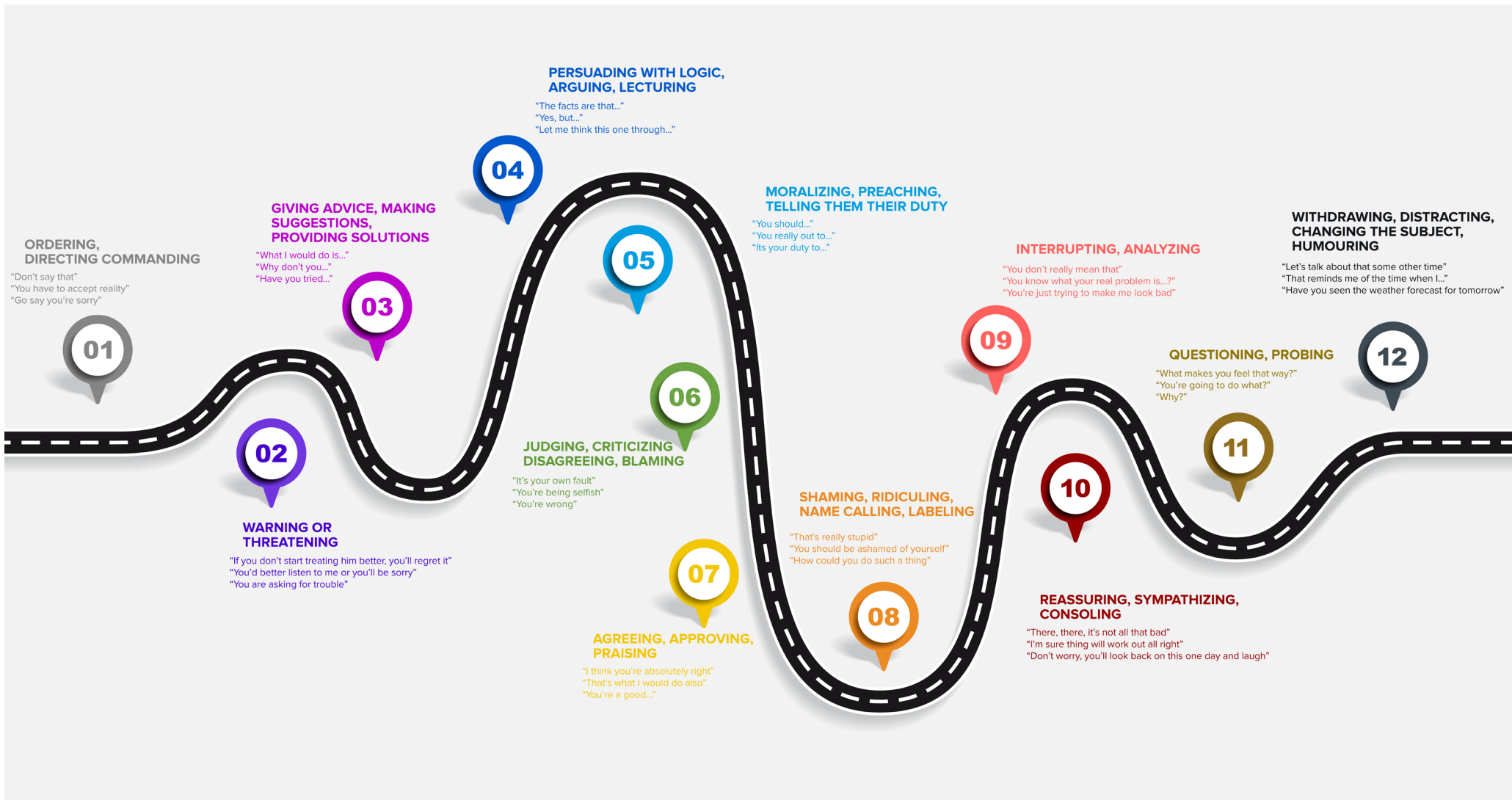


Listening is a gift to both the speaker and the listener. Listening deeply is essential for children who have experienced, or are experiencing, sexual abuse. Children who feel that they are being listened to, and who feel safe sharing their thoughts, are more likely to disclose experiences of abuse. When disclosure occurs, we have an opportunity to intervene and protect a child from ongoing abuse AND we have an opportunity to help that child receive appropriate support in a timely manner. Children who tell and are believed really can heal from sexual abuse.

This Listening Cheat Sheet is based on **Dr. Thomas Gordon's 12 Roadblocks**. These are responses that block a speaker from sharing their perspective and their truth. A person who has something to tell will have a more difficult time fully sharing when they encounter these responses:



Most of us will find that these responses are incredibly familiar. Even habitual. It takes a conscious and intentional effort to avoid using these roadblock responses. To be a good listener, try some of the conversation OPENERS on page 2 that invite the speaker to share more, and encourage deeper thinking and reflection.

Good listening is about hearing what the speaker MEANS. We all use words differently, and we can't be certain about what a person means until we've taken the time to listen beyond the words. The important part of listening is understanding what the speaker means... what are the feelings they are sharing and what do they believe is the cause of the feelings? We can listen to understand by responding with some of these non-judgmental phrases:



Sometimes the best help we may be able to offer is a chance for the speaker to better understand themselves. A check-in question such as, "do I understand that correctly?" may result in the speaker answering with a 'No. Now that you say it like that, I don't think that is what is bothering me". This gives people the freedom to change their words and deepen their understanding.

These non-judgmental responses show children that they are safe to share their thoughts without criticism. Most kids who have experienced harm want to tell; it's up to adults to create a space that is welcoming and safe. Listening deeply shows children that they will be heard and believed, and that is a gift that lasts a lifetime.