

EMPATHY QUOTES

Empathy as Presence

"The Chinese philosopher Chuang-Tzu stated that true empathy requires listening with the whole being: 'The hearing that is only in the ears is one thing. The hearing of the understanding is another. But the hearing of the spirit is not limited to any one faculty, to the ear, or to the mind. Hence it demands the emptiness of all the faculties. And when the faculties are empty, then the whole being listens. There is then a direct grasp of what is right there before you that can never be heard with the ear or understood with the mind.'"

- *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life*

Listen.....

I do not know if you have ever examined how you listen, it doesn't matter to what, whether to a bird, to the wind in the leaves, to the rushing waters, or how you listen in a dialogue with yourself, to your conversation in various relationships with your intimate friends, your wife or husband....

If we try to listen we find it extraordinarily difficult, because we are always projecting our opinions and ideas, our prejudices, our backgrounds, our inclinations, our impulses; when they dominate we hardly listen at all to what is being said....

In that state there is no value at all. One listens and therefore learns, only in a state of attention, a state of silence, in which this whole background is in abeyance, is quiet; then, it seems to me, it is possible to communicate.

....real communication can only take place where there is silence.

-- *Krishnamurti*

Surfing Life Energy and Watching the Magic Show

Have you ever been surfing? Imagine you're on your surfboard now, waiting for the big one to come. Get ready to get carried with that energy. Now, here it comes. Are you with that energy right now? That's empathy. No words – just being with that energy. When I connect with what's alive in another person, I have feelings similar to when I'm surfing.

To do this, you can bring in nothing from the past. So the more psychology you've studied, the harder it will be to empathize. The more you know the person, the harder it will be to empathize. Diagnoses and past experiences can instantly knock you off the board. This doesn't mean denying the past. Past experiences can stimulate what's alive in this moment. But are you present to what was alive *then* or what the person is feeling and needing in *this* moment?

If you think ahead to what to say next – like how to fix it or make the person feel better – BOOM! Off the board. You're into the future. Empathy requires staying with the energy that's here right now. Not using any technique. Just being present. When I have really connected to this energy, it's like I wasn't there. I call this "watching the magic show." In this presence, a very precious energy works through us that can heal anything, and this relieves me from my "fix-it" tendencies.

- *Marshall B. Rosenberg, Ph.D.*