

Anatomy of a Complex Reflection

What goes into a reflection that adds meaning

Use it for
Building complex reflections

Format
One-page reference

Skill
Reflective listening

Complex reflection: a reflection that adds meaning beyond what the person just said. It is a guess at what they may mean.

Three parts

● Listen

Mindfulness
Acceptance
Positive regard
Non-judgment
Body language
Eye contact
Tone and attunement

● Learn

Curiosity
Wonder
Explore
Interest
Authenticity
Fascination

● Hypothesize

Guess
Values
Meaning
Complete the thought
Take it to the next step
Conclude

Helpful hints

- Reflections are statements, not questions.
- Skip “What I hear you say is...” and other worn phrases.
- When you can, reflect change talk.

Some types of reflections

Simple	Repeats what the person said with little change in content or meaning.
Meaning	States the core meaning of what was said, or a guess at it.
Observation	States back what you notice.
Feeling	States back feelings that were said, implied or observed.
Ambivalence	States back mixed feelings and uncertainty.
Change talk	Selectively states back the person’s change talk.
Double-sided	States the sustain talk, then the change talk, to highlight ambivalence.