christ.**

1. We are never going into sessions alone.
2. This work is about Him.
3. It is a privilege to walk into someone's hurt with them.

### **B. Listen in a way that will take you beyond the words that a client is speaking and into what's in her heart as you develop better listening skills—the cries, happiness, hopes, and dreams in her heart.**

## **II. Ten Characteristics of a Good Listener**

### **A. Anyone can be a good listener.**

### **B. All of us can learn to be better listeners and can develop these skills as we prayerfully ask the Lord to help us become more effective.**

#### **1. Shows respect and acceptance**

- Without this, we will lose the client before anything else can happen.
- Attitude and words must be respectful.
- Accept who she is.

#### **2. Does not rehearse personal input to the conversation while the client is speaking.**

**3. Pays attention to nonverbal communication**

- Body language
- Facial expressions
- Voice tone
- And your own nonverbal communication

**4. Is aware of the “big picture” while listening to details**

**5. Tolerates periods of silence and uses them effectively**

- Silences can be a time of very powerful changes in her thinking.
- The Lord can speak to her during these moments.
- Silence can be a time when she can really be considering the new information that you’re sharing with her.

**6. Shows sincere attention**

**7. Does not allow emotional moments to throw her off track**

**8. Recognizes that every person and situation is unique**

**9. Asks questions for clarification**

**10. Maintains proper eye contact and follows the client’s lead**

### **III. Connection**

- A.** It doesn’t matter how brilliant your suggestions are, how well you have learned about abortion techniques and risks, or how much you care for her internally if you’re not able to connect with her in a way that allows her to experience that care.

**B. You will best connect when:**

1. You recognize that each client has a **divine appointment** at the center.
  - God has a plan to do something
2. Both parties are willing to be **genuine** and **vulnerable**.
  - You cannot control this in her, but you must be committed to it
3. You are more concerned about the other person than yourself.
4. You allow the Holy Spirit to lead you, anticipating what He will do.
5. You are aware of obstacles to vulnerability and openness in relationships.
6. You are ready to show unconditional acceptance and compassion, knowing there is a risk of being disliked or rejected.
7. You realize that the connection may not always occur.

**C. Signs of Connection in the Client:**

**1. Physical**

- Reduced tension
- Sighing
- Relaxed posture and breathing

**2. Speech**

- Speech is slower and flows better
- Speaks in first person

### **3. Content**

- Not as intellectual, less defensive
- Volunteers information

## **D. Signs of Connection in the Coach:**

### **1. Physical**

- Less distracted
- Relaxed breathing and posture
- Responds physically and emotionally to the client's pain

### **2. Internal**

- Other-centered
- Tuning into the Holy Spirit
- Disinterested in client's baggage
- No longer trying to figure her out or label her

## **IV. Helping Skills**

### **A. Active Listening (sensing)**

#### **1. Early in the session**

#### **2. Discovering **facts** of the situation**

**3. Restating:** Repeating client's words back to her, and only changing the pronoun; use restating when client speaks in short statements.

**4. Rephrasing:** Summarizing client's statements, possibly adding your thoughts as well; use rephrasing when the client speaks in longer paragraphs.

**5. Seven benefits of active listening:**

- Allows client to hear, rethink, and re-evaluate her statements
- Helps you to check and clarify your perceptions
- Reassures her you're listening
- Encourages her to elaborate and expand
- Provides you an opportunity to formulate a good response
- Allows you to stay with her as she changes subjects
- Enables you to gain a better understanding

**B. Interpretative Listening (feeling)**





**1.** Discovering feelings behind her thoughts, plans, behaviors, etc.

**2.** Moving from cognitive experience to an emotional level

**3.** "Untangles" confusing emotions

4. “Feeling” vocabulary is used
5. Leads you both to deeper understanding
6. With interpretative listening, use **lead-in phrases**:
  - “It sounds like you are feeling...”
  - “What I hear you saying is...”
  - “I think you’re saying that...”
  - Three components: Lead-in phrases, feeling, and reason
7. Benefits of interpretative listening:
  - Puts client’s feelings into words
  - Identifies and clarifies emotions
  - The coach can confirm/modify her interpretation of the client’s feelings
  - Builds trust and rapport
  - Allows the client to better understand her feelings
  - Makes the level of communication between the coach and the client go deeper

