

Empathy Buddy Guidelines

Having an Empathy Buddy is a powerful way to strengthen our Empathy Battery. While it can be very helpful to choose someone who has attended an NVC Level 1 workshop, it is not essential.

It is essential to remember that Empathy is holding PRESENCE with as close to 100% attention as possible. We can sometimes guide a friend to be our Empathy Buddy by making the following agreements:

- 1) Read over the Empathy Block list. (see below) Agree that during our empathy time each of us will hold the intention of not responding from one of these blocks.
- 2) One of us will talk (or not) for ____ minutes. The other will listen with as full attention as possible without talking.

There is NO back and forth talking.

The listener will be aware that no matter what the speaker is saying, the listener does not believe or disbelieve the story. The listener is being present for the whole unbroken person who is inside each of us.

Only at the end of the agreed upon time, the speaker may ask for advise, education, reassurance, sympathy, etc. and the Empathy Buddy can respond if they are moved to.

Alternate Idea: Have a set of Feeling & Needs cards. (Found at: www.opencommunication.org/resources.html) After the first person finishes their speaking time, they lay down feelings cards that match their current inner experience. The listener lays down needs cards that they are guessing might be the stimulus for the feelings. Try using this sentence frame: "Are you feeling ____ because of the need (value) of ____." When a variety of needs cards are laid down, the original speaker selects the needs cards that resonate for them in that moment.

You and your Empathy Buddy switch roles.

Things that Block Empathy	
Advising:	"I think you should ____"
Educating:	"This could turn into a positive experience if you just ____"

One-Upping:	“That’s nothing, wait till you hear what happened to me.”
Consoling:	“It wasn’t your fault: you did the best you could.”
Sympathizing:	“Oh you poor thing.”
Story-telling:	“That reminds me of something I heard on the news ...”
Shutting down:	“Cheer up. Don’t feel so bad.” “Come on, let’s go (for an ice-cream) (to the gym).”
Interrogating:	“When did this begin?”
Correcting:	“That’s not how it happened.”
Reassuring:	“It will all be OK.”
Denial of Feelings:	“Don’t worry. It’s silly to worry.”
Minimizing:	“This isn’t so important.”
Diagnosing:	“Your problem is you’re a compulsive worrier.”
Analyzing:	“I think you are reacting like this because of your personality type.”