On Listening

When I ask you to listen to me and you start
Giving me advice, you have not done what I asked.

When I ask you to listen to me and you begin to tell me
Why I shouldn’t feel that way, you are trampling on my feelings.

When I ask you to listen to me and you feel you have
To do something to solve my problems
You have failed me, strange as that may seem.

Listen! All I ask is that you listen.
Not talk or do – just hear me.

When you do something for me that
I can and need to do for myself, you contribute
To my fear and inadequacy.

And I can do by myself. I’m not helpless;
Maybe discouraged and faltering, but not helpless

So please, listen and just hear me.

And, if you want to talk, wait a minute
For your turn; I’ll listen to you.

Listening example:

Consider the outcome of an interchange between a mentor and a mentee prior to an eligibility meeting – the first one the mentee will attend. The mentee may have a few questions about process that are easily answered by the mentor. The mentor, on the other hand, carefully listens to see whether the mentee is focused only on her role or whether the mentee is looking outward to see how the whole meeting will be run. If the mentee is inwardly focused, the mentor can ask probing questions to refocus the mentee perception. (How will you draw out the parent in the meeting? What should the general education teachers bring with them? etc.). If the mentee is already asking questions to indicate that he or she is thinking about the overall meeting, the mentor can reinforce this perception and support the mentee’s plans for the meeting.
From *Mentoring New Special Education Teachers* by Mary Lou Duffy and James Forgan, 2005, Corwin Press.