

Suggestions for Helpful Listening

- Make the environment quiet; limit distractions.
- Suggest allowing a supportive person in the room.
- Provide comfort.
- Be aware of possible cultural or ethnic issues.
- Pay attention.
- Show that you are interested: Face the speaker; use positive eye contact.
- Watch for nonverbal cues.
- Don't probe for emotions when the person is numb or in a state of shock.
- Avoid interrupting. Let the person tell you what he or she wants to say.
- Wait – think – respond. A short pause will usually be enough.
- Allow for silence, which often helps. A person can use a silent period to rethink what he or she is about to say.
- Allow expressions of emotions.
- Allow the person to repeat his or her comments and stories.
- Keep questions clear and simple.
- Restate a summary of what the person said.
- Reflect on the emotions the person has brought up.
- Ask clarifying questions when you do not understand.
- Offer hope.
- Help the person problem-solve instead of giving him or her advice.



QuickNote

Sometimes what counts is not being able to fix a person's problem, but simply taking the time to listen to him or her and encourage help-seeking behavior.