

24 Empathetic Questions and Response Statements

Empathic *listening* is vital to developing relationships and when successful, it forms a deeper connection with a mentee, client, friend, family member, or colleague at the emotional and intellectual level. However, in order to listen well, you need patience, to not interrupt, even if you disagree with what is being said. **Empathic questions** can be helpful but should not dominate a conversation – what follows are a few you can use yourself, or share with your Mentee to use with others (if the latter be discerning based on the circumstance rather than just downloading them all) :

1. When has your personal bias led to a wrong choice? ; What was the impact of that? ; What might you do differently next time?
2. What decisions make you feel uncomfortable? Why is that?
3. When have your instincts let you down? What did you learn about yourself and/or others from that situation?
4. How do you balance looking after yourself and the needs of others? Is there or is there not a balance? What is the outcome of that situation? How might you shift it?
5. How do you comfort others? How else? How else? What other ways might you bring comfort to others?
6. What about an experience makes it meaningful?
7. When were you most challenged to be your best self? Were you successful? What did you do?
8. Does your curiosity ever create difficulty? What kinds of difficulties? How might you shift this?
9. Do you use silence during your conversations? If so, when? What effect does it have?
10. What would you like others understand about you? How might you share that more fully?
11. How do you deal with negative emotions? What is the downside / upside of how you do that? Are there any other ways you might do this?
12. When are you most present? What is it that enables that – external circumstances and your internal mindset?

Empathetic statements and responses can show that you understand the feelings of others:

1. I am sorry that this happened to you.
2. That would upset me too.
3. I want to thank you for being so open and honest with me.
4. This sort of challenge is never easy.
5. It is clear that this has impacted you deeply.
6. What else would you like to share?
7. It sounds like you had a very stressful time.
8. Yes, what has happened makes no sense at all.
9. I am on your side.
10. It's no surprise you are upset.
11. That sounds frightening.
12. You are making complete sense.