youth law center

ACTIVE LISTENING & BUILDING CONNECTION WITH CLIENTS

Try using the questions and phrases below to build rapport with clients. Making these slight changes to your current interview practices can assist with expectation setting as well as relationship building.

01 "What I heard you say was... Is that right?"

Using your own words, tell your client what you understood them to say. This provides an opportunity for you to synthesize what you heard, and it slows the conversation down, allowing you to focus on what your client has said rather than focusing on what you'll say next. It also allows them to correct you if your takeaways were different from what they thought they had expressed.

02 "Can you tell me more about...?"

Phrasing this as a question rather than a statement (i.e. "Tell me more about...") is a more trauma-informed way to ask the client for more information. Whenever possible, allow clients to make decisions around how and when they respond or answer things. If you need to discuss more than one thing, you can also tell your client that and allow them to choose the order, giving them more autonomy over their story.

03 "I'm going to be taking notes so that X. Is that okay with you?"

Many attorneys need to take notes when speaking to clients. Tell clients ahead of time that you'll be taking notes, get their permission to do so, and explain why you'll be taking these notes. Also be sure to tell them who else has access to the notes and how the notes will be stored.

04 "What do you need from me?"

Allowing clients to tell you what their needs and expectations are opens the door to a conversation about what your role is as well as what you can expect from one another. Having this conversation early on will help build a better foundation for your relationship.

Questions? | Contact us at info@ylc.org