

ATTENDING: FULL FOCUS

Any adult should practice attending with full attention to teens when they share their thoughts because it fosters trust and open communication. People are more likely to seek guidance and support when they receive our full attention. Adults can better understand the unique challenges and concerns and might let each of us connect and provide effective guidance.

The full focused attentive approach also demonstrates respect, helping to strengthen the relationship and create a supportive, nurturing environment for spiritual growth and personal development.

	Distracted	Being Relevant	Being Spectacular	Dominant	Attentive
Eye Contact:	Glances at phone Scans room for a more interesting person	Maintain strong eye contact when a topic of interest comes up ... eager to share	Over-the-top listener	Staring to intimidate Unwavering eye contact	Culturally appropriate eye contact
Body Language:	Turned away	Leaning forward	Nodding emphatically	Leaning in, close Taking up space	To convey warmth, safety, and understanding
Gestures:	Unassociated to conversation	Neutral	Extravagant gestures	Precise	Showing genuine interest Encouraging more sharing
Facial Expressions:	Blank	Eager	Exaggerated	Intense	Warm, empathetic Appropriate to content
Responses:	"Uh, I must have missed that." Dismissive	Jumps in at the earliest moment to demonstrate knowledge	Drawing attention to themselves in their comment	Assert dominance and authority. Intimidation	Curiosity Validation Empathy
Examples:	"Hmm. Uh-huh." "What was that?"	"I have heard about this. Have you tried ___?"	"This is what my friend and I did; it was so helpful."	"You shouldn't feel/think that way. Do this___!"	"That sounds like it affected you deeply. Would you say more about..."



KINGDOM RESOURCES

In addition to Ministry of Presence, Listening, and Questions, there are more Kingdom resources that are healing as we deal with others in times of trouble and suffering. Emotional regulation is a physiological response to prayer, meditation, worship, and listening to God's voice through His Word and His Spirit.

The question we need to have in the forefront of our minds is:

How, in our presence, questioning, and listening are we both living out Christ's love and directing the youth towards Christ's love?

	Purpose	Benefits	Examples	Verses
Prayer	Communication & relationship with God: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Adoration ▶ Thanksgiving ▶ Petition ▶ Confession/ forgiveness ▶ Reconciliation 	Comfort Guidance Strength Healing Intimacy	Breath prayer In – Name of God Out – request/statement Prayer Journal of both requests and responses	Isaiah 25:1 Matt 6:9-13 2 Cor 1:3-4 Heb 4:16 1 Thess 5:16-18 Phil 4:6-7 1 John 5:14-15
Meditation	Focusing on God Embodied connection and worship	Physical & Emotional Regulation	Solitude Notice - Breathing & Relaxing body Notice – God's presence Feel the difference between doing something and being with	Psalm 1:1-3 Psalm 143:5 Psalm 119:9-11 Isaiah 26:3 John 17:3 Phil 4:8
Worship	Using body in praise	Uplifting Emotive Grounding Comforting Solace Connection	Expressing to God Singing Serving Nature walk	1 Chron 16:23-31 Psalm 75:1 Psalm 63 Psalm 95 Psalm 96:11-12 Psalm 150
God's Word	This is a conversation we get to be part of We know who God is and who we are through His giving us His Word	Know God Know Self Hope Encouragement Conviction Knowing the need we have and the healing He provides.	Lectio Divina <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Silence, relax, invite ▶ Passage (6-8 vs) read before each section below ▶ Reflect: how is my life touched by this? Putting myself in the story. Connecting to my life now. ▶ Respond – what is my word back to God (conversation) ▶ Rest: waiting & resting in God's presence 	Psalm 119:105 Prov 30:5 John 1:1-5 John 17 Acts 2:44-47 Col 3:16 Heb 4:12 1 Peter 4:8-11



BEING PRESENT: STRUGGLING TOGETHER

Think of a time you had to fix something (e.g., a mobile phone). You call the helpline, and they tell you exactly what you need to do; however, it doesn't work. Then, they proceed to blame you for the problem. When people in our lives are struggling or suffering, we may or may not have the answers, but often, being with them, sitting with them, and understanding the struggle is more helpful than suggested solutions. We see this from Paul to both the church in Ephesus and Galatia ... be present, bear burdens together, be humble, and be gentle. All this comes from a place of caring.

