

6. Pause after you ask probing questions. Avoid answering the question for them or giving them advice. Insight that comes from our internal wrestling, especially when guided by the Holy Spirit, has a much bigger impact than directive or prescriptive truth. Proverbs 18:13 says, “If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame”.

7. Summarizing conceptualizes what the other person has said. It can be done by using a combination of labels and paraphrases. We want the person to feel heard and understood.

- *From what you are saying, I get the idea that...*
- *I've noticed that you...*
- *If I understand what you're describing...*
- *It seems like things were going well and then this happened.*

8. Beware of 'Black Swans', which are the unexpected and hidden motives or realities that exist within another person. The most important thing we can do to uncover 'Black Swans' is to release our agendas and assumptions, listen well, and stay curious.

*While these concepts are taught in counseling courses across the country, most of the terminology utilized in this brochure was taken from the book *Never Split the Difference: Negotiating Like Your Life Depends on It* by Chris Voss.

For additional resources or to contact a Care Team member, go to www.crossroadschur.ch.



Tactical Empathy

Skills for Assessing Needs, Diffusing Hostility, and Facilitating Emotional Healing

Why Empathy?

Most of life revolves around loving, communicating, and connecting with others. Empathetic skills help us do that more effectively! We can all learn these skills, regardless of our natural abilities. And when we do so, it's a game changer! Below are techniques to help you become an empathetic listener*.

1. Maintain Focus by slowing things down and using your "late-night DJ voice". This helps the other person feel safe enough to open up. As Christians, we must also learn to practice "dual listening." This is the discipline of giving others our undivided attention while, at the same time, submitting ourselves to wisdom and guidance from the Holy Spirit.

2. Adopt a Listening Posture by facing the person, leaning forward, looking them in the eye, nodding your head, and verbalizing various minimal encouragers, which are really various ways of saying "I hear you". (*I see. Of course. Whew! Understandable.*)

We can alternate minimal encouragers with validating phrases. (*That makes perfect sense. That's very understandable. I would feel the same way. That sounds hard.*)

3. Mirroring is a disarming way to build trust and trigger an instinctual reciprocity with another person. Verbal mirroring is to repeat the exact same words the other person said in a way of acknowledgment. Physical mirroring is to adopt their posture or facial expressions. Paraphrasing is similar to verbal mirroring, but it is to repeat what they have said in our own words.

4. Labeling is a way to name the other person's feelings. Labeling negative emotions diffuses them and can de-escalate a tense situation. Labeling positive emotions has the opposite effect and often reinforces them.

- *I'm not sure, but it appears you are saying that this makes you feel ...*
- *In a way, this situation caused you to feel...?*
- *It appears to me that you felt very ... in this situation.*
- *It must be difficult to have so much ... around this issue.*
- *I'm sensing that this brought up real feelings of ...*

5. Asking Good Questions is a way to confirm our understanding and then explore the other person's thoughts and emotions. There are two types of questions to ask: clarifying and probing. Regardless of the questions we choose to ask, it is important to pose questions that sound more like curiosity than judgment.

a. Clarifying Questions are simple questions of fact which provide us with useful feedback and a chance to confirm our understanding of what's being said.

- *Can you help me understand what you meant by ...?*
- *Is this what you said...?*
- *What's another way you might say that?*
- *Can you explain what you meant when you said...?*
- *When you said...did you mean this... or that...?*

b. Probing Questions are intended to help the other person explore more deeply their thoughts and feelings.

- *Tell me more about...*
- *What do you think would happen if...?*
- *What is the most important thing to you in this situation?*
- *How did you feel when that happened?*
- *Tell me about the thought process you went through.*
- *What are you hearing from God about this?*
- *What might be your next step?*
- *What is the connection between... and...?*
- *What do you most need right now?*