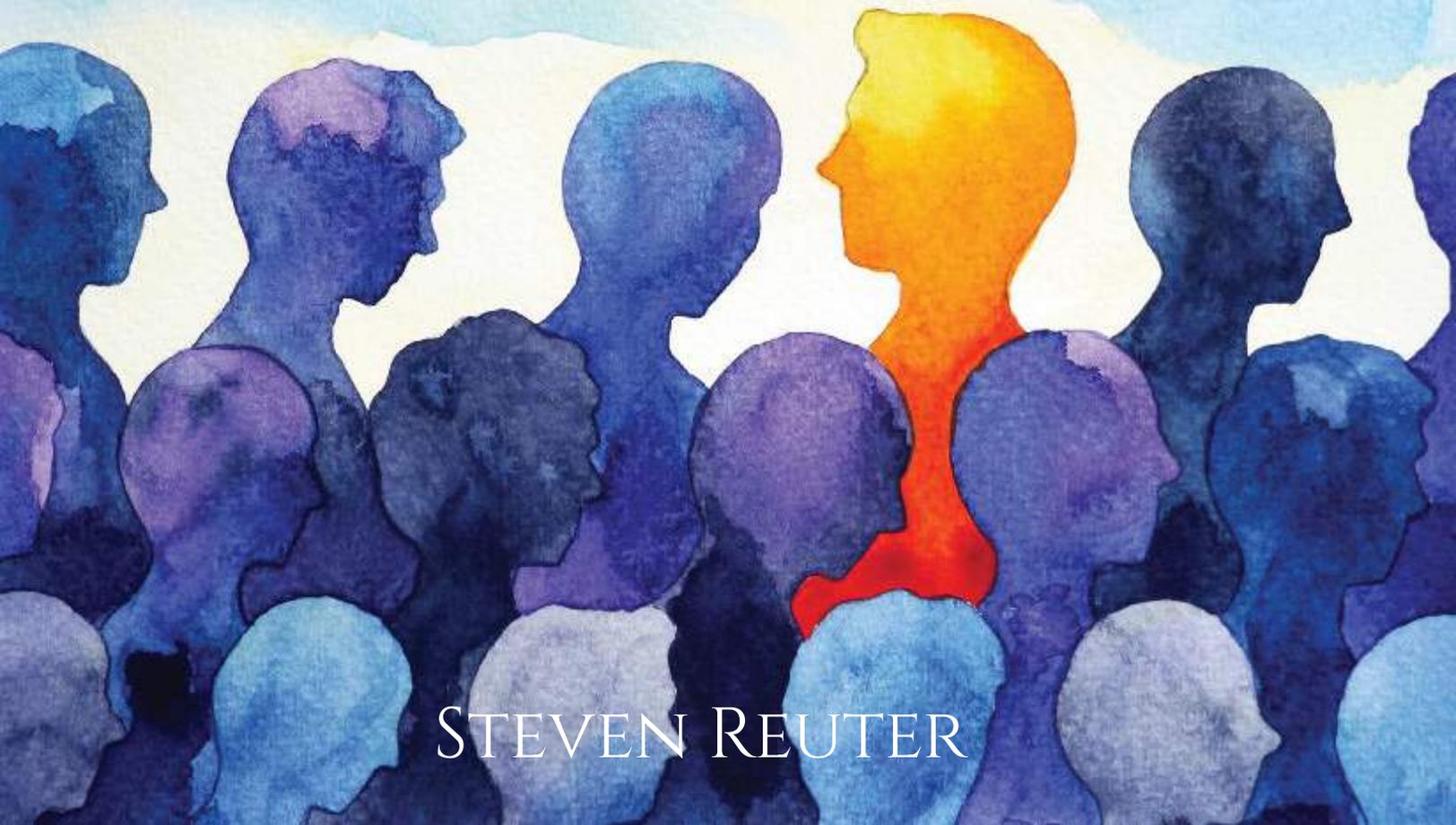


# HUMAN- CENTERED LEADERSHIP EXERCISES



STEVEN REUTER

## MIRRORING

Mirroring is an Active Listening skill where the listener, using a tone of curiosity, repeats back to the speaker either the last 1-3 words or 1-2 critical words within the sentence the speaker just said. For example, if the speaker said, "I'm excited to start working on this new project." The listener would repeat back, "New project?"

## MIRRORING PRACTICE - SIMPLE

Let's try it out. Read the following sentence and write down the 1-3 words you would mirror back to the speaker

**"I'm feeling overwhelmed with all the tasks I have to complete."**

Mirror:

**"This project is really stressing me out."**

Mirror:

**"I'm excited about the new opportunity."**

Mirror:

**"I had a frustrating day at work."**

Mirror:

**"The traffic this morning was unbearable."**

Mirror:

**"I'm worried about my performance in the upcoming presentation."**

Mirror:

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"I'm feeling proud of my accomplishments."

