



Expressing Empathy

The primary way we express empathy is by responding with complex reflections. As a reminder, a complex reflection is a statement, a guess, a hypothesis. It is not a question. A complex reflection makes a guess by what the served person means by their words. It is not about repeating back the person’s words. It is about the meaning of their words.

Responding with complex reflections is very likely something you already do but may not be aware of. The purpose of this exercise is to further develop your skill and intentionality in expressing empathy by responding with complex reflections. It will also support you to contextualize this concept to your role and those you serve.

Step #1: Served Person Statement: Write down a 2 – 3 sentence served person statement you’ve heard recently. It is best if it is NOT a series of questions they asked you or an affirmation they gave you.	Examples
	Step #1: “They just kept giving me different kinds of medications and I like was taking it, so I stopped taking it, and so I stopped taking it and then I realized I needed it. So, I wait two months and go back and say, “Give me the medication back.”
Step #2: Now, write down your guess what the person meant by their words. This could be an unstated feeling or an adjective that describes their experience or perspective.	
	Step #2: My guess: They recognized that not taking the meds was unhealthy for them. A feeling might be regret .
Step #3: Now, take your response to step #2 and put it in the form of a reflection.	
A complex Reflection might be:	A complex Reflection might be: You feel a little regret about not taking your meds because you noticed that not taking them was unhealthy for you.