

HOW TO: EMPATHY

EMPATHETIC LISTENING

Here are some tips to help you facilitate transformational conversations that will allow you to really get to know the person in front of you:

1. Cultivate a genuine heart of curiosity and desire to know the other
2. Ask thoughtful questions in a tone that is not interrogatory or accusatory
3. Be slow to respond, defend the church, or share your own experience, this time is for you to get to know their reality not to shape it
4. Allow the conversation to go wherever it may naturally – don't force it in a certain direction (i.e. their experience of the church) and don't be afraid if it goes somewhere that challenges you (i.e. an experience that is contrary to your experience)
5. Empathetic listening vs. Active listening - Empathetic listening gets inside another person's frame of reference. You look out through it, you see the world the way they see the world, you understand their paradigm, you understand how they feel.
6. Listening skills:
 - a. Restate what was said
 - b. Rephrase what was said in your own words
 - c. Reflect back thoughts and feelings that you hear
 - d. Feel free to say, "tell me more about that", to prompt people to share more

TENDENCIES OFTEN CONFUSED FOR EMPATHY

In preparation for you take on these empathetic conversations, be aware of the empathetic listening tendencies that we can often confuse as empathetic listening:

Go-to responses that we often confuse as listening:

- "Don't worry..."
- "At least..."
- Giving unsolicited advice

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- Sharing personal narratives/experiences (occasionally this can be effective – but often it is us focusing on our own experiences vs. those of the person in front of us)
- Unable to separate from own biases
- Condescending kindness
- “Me too”
- Excessive sympathy
- Joking
- Active listening divorced from true interest - not enough to go through the motions of active listening

Mistakes we make:

- Going through the motions
- Faking care and interest
- Self-consciousness
- We evaluate - either agree or disagree (judge)
- We probe asking questions from our own frame of reference
- Unsolicited advice
- Interpret - try to figure people out, to explain their motives, their behavior based on our own motives and behavior