

Glossary of Intervention Skills

ATTENDING SKILLS: Skills used by the caregiver/teacher/support staff to convey to the student at-risk that he/she is attending to what he/she is saying and doing.

PHYSICAL ATTENDING SKILLS: Removing distractions, adopting a facilitative body posture. The caregiver should be facing the student with an open posture. The two people should be an appropriate, comfortable distance apart. A tense posture is not appropriate, nor is a completely relaxed one. A posture that indicates concentration and concern is what is desired. Leaning forward slightly is generally best.

VISUAL ATTENDING SKILLS: Maintaining eye contact and displaying facial expressions that are appropriate to what the student is saying.

VERBAL ATTENDING SKILLS: Listening actively and carefully to what the other person is stating in words (content of the verbal message) as well as para-verbally (voice tone and inflection) and non-verbally (body language).

EXPRESSIVE SKILLS: Skills used to convey an understanding of the student's feelings.

EMPATHETIC RESPONSE: To have empathy for another is to understand that student's feelings from their point of view. It is not enough to think that one understands. Saying, "I understand" is relatively meaningless. An empathetic response is an attempt to convey the understanding to the student at-risk.

Examples: "Things must seem very black to you"
"It must seem like it will never stop"

SELF-DISCLOSURE: Responses that convey the emotion of the caregiver. This may be a direct report of a feeling. These types of responses help to convey openness and genuineness. They become inappropriate if they shift the focus away from the student at-risk and onto the caregiver.

Examples: "You really scared me when you said that"
"It makes me angry when you say I don't care"

REFLECTIVE-CLARIFICATION SKILLS: Responses which allow the caregiver to obtain an accurate understanding of what is being said to the student at-risk.

PERCEPTION CHECK: Checking out what the student is saying, especially if the caregiver's perceptions are at variance with the message.

Example: "You've said that you've gotten over your boyfriend now, but your voice slowed and got lower. You clenched your fists. I wonder if it still doesn't hurt?"

Note: It is very helpful to be specific in reporting the behavior one is seeing. It is not sufficient to say, “You seem defensive about that.” Rather, it is more productive to say, “I wonder if you’re defensive about that. When I mentioned it, your face tightened, you gripped the chair and looked away from me.”

FACILITATIVE QUESTIONS: Poor questions can set the wrong tone and can shift the focus away from meaningful interchanges. Good questions can open communication and draw out important information.

- ✓ **OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS:** Questions that can’t be answered with a simple yes or no. These questions are especially useful when the goal is to assist the person in opening up and elaborating on his/her feelings and situation.
- ✓ **CLOSED QUESTIONS:** These questions are structured in a way that the only appropriate response is yes or no.

IMMEDIACY/SPECIFICITY: Responses which maintain focus. This involves dealing directly with the student feelings, his/her immediate problems and intended actions. When this is done, the caregiver can avoid vague, general, unclear discussions as well as meaningless philosophical debates.

PROCESS GUIDING: Skills and abilities necessary to maintain the process of helping a student at-risk in a manner, which is in sync to him/her. Critical to working in this cooperative, synchronized manner is an appreciation of the likelihood that a student at-risk has mixed or ambivalent feelings.

PROCESS CHECKING: The appropriate use of questions to assess whether or not the caregiver and the student are working together. These questions allow the caregiver and the student to determine where they are in the process and gauge the willingness of each to carry on.

Example: “So, it seems that we have a pretty good understanding of the problem and of the danger involved. Now we need to think about what to do about it. Am I right about this?”