

HELPING SKILLS

Attending: showing the student that you are paying attention to him/her (= attitude).

Examples:

- ❖ Comfortable, open posture
- ❖ Lean forward
- ❖ Eye contact
- ❖ Listen
- ❖ Do not interrupt
- ❖ Relax
- ❖ Nod of head
- ❖ “Uh-huh”
- ❖ Clear, sincere voice

Open-ended questions: asking questions in a way that requires more than a “yes” or “no” response.

Examples:

- ❖ “Tell me...”
- ❖ “What do you think/feel...?”
- ❖ “I’m interested in knowing more about...”
- ❖ “What have you done...?”
- ❖ “Give me an example...”

Hints:

- ❖ Avoid “why...”
- ❖ Do not bombard the student with questions without explaining your purpose

Paraphrasing: repeat back the essence of what the student is communicating.

Examples:

- ❖ “It sounds like...”
- ❖ “It seems as though...”
- ❖ “I get the idea that...”
- ❖ “You’re saying...”

Hints:

- ❖ Be tentative (no assumptions)
- ❖ Paraphrase both content and feelings

Clarifying: ask the student to be more clear or elaborate on a vague, ambiguous or implied statement.

Examples:

- ❖ “Could you describe...?”
- ❖ “Are you saying...?”
- ❖ “Tell me what you mean...”

Summarizing: tying together what has been said or identifying themes or consistencies, or providing focus, or reviewing what has been said/done.

Information giving: providing important information to educate and empower the student.

Hints:

- ❖ First, listen to determine what information is known and what is needed
- ❖ Avoid jargon without explaining
- ❖ Present all relevant facts (do not protect the student)
- ❖ Do not “overload” the student with information
- ❖ Get the student’s reaction to the information
- ❖ Use paper and pencil aids
- ❖ Educate about ASU resources

Problem-Solving: helping students identify, evaluate and choose alternative solutions.

Examples to identify alternatives:

- ❖ “What have you thought about doing about...?”
- ❖ “What other solutions could you consider?”
- ❖ “What have you seen others do when they’ve been in this situation?”

Examples to evaluate alternatives:

- ❖ “What else do you need to know to figure out if that will work for you?”
- ❖ “What is likely to happen if you...?”
- ❖ “How would you feel if you followed this plan?”
- ❖ “What steps would you have to take if you chose that solution?”

Examples to choose alternatives:

- ❖ “We’ve identified these possibilities,..., which do you think you might like to try?”
- ❖ “What would be helpful to you to be able to pick a plan of action?” (get more info, have time alone to think about it, talk it over with someone else, etc.)

Hints:

- ❖ Do problem solving only after the student has had adequate opportunity to talk about and explore the problem.
- ❖ Do problem solving only after the student has a realistic view of the problem.
- ❖ Don't encourage premature decisions. Encourage students to gather adequate information to be able to make a decision.
- ❖ Don't ever make the decision for the student.
- ❖ Suggestions of solutions can be helpful, but remember that people generally follow-through more when they come up with the solution themselves.

HELPING SKILLS FOR RESISTANT/MANIPULATIVE/DEMANDING STUDENTS

Recognizing these students:

- ❖ “Yeah, but...” (all attempts to help are shot down)
- ❖ “I’m okay” (but behaviors suggest otherwise)
- ❖ Blaming others/becoming defensive
- ❖ Using manipulation to attempt to gain what is wanted/imposing on your personal space and time
- ❖ Hinting about suicide, without making a direct threat

How to approach:

- ❖ Express genuine concern - not judgment
- ❖ With manipulative and/or demanding students, maintain boundaries, be explicit about these, and continue to define these
- ❖ Express compassion and desire for them to be happy/healthy/well
- ❖ Consider your role (unless they are at some sort of imminent risk or creating conduct problems) as a "seed planter" - rather than expecting to "harvest" insight during your first approach
- ❖ Acknowledge specific behaviors that have you concerned
- ❖ Acknowledge how hard it is to accept help sometimes and let them know that even if they are saying they are fine now, it is okay if later they decide they want or need help, to come and tell you so
- ❖ With demanding and manipulative students, remain firm, but empathic by utilizing the helping skills described above. Most importantly, do not argue with the student
- ❖ Regarding possibly suicidal students, it is important to ask the student for clarification by asking directly if they are suicidal. If they continue to make veiled threats without clear explanation of meaning, it will be important to inform them of your obligation to keep them safe. That might mean contacting the RD which might also mean contact with the counseling center or the emergency room for a safety assessment.

MEDIATION SKILLS

Mediation: Helping to resolve disagreements or conflicts between roommates and residents

- ❖ Often there is an underlying issue that makes a seemingly simple issue difficult to fix.
- ❖ If you notice resistance to your excellent problem solving ideas, it is time to investigate further
- ❖ Identify the "feelings" behind the students complaints and reflect those back to the student to be sure you are correct (For example: If a resident says I really want my roommate to stop playing her music so loud while I'm trying to study, but every time I ask her to turn it down, she ignores me. You could say something like: "It sounds like you are feeling ignored, and that you might be feeling exasperated or even angered by this?")
- ❖ Then restate those feelings to the other resident and elicit their emotional reaction... (For example: You could then look to the other roommate who plays music too loud, and say "It sounds like your roommate is feeling exasperated and is becoming angry with you because she feels ignored by you. What is your reaction to this?")
- ❖ Target the problem solving at these underlying feeling issues rather than fixating on the situational issue - otherwise they will be resistant, despite your good ideas (In other words, you can attempt to "fix" the problem, but there are always emotions that motivate behavior, so it's more important to work with the emotions. The situation is a byproduct of the emotions. For example, if the roommate in the above example is angry at her roommate for not inviting her to a party, and is blasting music to "get back at her," you will not be able to assist the situation until the anger is admitted and put out in the open. Remember that the counseling center can assist in these situations as well through consultation, or a program on roommate communication)
- ❖ Remain calm and level headed
- ❖ If things don't seem to be going well, suggest another meeting for the next day (if possible) and invite the residents to think about what was said and revealed. Remember, sometimes your role will be to "plant a seed," and a break from an emotionally charged situation may give the residents time to consider the feelings, ideas, and thoughts revealed in the initial mediation session.
- ❖ Remember counseling center services. You are not a trained counselor, and there may be some personal issues or concerns that could be better addressed individually through counseling.