

Three ways to know you are in Empathy

1) Intention

Be aware of your intention behind offering empathy to another person.

It is important that you listen because it meets your need to connect and not give empathy for the other person's benefit. If you give empathy for the other person's benefit it puts them in a one down position of being helped.

We give empathy because it meets our needs; when we hold this intention for being in empathy one is not able to distinguish between the giver and the receiver.

2) Presence

This requires us to empty our mind of any past experiences or judgments we have of the person we are listening to that block our ability to listen with our "full being."

Judgment and compassion cannot co exist.

3) Attention/Focus

Put your attention towards hearing what the person might be feeling and needing. If the person speaking wanders and makes reference to the past or memories, bring the focus of the conversation to the present: what are you feeling in this moment?

Silent Empathy:

Empathy can be done silently; the most important parts of empathy are in silence.

Empathy is not about the words but about the quality of presence and listening.

When to verbally reflect back:

There are 2 times that we might want to express out loud "I heard you say."

1) When it meets your need for confirmation or when you are not sure you are connected to what the person is saying.

"Just so I know I am connected may I tell you what I've understood so far or heard?"

2) When we sense the other person would appreciate a confirmation.

Sometimes the other person makes it easy and asks you to tell them back... is that clear?

Do you know what I am saying? Then reflect back.

Stay with the person listening until the person has received the empathy they would like.

The first few words are often the tip of the iceberg. With empathic listening the person may get in touch with something much deeper and a core unmet need.

How will I know we have reached the bottom?

The problem or unmet may not change however you will notice a shift or you may sense relief, a change in body posture that is often accompanied by slowing down of the words or silence. The person may say I feel much better or relieved!!

At this point you might want to check. "Is there more you want me to hear"?

Be very slow about going into finding/offering solutions.

POST-EMPATHIC REQUEST