

Strategies to support others without having to be a therapist

One of the best ways to support a colleague or friend in need is to listen deeply without judgement and to provide a safe space for them to share their true feelings, worries or problems. "Providing space" means having the capacity to feel, understand and sit with the pain of the other person (empathy), to allow the uncomfortable emotions to be with you both, and to acknowledge these without trying to get rid of them. Acknowledging: "I feel your sadness and the sense of loss that you are describing." Pausing there, without consoling or minimizing, is not easy. Yet it provides your friend or colleague the opportunity to feel understood.



WATCH



experiencing an empathy shortage, but we can fix it together | Jamil Zaki | TEDxMarin

Jamil Zaki: Empathy is a skill that can be trained



Panel Discussion: Benefit of Compassion Meditation / Training - Emory University.

READ

Tipps on how to support someone who is facing a mental health issue -
from Beyond Blue



Compassion Meditation - Step by Step - from GreaterGood Science Centre -
from Berkeley University.

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BEWARE OF COMMON COMMUNICATION BLOCKERS

Minimizing

- "At least ..."
- "It could be worse ..."
- "It's not as bad as you think ..."

Comparing with own Story

- "Oh, I know how you feel ..."
- "When I was in a similar position ..."

Reassuring

- "It will pass."
- "You will be alright. It will be alright."

Diverting

- "Look, I am meeting up with friends ... I've got to go soon, do you want to come along?"

DON'T GET OVERWHELMED - SET BOUNDARIES



Check in with yourself.

Is your friend's problem draining you?
How can you tell?



Set your internal boundaries.

This is not my problem. I have compassion and I go on with my life.



Be honest.

Say how you feel: "I am sorry. I think your situation is beyond what I can offer. I fear I cannot support you the way you need it."



Be there with healthy limits.

Help with finding professional assistance.
Set communication rules.

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