Reflective Listening
A Specialized Listening Skill

What reflections are and do:

- A reflection seeks to summarize what the person means; it makes a guess.
- Reflections are the type of responses made most often by experts at Motivational Interviewing (MI).
- A good reflection is spoken as a statement, not a question. Counselors should craft their words wisely when composing reflection.

Simple Reflection:

- Makes a direct restatement of what the client said. Example:

  Client: “I’m not sure I need to quit drinking.”
  Counselor: “You are not certain that you need to stop altogether.”

Complex Reflection:

- Makes a guess about the client’s meaning; continues paragraph; guesses about what was not said, goes beyond what the client says. Example:

  Client: “I’m not sure I need to quit drinking.”
  Counselor: “Sounds like things don’t seem bad enough for you to quit.”
  Counselor: “Seems to you that abstinence would be taking things too far.”

Structure of a Reflection: Stem + Flower

- Stem:
  - It sounds as if...
  - I’m hearing you say that...
  - You must be feeling...

- Flowers:
  - You’re not ready to quit yet...
  - You think quitting is too extreme...