Response below if a teenager is struggling with their self-worth and is feeling suicidal.

	Purpose	Within Me	Problem Stance	Helpful Stance
Sitting with them	Creating safety Encouraging sharing Respecting their pace Normalizing	Fear of them harming self I feel I have to do something	Prolonged silence without teen speaking may feel isolating or ignored Missed opportunity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Youth makes a request, and you just stare at them Misinterpretation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Indifference by you 	Silence should be combined with appropriate actions to ensure the youth's safety and well-being. What you are doing is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Listening so they can express thoughts and feelings at their own pace ▶ Signals support
Reduce Distraction	Valuing the youth Full attention Validates their experience	The intensity is too much for me Don't have the time for the talk	Overwhelms youth, too much attention. Increases the pain with the intense focus Feeling pressured	Increases the focus Creates sense of connection "I am here with you in this, and this is the important thing right now." Might need to do something while talking ... reduces the intensity
Practice gratitude	Affirming their worth as a child of God Encouraging openness Modeling positive behavior	Temptation to do something Trying to make it okay when it is not Gratitude for sharing might minimize the severity of what was said	Might unintentionally minimize their struggle and pain Places pressure to be positive and not compliant	Gratitude can be helpful but shouldn't be the primary approach Helpful at the end of time to validate the importance and appreciation of the process
Empathy	Emotional connection Reducing stigma Providing comfort	Struggle to be with them emotionally because you are struggling too Not good at setting boundaries	Get too far into the situation Not capable to deal with the emotions Empathy is not the solution; it is a bandage	Connects you and the youth Communicates understanding Encouragement and validation

PASTORS REFERRING TO CLINICIANS: QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

When referring someone to seek professional counseling, pastors may want to ask the following questions of the individuals involved (self, adolescents, parents, and therapists).

Pastors (SELF):

1. Do I have someone that I can consult with on this situation?
2. How much time am I willing to devote to this person? ____ hours
3. Am I struggling with depression, anxiety, fear, failure, anger?
4. What can I say “no” to, and what can I say “yes” to?
5. What happens to me when I say “no”?
6. Am I uncomfortable with this issue or person? Why?
7. Am I dealing with my own issues in the matter that is being presented?
8. Do I find myself being (attracted, angry, disconnected) to/at/from this person?
9. Am I willing to draw a distinct boundary with this person?
10. Am I open to instruction, criticism, and input without getting defensive?
11. Am I connected to myself (& family/friends) emotionally? Can I empathize?

Adolescents/Parents:

1. Is this an individual, relational (parents), or institutional (youth group, church) issue?
2. On a scale of 1 – 10, how severe is this issue?
3. Are you safe? From Self? From others?
4. Do you think you can take care of them on their own?
5. Are you seeking out help? Are you ‘forced’ to talk with me?
6. Previous counseling? Outcome?
7. What issues need to be addressed before getting to the ‘real’ issue?
8. Is it a psychological, physical, or spiritual issue? Combination?
9. Are they/parents open to sharing with me?
10. Are the parents/adolescent open to the other’s involvement in the process?

Therapist

1. Are they open to Christianity, the Gospel, as part of the process?
2. Do they offer information demonstrating open belief in Christianity?
3. Are they willing to interact and collaborate with the pastor (with appropriate consent/release of info)?
4. Have they been helpful? Other experiences with them
5. What has the feedback been from others sent to them?
6. Are they certified? Are they known within the professional community?
7. On a scale of 1 – 10, how comfortable am I sending people to them
8. In person v. telehealth ... in country, UK, US?



SO MANY QUESTIONS...

We ask questions for many reasons. We ask questions to elicit information, clarify information, and have others explore or express themselves well. We see that Jesus used many different types of questions for different purposes. Knowing the situation, your role, and what you hope to achieve can inform you what questions to use and avoid.

