

## Lab 4: Attending and Listening

Please note that the first few labs might feel somewhat artificial because each helping skill is first practiced separately. In real helping sessions, you will not use just one skill at a time. The best way to master the helping skills is to focus on each one intensely and separately before trying to integrate them.

In addition, some students feel overwhelmed with these lab exercises because they worry that they will not remember everything they are “supposed” to do. You probably will not remember everything. It takes a lot of practice before you can begin to use everything you have learned. Try to relax and do your best—you do not have to be perfect. Just get in there and try the exercises and see what happens. These exercises are designed to give you the opportunity to practice the skills in a relatively safe place.

### Exercise 1: Attending

#### *Goals:*

1. To allow helpers a chance to communicate empathy just through attending behaviors.
2. To enable helpers to become accustomed to being in the helper role.

#### *Helper's and Client's Tasks during the Helping Exchange*

1. Students pair up and take turns being helper and client.
2. The helper uses appropriate attending behaviors with the client, who talks about an easy topic (See Exhibit 1.1 in Chapter 1). The helper should communicate empathy *but not say anything verbally*.
3. Continue for three minutes. Switch roles.

## Exercise 2: Listening

### *Goals:*

1. To enable helpers to become accustomed to the helper role.
2. To allow helpers an opportunity to try different attending behaviors to see which feel most comfortable and congruent.
3. To provide feedback to helpers about their attending behaviors.
4. To allow helpers an opportunity to observe and learn about the meanings of clients' nonverbal behaviors.
5. To give helpers an opportunity to practice listening skills without interpreting, making judgments about what clients say, or thinking of what they want to say.

### *Helper's and Client's Tasks during the Helping Exchange*

1. Students should be arranged in groups of three, alternating roles so each person participates at least once in each role (helper, client, and observer).
2. The helper can relax, use appropriate attending skills, introduce him- or herself, and ask what the client would like to talk about.
3. The client should talk *briefly* for one or two sentences about an easy topic.
4. The helper should first pause to think and then repeat verbatim (except for changing "I" to "you") what the client said. Repeating verbatim probably will feel awkward to many helpers, but it enables helpers to listen carefully and make sure they hear what clients are saying. Be sure to focus on this task and not talk about life in general.
5. Continue for eight to ten client speaking turns. Although it is difficult (especially the first time), stay in the helper and client roles.

### *Observer's Task during the Helping Exchange*

1. Take notes on your observations of the helper's ability to repeat exactly what the client said.

Note one positive and one negative attending behavior.

2. Encourage the helper and client to stay on task.

### *After the Helping Exchange*

1. The helper first discusses which attending behaviors felt comfortable and how it felt to repeat what the client said.
2. The client can give feedback about the helper's attending and listening skills.
3. The observer can give positive and then negative feedback to the helper.

### Personal Reflections

- What was it like for you to be silent in the first exercise?
- What was your experience in the roles of helper, client, and observer?
- Which attending behaviors did you find most helpful as a helper and as a client?
- How did you feel about repeating everything verbatim?
- What multicultural issues (e.g., gender, race, ethnicity, age) arose in your dyads?