

## Mindfulness of Needs Empathy Exercise

**Intention:** To provide empathy to another person by truly listening to what they are saying without judgment and without an agenda other than to be present.

### **Guidelines:**

1. Pick a speaker and listener. Have the person who has something most alive in them speak first.

2. The speaker picks a trigger or stimulus that may have happened in the past but is still alive in them now or easy to generate feelings around.

(Note: Both the listener and the speaker have the responsibility to stop the dialogue and ask to give or receive empathy, whenever they start to feel full or at one's capacity.)

3. Once the speaker stops talking, the listener can then give the speaker empathy based upon their capacity in that moment to either:

1. Reflect back to the speaker as accurately as they can what they heard the speaker say.
2. Reflect back to the speaker the gist or essence of what they heard the speaker say.
3. Make guesses at the feelings and needs that the speaker may have around what was said.

4. Once the speaker feels "heard", in other words feels some empathy, then switch roles.

### **Tips for giving empathy**

1. Keep it focused on the present. What is the person feeling and needing right now?

2. Keep in mind that only the speaker truly knows what is going on with them. The listener can only guess.

3. Try to focus on what the person needs, not what they don't need. Keep it positive.

4. If guessing feelings and needs, try to connect the guesses to what the speaker said: I am guessing you are feeling \_\_\_\_\_ because your need for \_\_\_\_\_ was not met when \_\_\_\_\_ happened.

**(Keep Self-Aware:** If the listener is unable to truly be present for the speaker, it is recommended that they ask for a "time out" to either self connect or ask for "emergency" empathy. If they original speaker can give empathy, then switch roles until the original listener feels heard, using the three forms of empathy above. Once the original listener feels heard, switch back.)