

Tools for Empathic Listening

THE FOUR ATTRIBUTES OF EMPATHY:

In *I Thought it Was Just Me (But It Isn't)* (2008), Brené Brown references nursing scholar Theresa Wiseman's four attributes of empathy:

- **To be able to see the world as others see it**— This requires putting your own "stuff" aside to see the situation through the other person's eyes.
- **To be nonjudgmental**— Judgement of another person's situation discounts the experience and is an attempt to protect ourselves from the pain of the situation.
- **To understand another person's feelings**— We have to be in touch with our own feelings in order to understand someone else's. Again, this requires putting your own "stuff" aside to focus on the other person.
- **To communicate your understanding of that person's feelings**— Rather than saying, "At least you..." or "It could be worse..." **try**, "I've been there, and that really hurts," or "It sounds like you're in a hard place now. Tell me more about it."

Empathy is a skill that strengthens with practice and encourages people to both give and receive it often. By receiving empathy, not only do we understand how good it feels to be heard and accepted, we also come to a better understanding of the strength and courage it takes to be vulnerable and to share that need for empathy in the first place.

EMPATHIC LISTENING IS:

- Tuning in to content *and* emotion
 - And responding appropriately
- Paying attention to what's **not** being said
- Sincerely wanting to understand
- Paraphrasing & reflecting feelings
- Focusing & refocusing your awareness
- "It sounds like this is really worrying you."
- Feeling *with* people

EMPATHIC LISTENING IS NOT:

- Formulating your response while other person is talking
- "Don't you think you're overreacting?"
- "I know exactly how you feel..."
- Advising, probing, interpreting, judging
- ...Did I close the garage door this morning?...
- Filling the silence

For more information on empathic listening and other topics, contact your EAP in the family of AllOne Health Employee Assistance Programs.

Also explore www.mylifeexpert.com for resources. Ask your HR Rep for your passcode.

