

At Mt. Pleasant Community Church this week, I worked on numerous detailed tasks. For example, I composed a list of students who have not been to CREW for at least three weeks. I often make lists like this so that the youth director can contact these students and inquire about why they have not come back to CREW. Also, I sent feedback emails to the volunteer staff members who took part in running last Sunday night's J-CREW program. I coordinated with the next Program Director on the plans for his Sunday night program. This included discussing recreational activities, building resources, and program format. Also during my office hours, I began my work on a journal called "Spiritual Benchmarks" which the youth director is using as a tool to mentor me. Finally, my responsibilities on Sunday night included transporting students on a field trip to Target, directing staff, and interacting with the students.

On Sunday night, as students were arriving at the church, I was approached by one of the high school students. When I said hello and asked her how she was doing, she began to disclose a couple of very difficult struggles she has been dealing with. As she opened up to me, I gave her my full attention and listened well. As I am reflecting back on my interaction with her, I recognize that I was utilizing a specific listening skill I have learned: reflective listening. Reflective listening is a way of giving feedback to the person who is speaking that shows that their statement was understood (Cushman & Cahn, 1985). In other words, it means that when a speaker makes a statement, the listener responds by repeating the statement, but in different words (Cushman & Cahn, 1985). By doing this, the speaker feels affirmed, understood, and comfortable continuing to disclose.

The high school student on Sunday was telling me about her ill grandmother, frustration with her parents, and a conflict at school. She was on the verge of tears as she spoke, and I knew this situation needed to be handled sensitively. I wanted her to know I cared about what she was going through and that she could trust me. So, I often responded with reflective listening statements. For example, I made statements such as, “It sounds like you are frustrated with your parents”, “You must be pretty worried about your grandmother”, and “It must be hard to concentrate at school”. These were just a few examples. I believe that by reflective listening, I did show the student that I understood the feelings she was having. The more I reflected, the more she continued to open up. I quickly learned that this student was not looking for someone to solve her problems. Instead, she was just looking for someone to listen and affirm her feelings. She has been open with me ever since. I have developed a trusting relationship with her, which was one of my goals at the beginning of this internship.

Prior to learning listening skills, I took listening for granted. I thought I was a good listener. However, listening is so much more than just standing there while a person speaks to you. It involves fully understanding the perspective of the other person and communicating it back to that person. I think everyone should learn how to listen, and not just how to hear.

Works Cited

Cushman, D. P., & Cahn, D. D. (1985). *Communication in interpersonal relationships*.

New York: State University of New York Press.