



NAVIGATING THE JOURNEY AS A CAREGIVER

let's talk about **ACTIVE LISTENING**

A Bridge on Your Caregiver Journey

The world has a shortage of listening, and our loved ones who are living with mental illness need it as much as anyone. While it may sometimes feel difficult to accept some of what your loved one is saying, engaging in active listening is a powerful way to BRIDGE any distance in your relationship. You can even teach them the basics of actively listening to YOU and practice with them!

Here are some basics of active and empathic listening:

Reflect and Paraphrase

Simply repeat back what your loved one has said in different words.

"I'm hearing you say..." "It sounds like you..."

Ask Curious Questions

Instead of yes-or-no questions, ask open ended "What" and "How" questions. "Why" questions can be rephrased to sound less like a demand for justification. "What is that like for you?" "What did this mean to you?" "How were you feeling when you...?" "How are you feeling about it now?"

Identify Emotions

"I can imagine this has left you feeling *stressed*." "That sounds very *frustrating*." "I bet that felt pretty *overwhelming*."

No Fixing, No Changing

When your loved one is sharing their experience, wait until another time to volunteer solutions. Acceptance creates the best listening. Ask first if you do offer solutions.

Hold Off on the Sharing

It's ok to share a story about how you relate, but wait until your loved one has had time to express all their thoughts first.

See next page for more resources on active listening!

If you are currently experiencing a crisis, please call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or contact the Crisis Text Line by texting TALK to 741-741.

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Resources for You and Your Loved One

- The [National Alliance on Mental Health](#) on how to listen to a loved one with a mental illness
- [Cognitive Healing](#) on communicating with someone with a mental illness
- A chance to experience active listening firsthand through the [SeekHealing Listening Line](#)
- Listening support from the [National Warmline Directory](#)
- Advice on listening to your loved one experiencing psychosis from [Understanding Voices](#)
- [Intervoice](#) for schizophrenia: online discussion for persons who hear voices
- 7 active listening games and exercises from [The Good Listening Project](#)
- A colorful video on active listening from [HeartLines](#)
- Empathic listening tips for parents from [Talking to Teens](#)
- Active listening to make caregiver for older adults easier by the [Institute on Aging](#)

Preventing Caregiver Burnout

We give our BEST care when we are also taking care of ourselves! Make time to recharge, even with a short moment that's just for YOU. Connecting with other caregivers is another powerful form of self-care. Learn more about our One-to-One Caregiver Peer Support program on [our website](#).

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