Mirror:

"I'm really looking forward to this weekend."

Mirror:

"I'm so exhausted after this long day."

Mirror:

"I'm anxious about the uncertainty of the future."

Mirror:

"The situation seems out of my control."

Mirror:

"I'm struggling to find a balance between work and personal life."

Mirror:

"The feedback I received was unexpected."

Mirror:

"I feel misunderstood by my colleagues."

Mirror:

"I'm happy with the progress we've made so far."

Mirror:

"I'm annoyed by the constant interruptions."

Mirror:

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"I'm feeling lonely without my friends around."

Mirror:

"I'm frustrated by the lack of communication."

Mirror:

"I'm relieved that the deadline was extended."

Mirror:

"I'm disappointed by the lack of support."

Mirror:

## MIRRORING PRACTICE - COMPLEX

These examples are more complex, nuanced, and conversational. Meaning, there may be several opportunities to mirror. What you mirror with impact the course of the conversation, so choose wisely!

Directions: Underline or list the possible mirrors in each quote

"I'm tired of feeling like I'm the only one putting in effort to make this work, while you seem content to just let things fall apart."

Mirror:

"It's infuriating how you always manage to twist my words and turn everything into an attack on me, instead of taking responsibility for your own actions."

Mirror:

"I'm fed up with your constant need to control every aspect of our relationship, as if I'm not capable of making decisions on my own."

Mirror:

"You never seem to acknowledge how your behavior affects me, and it's maddening to feel like I'm constantly being overlooked and disregarded."

Mirror:

"I can't believe you're resorting to gaslighting tactics again, trying to make me doubt my own reality just to avoid taking accountability for your actions."

Mirror:

"I'm sick and tired of having the same arguments over and over again, with no resolution in sight. It's like we're trapped in this endless cycle of dysfunction, and I don't know how to break free from it."

Mirror:

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"You always find a way to play the victim card whenever I try to address your behavior, deflecting blame onto me instead of owning up to your mistakes like an adult."

Mirror:

"I've had enough of your passive-aggressive comments and manipulative behavior. It's like you enjoy pushing my buttons and seeing how far you can push me before I snap."

Mirror:

## LABELING

Labeling is an Active Listening skill that involves identifying and verbalizing the emotions and values that the other person is experiencing. It helps the other person feel understood and validated while you gain valuable information from them.

In the following exercise, read the quote and create a label starting with the given prompt, "it sounds/seems like..."

As you read the quote, think about what emotions the person might be feeling and what is important to them. This information then becomes the label you would share with them.

## LABELING PRACTICE

Let's try it out. Read the following statements and write down the label would say to the speaker

**"I've been feeling a bit overwhelmed lately with everything on my plate, you know? Between work deadlines, family commitments, and trying to maintain some semblance of a social life, it feels like there just aren't enough hours in the day."**

It sounds/seems like...

**"I'm finding it difficult to express my true feelings in certain situations, especially when I'm worried about how others might react. It's like there's this internal conflict between being authentic and avoiding potential conflict or judgment."**

It sounds/seems like...

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"Lately, I've been grappling with this sense of uncertainty about the future. I mean, I know change is inevitable, but sometimes it feels like I'm standing on shaky ground, not knowing which direction to go or what lies ahead."

It sounds/seems like...

"I'm struggling to find the balance between taking care of my own needs and being there for others, especially when it feels like everyone is relying on me for support and guidance. It's like there's this constant tug-of-war between self-care and selflessness."

It sounds/seems like...

"I've been experiencing bouts of anxiety and panic attacks lately, and it's been really challenging to manage my emotions and stay grounded. It's like there's this constant fear of the unknown lurking in the back of my mind, ready to pounce at any moment."

It sounds/seems like...

"I'm feeling a sense of inadequacy and self-doubt creeping in, especially when comparing myself to others who seem to have it all figured out. It's like there's this constant pressure to measure up to unrealistic standards of success and happiness, and it's hard not to feel like I'm falling short."

It sounds/seems like...

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"I'm feeling a mix of emotions right now—gratitude for all the blessings in my life, but also a sense of longing for something more. It's like I'm torn between appreciating what I have and striving for greater fulfillment and purpose, and it's a delicate balance to maintain."

It sounds/seems like...

"It seems like we're stuck in this cycle of arguing about the same issues over and over again, and I'm starting to feel frustrated because it feels like we're not making any progress towards finding a resolution."

It sounds/seems like...

"I understand that you have your perspective on this matter, but it's challenging for me to see things from your point of view when I feel like my opinions and feelings are being dismissed or invalidated."

It sounds/seems like...

