

Empathy Essentials

1. Empathy is giving your compassionate curiosity to another's experience. In NVC we do this specifically by either silently or verbally guessing another's feelings and needs. For example, "Are you feeling discouraged because you need support?"
2. Empathy is a heart-based response to a heart-based expression of needs met or unmet.
3. Empathy requires the intention to connect and honor the other person's experience as valid, regardless of how it compares to your experience.
4. Empathy is a form of responsiveness that depends on an internal sense of spaciousness and equanimity.
5. Empathy requires you to stay centered and self-connected.
6. Empathy often requires the ability to be comfortable with uncomfortable emotions and witness the suffering of others without trying to get them out of it. This means letting go of any agenda for the other person. (Requests about the behavior of others occur in your direct and honest expression, not in empathy).
7. The ability to offer empathy increases when you trust yourself to be true to your own experience. That is, you know that offering someone empathy doesn't mean you are abandoning yourself. You know how to set a boundary when you are done offering empathy. You know when you are not able or willing to offer empathy.
8. Offering empathy often means being okay not understanding content when it serves the connection. You are able to let go of your own need for mental clarity regarding the facts and details of what someone is sharing in order to keep your focus on their experience (feelings and needs).
9. Empathy is grounded in the knowledge that when someone is heard deeply, they have greater access to their own wisdom.
10. Empathy can be silent or aloud, short or long.
11. Empathy is not always the best response or the response for every encounter. Empathy is useful when the other person has a need for empathy.
12. Empathy can be offered when you disagree with another's opinion, memory, or perspective.