

Role Play Activity

Target Skills: **Listening, Summarizing, and Clarifying**

Goal: **To demonstrate the ability to engage in active listening, using summarizing and clarifying as strategies for taking in information without passing immediate judgment**

Participants and roles: **This activity is completed in triads, using the following roles:**
 1 “story teller”
 1 listener/summarizer/clarifier
 1 observer

Directions (Total time per story = 10 minutes)

1. Story teller chooses one of the three situations described below *or* a situation from his/her personal/professional experience and talks about it for 3 – 4 minutes. During this time, the listener listens and prepares to summarize the information. Clarifying questions may also be asked (but not too many – this story teller wants to vent!). The observer’s role is to observe the interaction, especially the listener’s ability to listen and clarify the information being shared in a non-intrusive and non-judgmental way.
2. Listener summarizes the story, asking additional clarifying questions if necessary. Observer takes mental and/or written notes on the process
3. Observer shares reflection on the interaction with the other two members of the role play triad, including positive and negative feedback for the listener. Story teller comments as to her/his feelings about the degree to which the listener seemed to capture the main points of the story in an accurate, non-judgmental way.
4. Repeat until all participants have had a chance to be the listener.

Situations/Stories (Feel free to exercise creative license!)

1. You are the parent of a first grade child whom you see as being extremely capable in an academic sense and very creative. He can be a bit of a “loner” and has been described by some of your relatives as being “too emotional,” but in your eyes, he just needs time to mature. Unfortunately, he does not yet seem to have formed any friendships at school. He reports to you that kids tease him constantly on the playground and never include him in any games. You can’t stand his crying anymore, and have decided to take action. You’ve already tried talking to his teacher, who gave you the impression that it wasn’t her job to find friends for your son. You’ve made an appointment with the principal to let him/her know that this is not acceptable to you.

2. You are a special educator who spends a lot of time in Bill Jensen's 6th grade class. Yesterday, Bill was out sick and a substitute teacher named Sally Jones filled in for him. Sally is president of the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) and a well-respected community member. You were present in the class for over an hour to support Dan, a 6th grader with learning needs and a fragile sense of self-esteem. You were shocked to see how Sally interacted with Dan and several other boys in the class. She reprimanded them constantly, using language that made them feel punished and de-valued. As an advocate for Dan and others, you decide after school that you need to speak with the principal. You believe that he has a positive relationship with Sally, but you find you can't tolerate this kind of treatment of kids.
3. You are a 10th grade science teacher who has spent many hours in the past year on a curriculum committee charged with aligning the school's science curriculum with state standards. Although you were initially skeptical about the standards, your work has convinced you that this is the direction that schools need to take in order to improve student achievement. It's now spring, and you've just finished a week of testing using the state's newest standards-based assessment measure in science. You find yourself feeling really angry about the fact that several students in your class who are labeled learning disabled were allowed to take their tests with the special education teacher, in a separate setting without being timed. The more you reflect on this, the angrier you become. It seems that your convictions are being compromised and your hard work is for naught! You decide to pay a visit to the principal to discuss the issue and your general sense that special educators make things too easy for some kids.