

## What Is Empathy? – What Is Not Empathy?

### EMPATHY

- **EMPATHY** requires a willingness to set yourself aside for the moment and completely enter the other's world with acceptance, curiosity and respect. It also requires a willingness to be with someone who is in pain or difficulty without trying to get them out of it.
- **EMPATHY** is giving your full attention to another by either silently or verbally guessing their feelings and needs: *"When I hear your story, and I see you're crying – I wonder if you're feeling sad because your need for connection isn't being met?"*

**NOT EMPATHY** These are often offered in response to someone's expression of pain or celebration. Although these can serve a purpose, usually when someone is expressing difficulty, empathy is the need they want met most.

- **SYMPATHY:** Bringing 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 it reminds you of your childhood. . ."*
- **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'll be okay. You're okay, everything will work out, it's all good. . ."*
- **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."*
- **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're over-reacting. 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."*
- **COLLUSION:** You join in the bad-mouthing. *"You're right, he really is a jerk!"*
- **NOD & SMILE:** You feel uncomfortable and just want to get out of the situation.