

# TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE LISTENING

## *HOW AND WHEN TO APPROACH YOUTH*

- If youth are upset, **give them time to cool down** before you approach
- If you do not think a youth is in immediate danger of harming themselves or others, it is okay to give them space if they are not ready to talk. Let them know that they can speak to you when they're ready

## *LISTENING TIPS FOR WHEN YOUTH ARE TALKING*

- You do not have to maintain eye contact throughout the entire conversation if it isn't comfortable but try not to multitask in that moment. It's important for youth to know that they have your attention during sensitive conversations
- **Try not to interrupt** with stories of your own. Stories may help you empathize and may hold valuable lessons, but it's important in the moment for youth to feel heard. Stories can come after they've finished talking and are ideally brief

## *TIPS FOR RESPONDING TO YOUTH*

- Ask open-ended questions (i.e., cannot be answered with a "yes" or "no")
- **Validate and accept their feelings in the moment, even if you do not agree with their behaviors**
- Summarize what they are saying and clarify important points (e.g., check for safety)
- Help youth make connections with important life skills (e.g., communication, emotion regulation, problem solving). They may need help problem solving by evaluating potential risks / pros and cons to different responses to their identified problem
- It's important that youth not feel judged, otherwise they might shut down

## *THINGS TO AVOID*

- **Try not to minimize or dismiss what they are telling you** (e.g., "that's nothing to be afraid of," "it doesn't seem that bad," "cheer up")
- Don't argue or debate with them about their feelings (e.g., it might be appropriate for them to feel angry about something, but not appropriate to take it out on others)
- You are not responsible for solving problems, or providing treatment or counseling

***Don't underestimate the power of listening – including to each other. It can be helpful to find someone to talk to after tough conversations***