

**Shadow Rock Adult Spiritual Formation
Pastoral Care Basics ~ Summer 2020**

Characteristics of Effective Listening

Desire – showing up ready to listen, displaying a willingness to eliminate distractions

Commitment – disciplining ourselves, letting go of our ego-centered responses

Patience – not offering quick fixes, allowing a caring relationship to develop over time

Practical Considerations

- Take care of your needs and prepare emotionally and spiritually. If you are anxious or troubled by your own problems, consider that it's not the best time to be fully present for someone else.
- Plan ahead for listening
 - Consider the noise level and potential distractions and interruptions of the environment.
 - Consider comfort – can you sit easily for an extended conversation? Is the sitting distance appropriate?
 - Consider confidentiality – is there a level of privacy that puts both of you at ease?

Sharpening Your Skills

- Bracketing – putting to the side how you feel about something or your own experiences/values to hear the other person with compassion
- Listening for more than just words – body language, breathing, color, tension, posture.
- Noticing recurring themes (paying attention over a sustained time period during a conversation and among several conversations)
- Listening to what is not said (for example – when a friend has not mentioned their spouse or children when that is a typical topic of conversation)
- Asking open-ended questions – sitting with a question before you ask it (a good rule of thumb = WHAT questions rather than WHY questions)
- Reflecting what the speaker has said
- Clarifying confidentiality and boundaries (such as – is it OK to mention your situation without giving your name? is it OK for me to ask you about this the next time we see one another?)