

Building Empathy in Your Community

take
time.



OKLAHOMA
State Department
of Health

In Oklahoma...

We care for our neighbors and lend helping hands when there are people in our community struggling. Our community thrives because of people like you who are kind, generous, and compassionate towards others. Building a healthy community starts with you, and we value everything you do to care for others.

When the people around us struggle, it affects each and every one of us. It can often be difficult to know what to say when you notice someone going through something.

Remember that we all have struggles, and you can use your lived experiences to respond with empathy.

What is Empathy?

Empathy is the ability to understand another's feelings without judgment. When you're empathetic, you can connect with another person on a deeper level – a level that is not limited by your personal experience.

When you empathize with another, you can feel their emotions, regardless of anything you've experienced.

Empathy is:



Feeling what someone else feels.



Actively listening to what the other person is saying.



Not judging.



Being aware of non-verbal cues during conversation.



Genuinely trying to understand other perspectives.



Validating other's feelings.

What is Active Listening?

One of the most important skills to master to build a connection with others is the ability to be an active listener. When you are an active listener, you give others your undivided attention, reflect back to them what you're hearing, pay attention to non-verbal cues, and steer clear of giving advice or "fixing" the issue. **As an active listener, your job is to listen.**



Responding empathetically may sound like:

I know this must be difficult to talk about, but I'm here to listen.

I'm glad you told me. I'm here for you.

You're doing an amazing job considering how hard this is. I'm really proud of you.

What I'm hearing is...

Next Steps:

Think of a time when you were struggling and someone offered you a helping hand. You have more power than you may realize to positively affect someone's life. Here are some scenarios where you could put your empathy skills to the test:

- At work with an overwhelmed coworker.
- When you find out someone has lost a loved one, family member, or pet.
- Seeing an overwhelmed caregiver at the grocery store or other public place.
- Hearing that a friend is going through a breakup or divorce.
- Learning that someone is sick or has sick family members in their household.

If someone is in an emergency situation, contact 911 or 988 the Mental Health Lifeline for immediate assistance.



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