

Reaching Into Silences

Being able to explore the meaning of a client's silence by putting possible feelings into words

Skill Steps:

1. Being comfortable with silence;
2. Offering non-verbal support in posture and facial expression to indicate that you are listening and want the client to continue talking; and
3. Encouraging the client to share their thoughts and articulating what the silence may mean.

Examples:

Case worker is sitting without talking or fidgeting, and maintaining visual contact with the client.

Leaning in slightly toward the client without violating personal space needs.

Caseworker statements:

"You are very quiet. Could you tell me what you are thinking?"

"I'm not sure what you're thinking about right now... could you share your thoughts with me in words?"

"I can see that this is hard for you to talk about; Many mothers in this situation have felt angry, frightened, sad, etc."

"Does your silence mean that you're having a hard time finding the right words to tell me what you are thinking?"