Empathic Listening – what is it?

Empathy is deep understanding of another person.

The essence of empathic listening is not that we agree with someone; it is, however that we deeply understand the person, emotionally as well as intellectually. We have empathy when we put our self in another’s place and experience feelings as he or she experiences them.

When we listen to others we usually listen at one of five levels. When we practice the fifth level of listening, Empathic Listening, we try to discover what the other person really means and feels from his or her point of view.

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<tr>
<th>Ignoring</th>
<th>Making no effort to listen</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretend Listening</td>
<td>Making believe or giving the appearance you are listening</td>
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<tr>
<td>Selective Listening</td>
<td>Hearing only the parts of the conversation that interest you</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attentive Listening</td>
<td>Paying attention and focusing on what the speaker says, and comparing that to your own experiences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Empathic Listening</td>
<td>Listening and responding with both the heart and mind to understand the speaker’s words, intent, and feelings</td>
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Empathic Listening Responses

The key skill of Empathic Listening is helping the speaker feel understood. Here are listening skills to use to achieve this goal:

1. **Repeat verbatim** the content of the communication—words only, not feelings
2. **Rephrase content**—summarize their meaning in your own words
3. **Reflect feelings**—look more deeply and begin to capture feelings in your own words—look beyond words for body language and tone to indicate feelings
4. **Rephrase content** and reflect feelings—express both their words and their feelings in your own words

**Helpful Phrases to Acknowledge Understanding**

What I’m hearing is…

Your feeling now is that…

You must have felt…

Your message seems to be, “I…”

Material used with permission from The KonTerra Group.
In other words…

I’m sensing that you…

As you see it…

If I understand you correctly you…

Writing Exercise:

Here are three statements that might be made by peers. Using the space below, write an empathic response for each situation

1. “I don’t know what to do. Every time I work with Maria on a project she never does her fair share. I just don’t want to work with her anymore”

   Response: _______________________________________

2. “I’ve just had it. The work is really getting to me. We’ve been pushing and pushing and pushing to meet all of our deadlines and more work just keeps coming. I don’t know if I can keep up this pace. I’m really tired.”

   Response: _______________________________________

3. “My supervisor doesn’t ask us our opinions or communicate with us…he sometimes doesn’t even say good morning. It is so depressing. I feel like I’m not able to give the best of me.”

   Response: _______________________________________