# The Three Stances of Deep Listening

**Purpose:** To support healing and build relational capital.

## Stance

### Attention to Nonverbal Cues

**How to Use This Stance:**
- Question your interpretation of nonverbal cues through the lenses of culture, gender, and power. Don’t make snap judgments.
- Select nonverbal cues that mirror the speaker’s emotional state.
- Pay attention to your own nonverbal cues.

**What It Looks or Sounds Like:**
- Pay close attention to:
  - Facial expressions
  - Body language
  - Eye contact (frequency of glances, patterns of gaze, pupil dilation, and blink rate)
  - Breathing patterns
  - Mediation of personal space (distance vs. proximity)
  - Voice and tone
  - Use of safe, appropriate touch
  - Perception of time
  - Vocalizations like “uh-huh,” “ohhh,” or “hmmm”

### Mature Empathy

**How to Use This Stance:**
- Form a mental picture of the other person’s experience.
- Demonstrate compassion through mirroring cues.
- Notice and manage your own anxiety. If you feel triggered, take a deep breath and refocus on listening.
- Use active listening stems.

**What It Looks or Sounds Like:**
- How are you doing, really?
- What’s coming up for you right now?
- Tell me a little bit about why this is challenging for you.
- It seems like this is bringing up a lot of emotion for you...
- Is there anything else you feel I should know?
- What I hear you saying is...

### Affirmation

**How to Use This Stance:**
- Set your brain to notice the positive—from the small to the significant.
- Pick out specific behaviors and actions to reinforce with verbal affirmation.
- Use nonverbal affirmations like a smile, a nod, a warm handshake, or a gentle pat on the back.

**Model affirmation consistently over time with a 5 to 1 ratio of positive to critical feedback; this will build trust and flood the brain with positive neurochemicals.**

**What It Looks or Sounds Like:**
- I really appreciate how you...
- I’m impressed by how you...
- Here is the direct impact that I witnessed...
- I want to share a strength I’ve noticed in your (teaching, leadership, etc.)...
- It sounds like you... handled that well (with confidence, grace, etc.) in a way that got the result you wanted.
THE THREE STANCES OF STRATEGIC LISTENING

PURPOSE: To invoke new insight or action.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STANCE</th>
<th>HOW TO USE THIS STANCE</th>
<th>WHAT IT LOOKS OR SOUNDS LIKE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orientation to Vision</td>
<td>Listen for opportunities to incorporate what people care about into a vision of equity and transformation.</td>
<td>• What would success look like at the end of this year?</td>
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<td>Reference vision in your messages and questions—from district and school-wide visions to the teacher’s own goals and values.</td>
<td>• What most excites you about where we’re headed as a school, and what concerns you?</td>
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<td>Embrace story orientation to build a cohesive narrative of where your school or team is headed and why it matters.</td>
<td>• What do you want to be a part of creating for our (team, school, community)?</td>
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<td>Reflective Inquiry</td>
<td>Engage the speaker with questions that provoke new ways of thinking or viewing a situation.</td>
<td>• What are your hopes and fear about…?</td>
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<td>Use street-level data to challenge implicit biases, single stories, and problematic beliefs.</td>
<td>• What might be getting in the way of…?</td>
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<td>Ask probing questions to get to the root of people’s challenges and concerns.</td>
<td>• What evidence supports that interpretation?</td>
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<td>• If you step back for a moment, what’s a different way of seeing this challenge?</td>
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<td>Bias Toward Action</td>
<td>Tap into the adult learner’s need for autonomy and agency with questions that prompt thoughtful action.</td>
<td>• What does this data (e.g. student interview transcript, piece of student work, video clip of students interacting with a task, etc.) reveal?</td>
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<td>Invite your colleagues to experiment with new ideas and reflect on what they learn in the process.</td>
<td>• As a result of this conversation, what specific action steps will you take and when can we debrief?</td>
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<td>Every chance you get, ask people, “What did you notice?” and “What did you learn?”</td>
<td>• I want to encourage you to try out this practice, even if it doesn’t go perfectly at first.</td>
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<td>• Let’s take a few minutes for you to practice the instructional move you’ve identified. How did that feel?</td>
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<td>• Now that we’ve debriefed the lesson, let’s take a few minutes to improve it together. What are one or two concrete changes you could make?</td>
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