

Empathy – Not Empathy

EMPATHY

Empathy is giving your attention to another by either silently or verbally guessing their feelings and needs. For example, “Are you feeling disappointed because you want to be included?”

Empathy requires a willingness to enter the other’s world with acceptance and respect while maintaining your mindfulness and center. It also requires a willingness to be with someone who is in pain of difficulty without trying to get them out of it.

NOT EMPATHY

These are responses that you might offer in response to someone’s expression of pain or celebration. Usually when someone is expressing difficulty, empathy is the need they want met first. These responses may meet needs, they are simply not empathy.

SYMPATHY: Bring attention back to yourself. *“Oh, I am so sorry, I feel terrible for you.”*

ADVICE: You assume the person needs information. *“Well, what you could do is...”*

EXPLAIN / ANALYZE: You believe that if you tell someone why they feel the way they do, they will feel better. *“You just feel bad because ...”*

CORRECT: You try to point out someone’s mistake in interpreting. *“He didn’t do that to hurt you, he was just in a hurry.”*

CONSOLE: *“It will be okay. You’re okay, everything will work out.”*

TELL A STORY: *“The same thing happened to me. This one time ...”*

PUSH AWAY FEELINGS: You might be uncomfortable so you tell others not to feel what they feel. *“Come on smile, don’t be sad.” “Just calm down and take a deep breath” “It’s not that big of a deal, just let it go.”*

INVESTIGATE / INTERROGATE: *“Why did you do that? What made you feel that way?”*

EVALUATE: You decide if another’s emotional response is appropriate or not. *“You are overreacting. This is no big deal.”*

EDUCATE: *“What I see about the situation is ... The reason you feel like that is...”*

ONE-UP: *“That’s awful, but something even worse happened to me and I was devastated.”*

DIAGNOSE: *“Sounds like you had a panic attack. I know some good herbs for anxiety.”*

DEMAND: *“If you don’t get control of your emotions, I’m leaving!”*

DENIAL OF CHOICE: *“It’s a hard thing, but we all have to do it.”*

NOD & SMILE: You feel uncomfortable and just want to get out of the situation. Or you lose track of yourself and become completely lost in the experience of the other person.

COLLUSION: You join the jackal talk. *“You’re right he really is a jerk!”*

SILVER LINING: Move past what’s happening toward some possible positive result. *“You will learn so much from this experience!” “You probably lost this job so you can get one that’s really right for you.”*

CHEER LEADING: You assume the need is for hope or reassurance. *“You’re a strong person, you can get through this.” “You’ve been through worse and made it.” “I believe in you.”*