



Conscious Communication

Empathic Connection

Empathic Connections

Instead of fighting or fleeing a situation, another way to respond is to connect with the other person by using active listening coupled with empathy. If we develop a rapport with the other person, we are more likely to have our own concerns listened to and our own needs met. It is a gift to be listened to. When we really listen the other person tends to calm down and is more likely to listen back.

To listen well, we need several pieces of information. We need to know: What are the issues? What are the feelings? What are the underlying concerns or vision? What is needed now?

We need to understand:

1. the issues, as observations in measurable terms, without mixing in evaluations.
2. the feelings (sad, glad, mad, scared) without mixing in any thoughts;

3. the underlying needs, interests, values or visions, without turning to solutions;

4. the concrete, measurable actions wanted, expressed in action language.

Exploring these four critical pieces of information will help to focus our attention on the other person and the meaning of the conflict or negotiation in which we are involved. We will need to set aside our own agenda temporarily in order to connect with the other person. Empathy is a key element in making this connection.

The Importance of Empathy

We tend not to share our feelings and when we do, are rarely listened to in a way that is satisfying. As a result, we often experience a sense of isolation and separation from other people. Expressing and receiving empathy can help bridge this gap.

Empathy involves attempting to understand and feel what another person is feeling and then expressing it back to them, to their satisfaction.

Empathy needs to be distinguished from sympathy, which is more feeling “for” someone, similar to pity. Sympathy says, “oh, you poor baby, you,” a separation from the other, while empathy strives to deeply understand a person’s feelings and to convey this understanding, resulting in a more profound connection.

“Empathy is a fundamental mode of human relatedness, the recognition of the self in the other; it is the accepting, confirming and understanding human echo.” -Heinz Hohut.

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The Focus

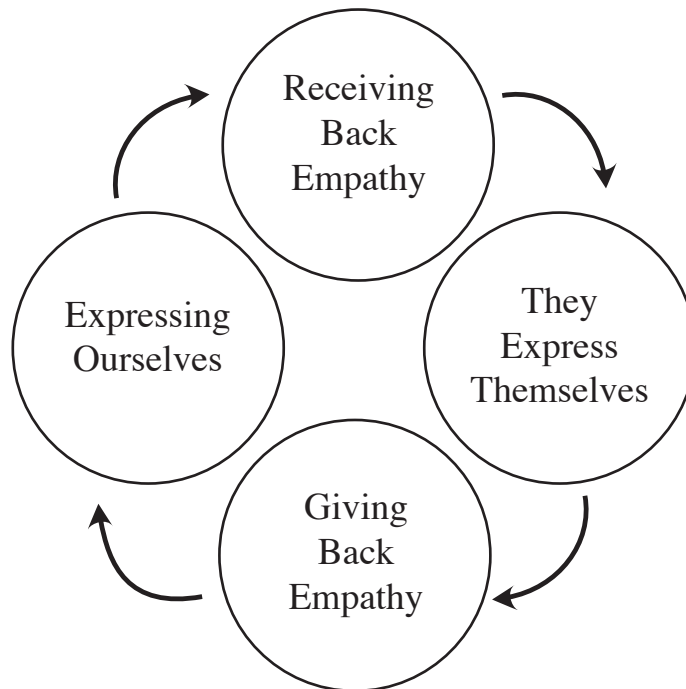
What is our intention and attitude? When we approach another in conflict we will be needing their receptivity to hear what we want to tell them but are we, in turn, receptive to them? Could we be wrong in our perceptions and perhaps hear something they might say that will clarify or completely change our understanding?

When I want to make a connection with another, I need to focus on what my intention is before approaching them. My purpose is to focus on my attitude which affects the quality of any skills I have. It is the difference between appearing stiff or robotic, parroting these ideas, and making a real connection with the other.

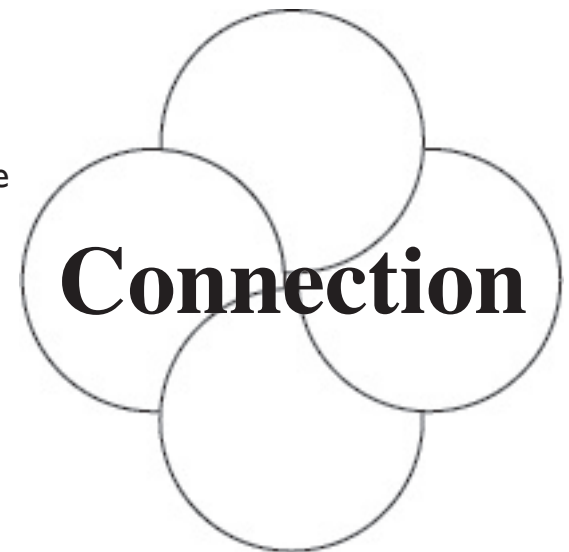
My purpose, above all else, is to be conscious. To be aware of my own feelings while getting educated by the other person so as to make an empathic connection, because I have a much greater chance of resolving a conflict with a connection. And, there are no guarantees. I may not get a resolution but I probably won't feel bad about it.

A Way of Connecting:

This is a process of communicating that enhances connection.



If we can bridge the gaps between us, we can make a connection.



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