

NVC AT WORK: EMPATHY IN THE WORKPLACE

“NVC guides us in reframing how we express ourselves and hear others. Instead of habitual, automatic reactions, our words become conscious responses based firmly on awareness of what we are perceiving, feeling, and wanting. We are led to express ourselves with honesty and clarity, while simultaneously paying others a respectful and empathetic attention.”

- Marshall Rosenberg, *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life*

EMPATHY:

A quality of being present with someone — hearing, seeing, and receiving them patiently without over-identifying, inserting ourselves, or trying to take them somewhere else.

Being present without trying to change anything, the intent with empathetic listening is to hold a space for identifying the underlying needs.

Listener asks him or herself: “What am I hearing the speaker say that they are longing for? What are the key qualities that they are speaking to?”

The optimal environment to support a person in accessing their own resources and coming up with their own strategies is a place of deep listening and empathy.

"Empathy forges communication that is inquisitive, nonjudgmental, validating, and compassionate. The primary thing that starts to happen when we communicate in this way is that it changes us, it softens us. We see the people in our lives in a different way."

- Paul Parkin

EMPATHY IN THE WORKPLACE

EXERCISE: COMPLAINT TO CORE VALUE

Objective:

Use an evaluation as a point of departure for giving empathy

Process:

Partner A: Scan the judgement words available on the Complaint to Core Value tool until you find one that you recently made of another person at work. Share the related anecdote with your partner.

Partner B: Hold space for initial feelings and provide empathy for your partner by guessing at their underlying feelings and needs.

Partner reflection: What did you notice? Did anything shift or settle? Did you learn anything?

EXERCISE: INITIAL FEELINGS

Objective:

Use initial feelings as a point of departure for giving empathy

Process:

Partner A: Scan through the Initial Feelings to Underlying Needs tool until you find a word that characterizes your initial feeling in a recent difficult situation. Share the related anecdote with your partner.

Partner B: Hold space for initial feelings and provide empathy for your partner by guessing at their underlying feelings and needs.

Partner reflection: What did you notice? Did anything shift or settle? Did you learn anything?

EXERCISE: INTERRUPTING WITH EMPATHY

Objective:

Use venting as a point of departure for giving empathy

Process:

Partner A: Think of a difficult situation you experienced recently. Without engaging directly with your partner, allow yourself to speak freely and vent about this situation. Continue talking until you are interrupted.

Partner B: Interrupt your partner with empathy.

Partner reflection: What did you notice? Did anything shift or settle? Did you learn anything?