

Speakers Notes and Role Play Guidance

The Art of Reflective Conversation

These notes are designed to guide a presentation on engaging in meaningful conversations, particularly focusing on how to communicate with individuals who may be homeless, struggling with addiction, or feeling forgotten.

Section 1- Introduction – The Profound

Purpose

- **Goal-** Our purpose is simple yet profound- To **love and serve our community**. This means meeting people right where they are.
- **Aim-** We strive to show **compassion, respect, and dignity** to every person we meet, regardless of their background, race, or belief.
- **The Problem-** One of the greatest needs of people living in the streets is simply **to be seen** as a person, as they often feel invisible.
- **The Solution-** A simple conversation—a smile, a hello, a few minutes of your time—can be the highlight of their day. This is where dignity is restored and hope begins to grow.

Section 2- Conversation as a Tennis Match (The Analogy)

- **Define Conversation-** Think of conversation as a game of **tennis**. It is a game of back and forth.
- **Avoid Monologue-** If one person is always "serving aces" (dominating), the other person doesn't get a chance to participate or connect. A monologue is not a dialogue.
- **The Goal is the Rally-** The beauty of connection lies in the **rally**. This "serve and return" approach fosters understanding, respect, and mutual participation. Every conversation, like every rally, is unique, but the key is **balance and engagement**.

Section 3- The Most Important Skill – Reflecting Back

- **The Necessity-** Therapists learn these skills early in their training and use them daily. While simple, they often go against our natural urges to interrupt or offer advice.
- **The First Skill-** The most important skill is to **reflect back what they've said to you**.
 - **Action-** Listen without comment.
 - **Action-** Then, reflect it back to them or rephrase it and say it back.
- **Example Script-** "So this happened to you and this as a result and that was the reaction. Does that sound right?"

- **Benefits of Reflection-**

1. It forces you to turn down the part of your brain that wants to interrupt or offer advice.

2. It gives you a chance to **check that you're actually hearing things correctly.**

3. It helps you **clarify** what the other person is saying. (You might realize you missed the most important details or misinterpreted what was important to them).

Section 4- Practical Guidelines and Boundaries

Do	Don't	Role & Safety
Keep it practical and simple.	Don't judge.	You are not a counselor.
Initiate a simple conversation.	Don't try to fix people.	You are one human being speaking with another.
Offer a smile, a handshake, maybe a hot or cold drink.	Don't push your beliefs or give advice.	Your safety comes first ; listen to your gut and respond accordingly.
Ask questions and really listen.	Don't dominate the conversation or serve "unreturnable aces".	Respect confidentiality ("What's shared on the streets stays on the streets").
Let people know they matter.	Don't jump into the conversation or talk about yourself.	Listening can change a life.

Role Play Guidance

The goal of the role play is to practice initiating contact and using the **reflection skill** while maintaining the boundaries of not advising or fixing.

Role Play Focus- Initiating and Practicing Reflection (The Rally)

Setup- Divide into pairs. One person is the **Community Member** (CM), the other is the **Listener/Volunteer** (L/V).

Step 1- Initiation and Active Listening (L/V Focus)

- **CM Role-** Begin by sharing a struggle or a problem (e.g., feeling invisible, losing important documents, struggling to find shelter for the night).
- **L/V Action-** Initiate conversation simply (e.g., offer a smile/handshake/drink). Ask an open-ended question about their day or situation. **Listen without comment.**

Step 2- The Serve and Return (L/V Focus)

- **L/V Action-** When the CM pauses, the L/V must **reflect back** what they just heard. Use a reflection phrase to check accuracy and clarify the feeling or situation described.

◦ **Example Reflection Phrases-**

▪ "So, if I heard you right, you're saying X happened, and that leaves you feeling Y. Is that correct?"

▪ "It sounds like the biggest struggle right now is Z, and you're worried about [detail]. Did I understand that properly?"

• **CM Role-** The CM confirms, denies, or clarifies the reflection. If the L/V missed key details, the CM should point them out ("No, the important bit was actually the fear of being unseen, not the physical cold").

Step 3- Avoiding the Ace (L/V Focus)

• **L/V Challenge-** The L/V must resist the "natural urge" to give advice or try to fix the CM's problem. They must remain in the role of **one human being speaking with another**.

• **L/V Action-** If the CM asks for advice, the L/V should redirect the conversation back to the CM's feelings or statement, perhaps with another reflective question, but **must not offer advice** or push beliefs.

Debrief- After three minutes, switch roles. Discuss how difficult it was to avoid giving advice and how helpful it felt to have their words reflected back.