"I'm feeling really hurt by some of the things you said during our argument, and it's hard for me to move past it when I feel like my emotions are being disregarded or minimized."

It sounds/seems like...

"I appreciate that you're trying to explain your side of the story, but it's difficult for me to fully understand where you're coming from when I feel like my own experiences and feelings are being overlooked or ignored."

It sounds/seems like...

"It feels like every time we try to have a conversation about our relationship, it turns into a blame game, and I'm left feeling even more disconnected and misunderstood than before."

It sounds/seems like...

"I know that we both have strong opinions about this issue, but I wish we could find a way to have a constructive dialogue without resorting to personal attacks or hurtful language."

It sounds/seems like...

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"I'm feeling really overwhelmed by the intensity of our arguments lately, and it's starting to take a toll on my mental and emotional well-being. I want us to find a way to communicate more effectively and respectfully with each other."

It sounds/seems like...

"I'm struggling to find a middle ground between standing up for myself and being empathetic towards your perspective. It's like there's this constant tug-of-war between asserting my boundaries and maintaining harmony in our relationship."

It sounds/seems like...

# IDENTIFYING VAGUE LANGUAGE & CLARIFYING QUESTIONS

These exercises will help you develop critical listening and questioning skills. For each statement, you'll practice:

1. Identifying vague, assumption-based, or unclear language.
2. Noting unfamiliar terms that need definition
3. Crafting open-ended questions to gather specific, actionable information

## WORKPLACE STATEMENTS

1.1. The project is moving along nicely, but we might need more resources at some point.

Vague/unclear words, terms, or phrases that need clarification :


Open-ended follow-up questions:


# Human-Centered Leadership Exercises

1.2. We need to improve our customer service because feedback has been somewhat negative lately.

Vague/unclear words, terms, or phrases that need clarification :


Open-ended follow-up questions:


1.3. Our sales numbers are down significantly compared to where they should be.

Vague/unclear words, terms, or phrases that need clarification :


Open-ended follow-up questions:


## MANAGEMENT STATEMENTS

2.1. Your performance has been inconsistent lately and we need to see improvement.

Vague/unclear words, terms, or phrases that need clarification :


Open-ended follow-up questions:


2.2. You need to be more proactive and take more initiative going forward.

Vague/unclear words, terms, or phrases that need clarification :


Open-ended follow-up questions:


2.3. The team isn't meeting expectations, so we need everyone to step up.

Vague/unclear words, terms, or phrases that need clarification :


Open-ended follow-up questions:


## CONFLICT STATEMENTS

3.1 You always do this and you never consider how it affects me.

Vague/unclear words, terms, or phrases that need clarification :


Open-ended follow-up questions:


3.2 You're being defensive and difficult right now.

Vague/unclear words, terms, or phrases that need clarification :


Open-ended follow-up questions:


3.3 I've tried everything to fix this, but nothing works with you.

Vague/unclear words, terms, or phrases that need clarification :


Open-ended follow-up questions:


## EXTENDED CONFLICT STATEMENTS

4.1 I've been thinking about this for a while now, and honestly, it feels like you don't really value what I bring to this relationship anymore. You used to be more supportive and understanding, but lately it seems like whenever I try to talk to you about important things, you just shut down or change the subject. I don't know what happened, but something has definitely shifted between us and it's making me question whether we're on the same page about where this is going.

Vague/unclear words, terms, or phrases that need clarification:


Open-ended follow-up questions:


# Human-Centered Leadership Exercises

4.2 Look, I understand that you're stressed and dealing with a lot right now, but the way you've been handling things lately is affecting everyone around you. Your mood swings are unpredictable, and people are starting to walk on eggshells because nobody knows what version of you they're going to get on any given day. Several people have mentioned it to me privately, and while I know you're going through a rough patch, we need to find a better way forward because this current situation isn't sustainable for the team.

**Vague/unclear words, terms, or phrases that need clarification :**


**Open-ended follow-up questions:**


## PRACTICE & APPLICATION

### YOUR TURN

Think of a recent conversation where you felt confused or uncertain about what someone meant. Write down what they said:


### NOW, ANALYZE IT.

Vague/unclear words, terms, or phrases that need clarification:


What questions could you have asked?


## REWRITING FOR CLARITY

Choose ONE statement from any previous exercise. Rewrite it to be specific, clear, and evidence-based while maintaining the core message:

**Original statement:**


**Rewritten statement:**


## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Which types of vague language did you find most common across these statements?


What patterns did you notice in effective clarifying questions?


How might practicing this skill change your professional conversations?


What will you do differently in your next client meeting or difficult conversation?


# FOR ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

In addition to developing tools like this exercise handbook, Steve is available for consultation, executive coaching, and speaking engagements. Learn more at [www.stevenreuter.com](http://www.stevenreuter.com) or reach out directly by email or phone.

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