Therapist's type of Questions	Purpose	When to use	Mis-use	Examples of Jesus' Questions	Examples
Open-ended	Creating safety Encourage expression of thoughts and feelings	Exploring Conflict resolution Relationship building Problem-solving	Overuse: One-sided Invasive: Why!? Ineffective: Agenda	What do you want? (Mark 10:51) Why do you call me good? (Mark 10:18)	Why...? "Why did you end your relationship?" How...? "How did you approach completing your homework?"
Closed-ended	Seeking a specific answer or/and trying to move a person to a certain conclusion	Need concise, specific info Assessing safety	Assuming yes/no Leading the person to a desired outcome Limits information Interrogative tone	Who are you looking for? (John 18:7) Do you love me? (John 21:15-17) Can you drink the cup I am going to drink? (Matt 20:22)	Are/can/do you...? "Are you breaking up with him?" "Did you finish your homework?"
Hypothetical	Think about the situation and potential outcomes	Have an existing relationship Open to explore Curious stance	Trying to be cute Experienced as manipulative Ignoring the reality of the situation Too ambiguous	Which of you, when his son asks for a fish, will give him a stone? (Matt 7:9-11) What can a person give in return for their soul? (Mark 8:37)	"Imagine you are in a relationship; how do you want to be treated?" "What would you do if you had twice the amount of work?"
Circular Questions	Assess attunement Uncover implicit beliefs Reconsider perspective or assumptions	Focusing on assumptions in relationship To understand one's own and other's feelings and thoughts	Aggressive, accusing tone Avoiding own participating Stalling	Who do they say the Son of Man is? (Mt 16:13-16) Challenge (Mt 21:23-27)	"What would your best friend say about this relationship?" "What do people say about procrastination and homework?"
Reflective	Seeking insight for the other	Use with empathy, respect, and curiosity	Not interested in others' response Overusing them	Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and not do what I tell you? (Luke 6:46-49)	"Can you think of a time when procrastination affected the quality of your work?"



REFLECTIVE LISTENING: RESPONDING FROM THE HEART

There are many ways to respond when a person shares something with us. Our initial response reveals what we are prepared to offer (i.e., ideas, opinions, distraction, compassion, etc.) and sets the tone for the rest of the conversation. Each of the responses below may be appropriate in some situations and counterproductive in others. A reflective response is highly recommended when someone has shared things from their heart (i.e., hopes, fears, joy, pain, sadness, etc.) because it communicates that these things are seen and valued. It demonstrates a willingness to be present with a person where they are.

A reflective response **communicates safety and invites a person to share more.**

	Interrogative	Evaluative	Non-Responsive	Takeover	Reflective
Structure:	Usually in the form of a question	Usually in the form of a statement	May be silence, humor, or changing the subject	Usually, it moves quickly from your story to my story	Usually in the form of "heart reflections."
Intention:	To "get the facts" and understand what happened	To console, rescue, or motivate the person who shared	To ease discomfort or awkwardness	To demonstrate one's ability to relate to what was shared	To convey warmth, safety, and understanding
Function or common outcome:	To gather enough information to offer advice or a solution	To convey the listener's opinion/values in an effort to alter the speakers' feelings	To move the conversation to a less intense, more comfortable topic	To shift the attention from the person who shared to the one responding	To affirm the value of the person's deeper feelings and presence with them as they are
Person sharing may feel:	Interrogated	Judged	Dismissed/ Shamed	Devalued/ Unimportant	Heard/Validated
Examples:	"What did the person actually say?" "What have you tried in the past when this happened?"	"I don't think you did anything wrong." "Just be thankful that... It could have been a lot worse!"	"...[crickets chirping]..." "Uh...oh. Looks like we're going to need more tissues!"	"I know what you mean. I remember a time when I..." "If it were me, I would have..."	"I heard [emotion] as you spoke about..." "That sounds really difficult."
©2013, 2021 A. Brown, Unpublished work					The best initial response is to facilitate presence, safety, and more sharing.