

## EMPATHY BUDDY PRACTICE by Kate Raffin [www.hearttalkmatters.com](http://www.hearttalkmatters.com)

One of the best ways to integrate NVC the powerful practices of Nonviolent Communication.

EMPATHY IS lending our presence to the person in front of us, just as they are.

EMPATHY IS NOT: Giving advice, fixing, solving, sympathising, consoling, colluding, evaluating, educating, one-upping, story-telling.

Scheduling: A suggested length of time is 20 mins to an hour long, on a regular basis eg once a week / fortnight.

Also at the start of any meeting. Taking as little as 6-10 minutes (3-5 mins each way) can change our availability in the meeting.

### How to do it:

- You call each other (or meet in person) at a pre-arranged time, check how much time you have available.
- Decide who will speak first. Person A or B.
- Offering empathy: Take 1/2 the time each eg on a 40 min call person Person A speaks for aprox 16 mins and your empathy buddy, (person B) is totally present for you for that time - reflecting back feelings and needs or whatever empathy you request - it may be just to be heard in silence and have the needs reflected back at the end OR it may be to ask for a natural flow of reflection – eg when a natural pause is felt the listener offers empathy guesses of feelings and needs.

I highly recommend you use this form - "Are you feeling ...(eg upset, anxious, excited) because you are needing ...(eg support, assurance, celebration)?" you could use the feelings and needs handout or needs cards.

Person A continues to speak and then more reflection from B.

Be cautious of falling into a 'comfortable' conversation, that is not what this time is. It is one person speaking, the other listening.

Feedback: At the end of the time (eg 16 mins) You can use the few remaining minutes for learning and offering feedback about what worked: It can be an added learning edge to request to hear, as listener, what you said or reflected back that worked for the speaker - or did not work.

- This feedback can be guided by you. eg some days you may just want to hear what did work and celebrate that.
- I recommend being as specific as possible and use observations with your feedback eg "when you said .....,I felt ... because it contributed to my need for ..."
- THEN SWAP OVER

This practice is worth doing for what ever time you have available. The intention of the empathy buddying is to practice and learn.

SIX minutes of focused listening is SIX minutes of quality empathy.