

Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy Listening to Disarm

As we discussed in the previous session, positive communication is extremely important when dealing with relationships. Particularly when working with a loved one in recovery.



Often in these situations the other party is inflexible on their point of view, and when you disagree with them nothing seems to move.

Disagreeing with an individual in this frame of mind, and attempting to force the other person to accept your point of view, is an unrealistic expectation and only leads to them shutting down.

It is at times like this that it becomes important for us to "listen" in order to defuse the situation.

More often than not we hear the words that our loved one is using, but we aren't really listening to what they are saying. We are far too busy reacting, judging, providing solutions, trying to fix or disagreeing.

Good quality, effective listening requires two things, gaining a clear understanding of our loved one's point of view and relaying that understanding back to them.

Being able to listen with a genuine concern and respect, and practising the use of tools like open-ended questions and reflective listening is paramount to opening the way for your loved one to care about YOUR opinion too!

Empathy is the key, when we use non-judgemental listening, our loved one feels understood, respected and more trusting.

When we can demonstrate that we understand their point of view and how they feel about their situation, there is nothing to argue about.

Typically, when situations are like this, your loved one becomes less defensive and more open to hearing your own perspective.



So, step one is to stop arguing and start listening to your loved one in a way that leaves them feeling that their point of view, including their rationale for any addictive behaviours, is understood.

You don't have to agree with the reality they have created, but it is important that you listen to it, understand it, and even genuinely respect it.

This means you cannot have an agenda in your expectations. We listen with only one goal in mind, to empathise with your loved one's point of view and reflect your understanding back to them.



The best listening skill is to be non-judgemental. When you judge someone when they're talking the other person often shuts down. Non-judgemental listening gives the other person a sense of freedom and acceptance.

This kind of reflective listening can reduce the level of anger in a situation and begin to build trust. Listening with one goal in mind is key, to understand the other person's point of view and reflect your understanding back to them.

This might sound easy but it is a skill that doesn't come naturally to most people and success hinges on your ability to really listen and not react to what your loved one feels, wants, and believes.

Once they have finished and you have a good understanding of what was said, reflect it back to them in your own words. The question is can you do this without commenting, disagreeing, or arguing.

Continuing the effective use of "I Statements" is also important in communicating how you feel to your loved one, and if things go beyond a point with which you are comfortable, setting boundaries becomes a significant step to take. In the next session we will look at setting those healthy boundaries and communicating them to the people in your life.

