

Barriers to Communication

Your Goal

To see examples of common, nonlistening responses.

Directions

Read the situation and examples below.

Imagine that a coworker comes to you and says, in an exasperated tone, "I just don't think I'm cut out for this new job." Your best response at that moment would be a Reflection. Any other response might serve as a barrier, eroding rapport and shutting down the other person's willingness to be candid. The following reactions would be more likely to shut down candor if said immediately in response to such a statement. Of course, once you've listened and reflected to "yes," some of these responses could be helpful.

Agreeing

"You're right. It may not be the greatest fit for you."

Disagreeing

"No, I think you're a great fit for the job."

Advising

"Don't make up your mind about it yet. You're not even fully trained yet. You really need to stick with it through the training, and then reassess."

Questioning

"How much did you know about the job when you accepted it?"

Reassuring

"Even though it seems hard now, it'll get easier. Before you know it, you'll be doing a bang-up job."

Explaining

"Everybody has this feeling at the beginning of a new job. But once they get their rhythm, they tend to get over it."

Sharing a Similar Experience

"That's the way I felt when I first started. But after a few weeks everything started making more sense and I really started to enjoy it."