

# Paraphrasing

Among the most used techniques or tools in communication is paraphrasing, which consists of a summary or synthesis of what has been exposed by one of the parties, to show that their message has been heard and understood correctly, reducing negative emotions.



Participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement



YOU.TH. Manual for youth workers - 3.3 Theatre Methodologies  
<https://youth-theatre.eu/>



Paraphrasing and emotional expression



A room with mobile chairs



15-30



80 minutes:



20 participants

10 minutes presentation of the exercise and explanation of the technique.



Paper and pencil

40 minutes to perform the exercise



If run online Google Meet or Zoom can be used

30 minutes of reflection

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## Implementation:

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After collecting the information expressed in the speech, both the important facts and the feelings, the interlocutor reproduces what the sender has said in other words, with neutral language, in an empathetic way and without negative emotional charge.

Paraphrasing makes it possible to reduce negative emotions in the speech by controlling its dynamics and the comments of the parties, avoiding the rise of tension between them. In addition, it also helps the speaker to clarify his or her own interests.

An example might be:

Paula to Martina. "You are always criticizing me for all the things I do - I'm fed up!"

Interlocutor: "I understand that you feel annoyed because your partner questions you about things you do on an ongoing basis and this situation makes you angry. Is this correct?"

Some inputs that can be used to ask the parties to confirm the interlocutor's remarks are:

"You tell me that..."

"If I understood correctly, what you just told me is that..."

"Correct me if I am wrong, or what you are telling me is..."

"I want to be sure that I have understood you, you state..."

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## Implementation:

### Example 1.

(Lucia). "I'm fed up with Antonio being late for all our appointments. The last meeting at my mother's house was the last straw: he was more than forty minutes late, knowing how important it was for me to look good in front of my parents. I'll never make it if my husband doesn't contribute."

A paraphrase of this intervention would be:

- "Let me see if I am understanding you correctly: what you are trying to tell me is that you feel very angry because punctuality is necessary for you in Antonio and that his lateness has caused you discomfort because it did not allow you to look good in front of them; which is very important to you. And furthermore, you would like to have Antonio's support in that regard. Is what I am understanding correct?"

Other example sentences could be:

1. Juan is always screwing up with customers because he is disrespectful and treats them badly, he is a complete disaster.
  2. Let's see if Carmen will finally let me speak, I've been listening to her for half an hour without being able to intervene.
  3. Paul thinks that no matter how many studies he has, he knows this company well, he is a bit cocky and arrogant. I dislike such smart people.
  4. I am completely disgusted with Martin because he doesn't want to meet with me and doesn't speak to me, he doesn't even say good morning as a courtesy. I am trying to get together to move forward in the project we have together and there is no way.
  5. Ana's way of working is incompatible with mine, she is very disorganized and messy, she doesn't prepare the meetings and she is complicating me so much that my own work is being affected for the worse. I hate working with her.
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## **Implementation:**

The first step is to explain the technique using the examples given in the document.

The second step is to divide the participants into pairs. Each member must write a criticism to the other, who must respond assertively to it, using the steps mentioned above. The exercise is repeated in each pair, ending with information on how they have felt when they have received the criticism in an assertive way, using paraphrasing, and in a non-assertive way.

The pairs are changed and the exercise is repeated several times.

It ends with a period of reflection.

## **Instructions for debriefing:**

Begin by asking participants how the activity made them feel and what thoughts or emotions it brought up. Encourage them to share their initial reactions.

### **Sharing Feelings:**

Invite participants to share any additional thoughts or feelings that emerged during the activity.

### **Closing Thoughts:**

End the debriefing session by summarizing the key points discussed and thanking participants for their contributions. Reiterate the importance of recognizing and utilizing their strengths to achieve their dreams.

Remember to foster a supportive and non-judgmental atmosphere during the debriefing, allowing participants to share their thoughts and feelings openly. The goal is to help participants gain deeper self-awareness and insights that they can carry forward in their personal and professional journeys.

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## **Tips and notes to the facilitator:**

**Adapt to Participants' Needs:** Be flexible and ready to adapt the activity based on the needs and dynamics of the group. Some participants may require more support or time for certain parts of the activity.

**Create a Safe and Inclusive Environment:** Establish ground rules for the session that emphasize respect, active listening, and a non-judgmental atmosphere. Encourage participants to be open and supportive of each other.