

6 Steps to Be Empathic

If a loved one, friend, colleague, or someone is experiencing something hard for them, a way you can be empathic to them is...

1. "What was your experience like?" Then ask follow up questions: "What did you feel?" "And how was that for you?" "What do you need?" "How are you now?" "What is supportive to you in this situation?"
2. Just listen, nod and let the speaker know you are with them non-verbally, but stay quiet and don't talk about you. Really listen to them. Even say their words in your head as they are saying them to really stay focused on their experience. You don't need to agree with them. You don't need to fix their situation. You just need to witness their experience. That is all. Undoing emotional aloneness is very helpful in and of itself. If someone feels seen, heard, connection and belonging in the midst of their suffering, it is really helpful.
3. If you are feeling too much of what they are feeling, then focus less on their content. Feel the inside of your hands, think of something light, feel warmth or love for them.
4. If you feel disconnected from them, then inside yourself think of a situation where you felt something similar to what they are feeling right now. Or think about what you would feel if their situation happened to you. Then let yourself feel about 20% of what they are feeling. Then you can emotionally resonate with their experience, and when you speak
5. Then say an empathic statement or two. There is a whole list of them on the webpage. Like: "I hear you." "You are not alone." "Awe, I feel you. That sucks that you had to go through that." "Thanks for sharing what it was like for you with me. I appreciate knowing and feel more connected to you now." Or you can reflect back what you heard them say: "Let me make sure I get you. Are you saying that you felt this..." "I'm so sorry."
6. You don't need to fix their problem. You don't need to give them advice. You don't need to let them know anything about a similar experience you had. This is not about you. Just give them lots of space to be known in their experience and feel like someone cares.