One way in which Learning Fellows can help students is by allowing space for students to reflect upon their own learning. Students may feel rushed in class, trying to retain as much information from the instructor as possible. When they are working in small groups and interacting with a Learning Fellow, students have chances to pause and reflect on what they are learning, and how they are learning it. Learning Fellows can aid in this metacognitive process by providing reflective listening to students while they speak about their own learning. Reflective listening provides a “mirror” for students to clarify their ideas, consider inconsistencies in their logic, or provoke further thought on a topic.

Learning Objectives:

- Learn how to construct and share reflective listening statements.
- Practice reflective listening through role-playing or real-playing in partners.

Activity:

- Introduce the activity to the Learning Fellows using the brief description above.

- Ask the Learning Fellows to look at the examples of reflective listening statements, provided in the handout. (An instructor’s copy of the handout is on page 3.)

- Ask the Learning Fellows to identify commonalities between these statements. What does a good reflective listening statement entail? (Some answers: The Learning Fellow paraphrases or rephrase the student’s feelings. The Fellow makes statements instead of asking questions. The Fellow makes some assumptions, sometimes adding unspoken feelings.)

continued on the next page
Activity inspired by:

This activity is borrowed from motivational interviewing (MI), a technique for leading individuals to make positive changes in their lives. Reflecting on feelings, rather than rushing through them, is an important part of the MI technique.

Activity, continued:

● After the Learning Fellows have a chance to share their thoughts, review some of the guidelines for making good reflective statements. Guidelines include:
  ○ Give your full attention to the student who is speaking, and do not interrupt them.
  ○ Rephrase, but don’t repeat, what the student says. Try to add something new to the student’s statements or their feelings.
  ○ Be open to the student changing, clarifying, or refuting the reflective listening statement; the goal of such statements is for students to respond with more information about their own learning.
  ○ Let go of goal-oriented listening. You are not trying to change a student’s mind, fix their problem, or compare their situation to yours. At this stage in conversation, you are simply providing space for students to think about their own learning.

● If there is time, ask the Learning Fellows to break into pairs. One Fellow should think of a common situation in the classroom and pretend to be a student experiencing this situation. The other Fellow practices listening to the “student,” and giving reflective listening statements to help the “student” clarify their thinking. After a few minutes, ask the Fellows to switch roles.

● If there is time, ask the Fellows to reflect on this experience. What did they notice as the student, and what did they notice as the listener?
Examples of reflective listening statements:

|   | Student: “I’m really having difficulty focusing in class. The lectures are interesting, but I find myself daydreaming and then I miss something important.”
|   | Fellow: “You want to find a strategy for performing better in class.”

|   | Student: “I know I should start my weekly assignments earlier, but I’m always busy with other things. Then I wait until the last minute, and the product isn’t very good.”
|   | Fellow: “You have a busy schedule, and you’re having trouble making this class a priority.”

|   | Student: “I don’t know why I got a bad grade on this exam. I understand all the concepts, and I do all the work in class. Then the professor asked really hard questions on stuff that wasn’t covered in class, and I didn’t know how to answer the questions. It was unfair.”
|   | Fellow: “You feel that what you learned in class didn’t reflect what was on the exam.”

|   | Student: “I’m really struggling with small groups. I don’t get the point of them, and I don’t like having to hear from other people. I just want to hear from the professor.”
|   | Fellow: “The small groups aren’t your favorite part of class, and you’re not sure how to work them into your understanding of the material.”

|   | Student: “What Tammy said in class really offended me. She didn’t even try to see it from my perspective, or anybody else’s. This whole class is about evaluating different perspectives, and she failed.”
|   | Fellow: “What Tammy said has hit a nerve with you. It doesn’t speak to your personal experience, or to what you’re trying to get out of the class. You’re not sure what to do next.”

|   | Student: “This class really changed me. I’ve learned so much. I see this issue in a new way, and I don’t know what to do with this information. I feel like more people need to know this and talk about it.”
|   | Fellow: “You have grown as a result of this class, and you’re looking for a way to keep growing in this topic.”
Student: “I like the discussions, but I don’t know how to participate more. I like hearing from my classmates, and they have really good ideas.”

Fellow: “Right now, you feel like you get more out of listening than participating, and you’re wondering if that’s okay.”