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Effective Intervention: Listener Responses

Reflecting 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 speaker has 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 me (or someone else) 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 speaker 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?"

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