



### **Tips for reflective listening:**

I use the acronym of ERASE:

**E: Eye Contact.** Turn to face the person and keep your eyes within the “social triangle” of polite looking—imagine a triangle with one point on each side of the forehead and the other at the person’s chin.

**R: Reflect.** The simplest type of reflection paraphrases what the person is saying, which lets the speaker know you are paying attention.

Ex: “So the kids really were naughty today?”

A deeper level of reflection lets the person know you’re trying to understand their emotions,

Ex: “You sound really frustrated about the new person at work.”

The deepest level of reflection expresses your understanding of the person and the meaning the situation they are describing holds for them, personally.

Ex: “...You were so hopeful the new administrator would move the school forward, and now this...”

**A: Ask:** Ask questions that show you were listening in the first place, especially questions like,

“What happened next?” Or, “How did you feel?” Avoid asking “Why” questions at first because it can sound like criticism. You don’t have to agree with everything—you’re just trying to understand.

**S: Support:** Let the person know you care about what’s going on: “I’m sorry that new coworker isn’t working out like you’d hoped.” You don’t have to fix the problem; you just have to care about it. You might also express your desire to be helpful, ex., “Is there anything I can do?” or, “I wish there was some way for me to help with this.”

**E: Empathize:** Show you care about the person’s feelings about the problem. Here, you offer more feedback that is focused on how the person is feeling. You don’t have to agree with how the speaker arrived at the feeling – you are just trying to express your sense of how the speaker feels.

Ex: “I can understand how aggravating all of that must have been for you,” or, “You must be so happy to have completed this task after so much hard work!”

This “E” can also mean, explain your point of view if you’re asked.

- L Puterbaugh, PhD, LMHC, LMFT, NCC