



**BCS Volunteer News**  
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## **Techniques for Listening**

As a Client Support Volunteer, you have been trained in completing our forms, how to schedule to meet with clients, and how to examine their needs. But our experiences with clients go deeper than that, and we all need to be able to really listen to our clients.

- How do you begin an interview with a scared or reluctant client?
- How do you get started and build a sense of trust and rapport?

Each of us has different needs and experiences that we bring to our role and that affects how we interact with our clients.

**Techniques for basic listening skills** can assist you to effectively (and efficiently) gather the information you need, while building an environment of trust and rapport. You will find that using these techniques also helps reduce the burden you sometimes feel when a client is needy or demanding and you know you can't "fix" them.

**Here are some listening techniques to assist you:**

**Clarification:** Asking for clear, specific information that elaborates upon a vague, ambiguous, or implied statement made by an individual. Examples:

- "How much is your disability income now?"
- "You say you are Stage III; what is your treatment plan?"

**Reflection:** Repeating an individual's words exactly as he/she says them. Examples:

- "So you have been frustrated by how tired you are feeling."
- "You're saying that you have trouble paying your utility bills."

**Open-ended questions:** Asking a question that does not require a "yes" or "no" response, but requires a response that is several words in length. Examples:

- "What has the doctor told you to expect?"
- **Ask** "What other places have you contacted for help?" **instead of** "Have you contacted other places for help?"
- **Ask** "What questions do you have for me/us?" **instead of** "Do you have any questions for us?"

**Silence:** Saying nothing and listening to what the other person is saying. Not having something to say is ok; maybe just a nod, a touch, or a smile.

**Mirroring of feelings:** Verbalizing the "hidden emotions" implied in an individual's statements. Examples:

- "You're feeling scared about what the treatment will mean for you."
- "It sounds like you might be angry about your situation...."