



Stand Ready to Heal: The Power of Listening

The Anasazi words “For man to is of the dust and Mother Earth stands ready to heal her children” reminds us that by our very human nature, we have the capacity to help others heal. During these current times of uncertainty and fear, we can, just like Nature does, create a safe space for people to just be — be who they are — fully accepted. Through compassionate listening we serve as a witness to people and their stories which can bring them healing.

Here are ways to listen compassionately to friends, family members, and colleagues when they tell you their story:

Hear with your heart as well as your mind and senses.

Be fully present. Be aware of their body language, their tone of voice, their facial expressions. Take in the words as well as the message they are conveying. Listen carefully to feelings and facts. Give the person your undivided attention.

Do not give advice or make suggestions.

Allow the person to tell their story without interruption. Refrain from judging, evaluating, or offering advice. Be there holding the space so that the person feels safe and can freely express what is on their mind. It is not the time to move the attention to you by telling your story. There is no reason to fix anything for the speaker. You do not have to agree with what is said. Just listen.

Do not be afraid of silence.

Show that you are listening carefully by restating what the person has said or by paraphrasing. Get comfortable with silence. The silence lets thoughts, emotions and reflections settle and become grounded.

Compassionate listening is about understanding another person’s words from the perspective of that person. Listening creates and deepens connections. It is an act of selfless love to give someone the sacred space to be heard. As people are heard, they start to heal.

When we engage both our ears and our hearts in the act of compassionate listening, people can find their own solutions. Listening is such a simple act. We simply must be willing to sit there and listen. When we do that, we create moments in which real healing is available.

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