

# OMBUDS OFFICE

Harvard Medical School  
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## Effective Intervention: Listener Responses

**Reflection** is when the listener says back to the speaker what the listener believes the speaker has just expressed, using language that is close to the speaker's own. A good reflection captures both the substance and the emotional tone of what the speaker has said, without parroting.

*"So, for you, what's happening is that..."*

*"What you seem to be saying is..."*

*"You're feeling..."*

**Summarizing** is when the listener condenses a series of things the parties have said, or a series of things that have happened, into essential points. A good summary is inclusive – nothing is strategically "dropped out."

*"So what you all want to talk about today is..."*

*"To summarize what you've both talked about so far..."*

*"There are a number of things you're disagreeing about, including..."*

**Questioning** is usually done with open-ended questions that encourage reflection, elaboration, dialogue, and deliberation.

*"What did you mean by...?"*

*"What do you want Martin to understand about that...?"*

*"Anything more you would like to say about that?"*

**Checking in** is a way the listener makes the process transparent, by asking the parties whether a decision-point that the listener has noticed is one they want to consider and/or act upon.

*"So where do you think the discussion should go at this point?"*

*"Are you comfortable with the way this conversation is going?"*

*"Are you ready to move on to (this new point) or do you want to stay with this part of the discussion a while longer?"*

*Adapted from - Institute for the Study of Conflict Transformation at Hofstra University School of Law ©2003*



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