

Empowering Others

Empathic: showing empathy or ready comprehension of others' states. (Webster's Online Dictionary)

Often, **people possess within themselves the resources and capacity to solve their own problems.** One of the tools for helping others to access these internal resources is empathic, or active, listening.

When others come to us with a problem that needs to be solved, we can offer a listening ear. Using active listening skills and an attitude of positive regard and caring for the other, we can help the other person come up with his or her own workable solution to the problem. **Empathic listening “allows those who own the problem to begin to hear themselves. And as they hear themselves they become equipped to solve their own challenges.”** (Gregorio Billikopf)

When **another person brings a problem to us**, we can empower the other to come up with a good solution by:

- **Paraphrasing and reflecting feelings.**
This allows you as listener to clarify, and the speaker to hear what he or she has just presented.
- **Help the speaker explore options.**
Person A: “What do you think I should do?”
Listener: “I would really like to hear what you think you should do.”
or Listener: “What are your options?”
- **Help the speaker to brainstorm possible consequences of the options.**
Person A: “I think I should just let go of the friendship. What do you think?”
Listener: “I think you should do what you think is right. If you do let go of the friendship, what will that mean for you?”
- **Help the speaker to step back and take the long view of the situation.**
Person A: “I’m not sure what to do. What do you think I should do?”
Listener: “Let’s say you had a friend who was going through the same kind of situation. What advice would you give that person?”

A point to ponder: Sometimes a trusted friend, colleague, or family member comes to us **earnestly seeking our advice.** It is possible to help the other think of his/her own solution first, then offer advice after the other’s ideas have been explored.