



BUILDING EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS LEARNING COLLABORATIVE

SEPTEMBER 2023: SEEK TO UNDERSTAND

CPS Professionals are likely to have biases (because we all do) and between interviews, observations, and collateral information, a hypothesis is developed. To test the theory, it's important to truly listen to the other person's story. We must seek to understand the family's story. If a family feels heard and respected, it sets the stage for collaboration in navigating the CPS intervention.

FIVE STEPS TO INCREASE UNDERSTANDING

STEP 1

Pay attention. Focus on active listening. This requires remaining objective and open-minded. Silence your own agenda, even when there's a time crunch, as this decreases the potential for conflict.

STEP 2

Repeat and ask questions. As you listen, repeat your understanding back to the individual to reinforce connection and verify understanding. Use the engaging skill of **Rephrasing** to ensure you are grasping points they are trying to make.

STEP 3

Empathize. Take cues from Step 1 and truly understand the emotions being expressed, both on the surface and underneath.

STEP 4

Rephrase the content and the feeling combined. Putting words together with the emotion strengthens your understanding. By demonstrating this skill, you are letting the person know you are promising to listen, and are, therefore, more likely to be listened to.

STEP 5

Act based on the situation. Develop action steps based on what you have learned from the other person. By following the process and not making offerings of help or support until Step 5, you are less likely to jump to conclusions, which may potentially offend the other person.



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REFLECTION ON CONTENT

Think about some of your recent contacts. How much of the time is spent talking and how much is spent listening? In the beginning of building the partnership, the vast majority of time should be spent seeking to understand the other person's story.

ACTION ITEM

During an interaction, pay particular attention to active listening. If your partnership is strong, try using a Rephrase that puts together both the content and feeling the person is expressing.