

# ABOUT EMPATHY – HOW TO SHOW UP

Empathy is ... the action of **understanding**, being **aware** of and **sensitive** to the **feelings**, **thoughts** and **experiences** of another person ... without experiencing their situation or feeling their pain **yourself**.

You are in the trenches with them, but it's not *your* story. Be present for *them* and *their* story.

## • 1 CHECK IN – CONSIDER THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

*How are you? Are you OK?*

VS

*How are things going with/since ...? I'm just checking in to see how you're doing...*

## • 2 LISTEN

"You listen with only one purpose: **to help him or her to empty their heart.**" (Thich Nhat Hanh\*)

Listen, not just to hear, but to **understand**.

## • 3 UNCONDITIONAL POSITIVE REGARD

"Even if he says things that are full of wrong perceptions, full of bitterness, you are still capable of **continuing to listen with compassion**. Because you know that listening like that, you give that **person a chance to suffer less.**"\*

## • 4 SIT IN THE PUDDLE OF GRIEF

Don't try to fix it, change it, diminish it

Do let them make decisions, mistakes - make it safe to fail without judgement, 'fall apart' without shaming

Do be prepared to hear tough revelations

## • 5 MORE EMPATHY

**Less** advice, opinions, solutions, 'shoulds & oughts', clichés. **More** acknowledgement, permission, understanding – **it's not about being all 'touch-feely**.

There are others worse off

- It seems like your world has fallen apart
- I can see you're heartbroken

It will make you stronger

- It sounds like you're overwhelmed
- Must be hard to know where to start

I know how you feel

- I can see what you mean
- I can understand why you feel that way

EMPATHETIC RESPONSES COULD START WITH WORDS LIKE THIS:

It sounds like ...

It seems ...

Gee, that must be ...