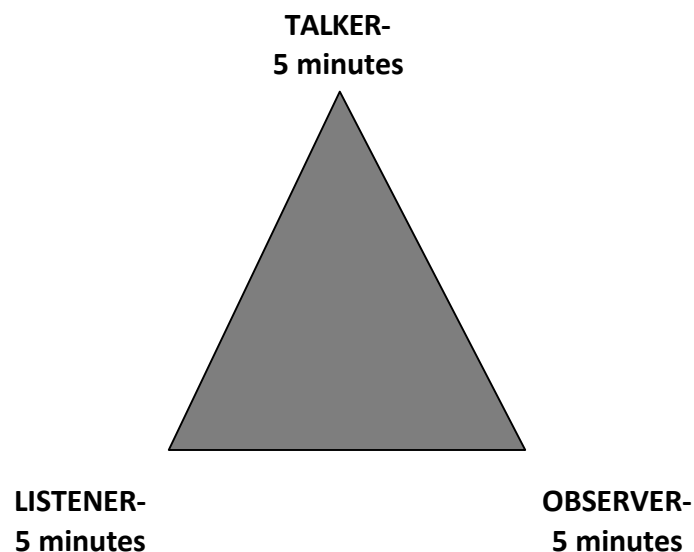


<div>   <b>FEELING WORDS</b>   </div>								
INTENSITY	HAPPY	SAD	ANGRY	CONFUSED	AFRAID	WEAK	STRONG	GUILTY
HIGH	Elated Excited Overjoyed Thrilled Exuberant Ecstatic Delighted Fired-up	Depressed Disappointed Alone Hurt Left-out Dejected Sorrowful Crushed	Furious Enraged Outraged Aggravated Irate Seething	Bewildered Trapped Troubled Desperate Spaced-out Lost Disoriented	Terrified Horried Scared stiff Petrified Fearful Panicky	Helpless Hopeless Beat Overwhelmed Impotent Exhausted Drained	Powerful Aggressive Gung-ho Potent Super Forceful Determined	Sorrowful Remorseful Ashamed Unworthy Worthless Condemned
MEDIUM	Cheerful Up Good Relieved	Heart-broken Down Upset Distressed Regretful	Upset Mad Annoyed Frustrated Agitated Disgusted	Disorganized Foggy Misplaced Mixed-up	Scared Frightened Threatened Insecure Uneasy Shocked	Dependent Incapable Lifeless Tired Rundown Insecure Shy	Energetic Capable Confident Persuasive Sure	Sorry Lowdown Rotten
LOW	Glad Content Satisfied Pleasant Fine Mellow Pleased	Unhappy Moody Blue Sorry Lost Bad Dissatisfied	Perturbed Uptight Dismayed Put out Irritated Touchy	Unsure Puzzled Bothered Uncomfortable Undecided Baffled Perplexed	Apprehensive Nervous Worried Timid Unsure Anxious	Unsatisfied Under-par Shaky Lethargic Inadequate Soft	Secure Durable Adequate Able Capable	Embarrassed

### C. Good Questions (Thinking and Choosing)

1. Explores options
2. Assists the client in her exploration of choices
3. Brings new information for the client's consideration
4. Avoids advice, lectures or debates at this stage

5. Asks good questions lead to new thoughts and possible breakthroughs
6. Questions to avoid:
  - **Close-ended** questions (“yes” or “no”)
  - **“Why”** questions, which imply judgment
  - **Rapid-fire** questions: several questions combined in one sentence
  - **Questions stating the answer**, which state an opinion (“You wouldn’t have an abortion would you?”)
7. Open-ended questions begin with *Who, What, Which, When, and Where*.
8. Practicing helping-skills:
  - **Talker:** answers questions from the listener and engages in conversation
  - **Listener:** uses helping skills to draw the talker into conversation
  - **Observer:** takes mental notes of good helping skills and watches for openings for the use of skills, giving feedback in the process



**D. Constructive Feedback** (doing)

1. Encourages action.
2. **Constructive:** is specific, focuses on self, and begins statements with “I”.
  - **(positive)** “I feel glad when you call to reschedule because it tells me that you want to continue your appointments.”
  - **(negative)** “I feel frustrated when you don’t come to our appointments because I’m hoping that we can work together and that you can make some really good decisions in your life.”
3. Feedback format:
  - “I **feel** \_\_\_\_\_ (insert feeling) \_\_\_\_\_ **when you** \_\_\_\_\_ (specific behavior) \_\_\_\_\_ **because** \_\_\_\_\_ (specific reason) \_\_\_\_\_.”

**E. Confrontation** (addressing wrong behaviors/perceptions)

1. This may be used towards the end of a session, **after** trust has been established.
2. Difficult challenges “padded” by kind remarks.
  - i.e., “Perhaps this additional information might help.” or “May I share another perspective?”
3. Focus on the immediate issue.
4. Gently use **expanded restatement**: “So, you are planning to have an abortion **even though...**”

5. Helpful hints on confrontation:

- Avoid in the early stages.
- Use when empathy and trust are established and the relationship is developed.
- The terms should be **specific** and **situation appropriate**.
- Comfort the broken-hearted, confront the hard-hearted.
- Confrontation comes from caring about the client in order to benefit her.
- It is not an attack on her.
- Use tentative lead-in phrases.
- Don't use the same approach.
- Speak the truth in love—you are a tool of the Holy Spirit, so don't be discouraged, but trust God.

## V. Confidentiality

A. **Never** give out information without a client's **written** permission.

1. Includes the parents of minors.
2. Answer questions by saying, "I'm sorry. All of our information here is confidential. I cannot answer your question."
3. Protects advertising and clients.

B. Don't discuss details of sessions with other volunteers, family, etc.

C. Don't give identifying details for prayer requests.

**D. Legal exceptions:**

- 1.** Child abuse (includes statutory rape in some states)
- 2.** Runaway minors
- 3.** Suicide threat by client
- 4.** Serious/imminent harm to a 3<sup>rd</sup> person
- 5.** Valid legal subpoena/court order