

EMPATHY ON THE “SHARP END” – PAIR EXERCISE

Part 1:

- 1) Find a partner
- 2) Decide on who is the Story Teller and who is the Listener/Empathizer – the Listener/Empathizer is the person who will be using NVC skills
- 3) **The Story Teller simply wants to be heard**, in this exercise. They're not looking for any other kind of response
- 4)
 - a. Story Teller – talk about a situation with another person in your life that you are not enjoying
 - b. Listener/Empathizer – use the various ways of listening and empathizing that we've looked at:
 - i. Silent presence
 - ii. Reflecting what you've heard to check you've understood what it means to the Story Teller
 - iii. Guessing at the Story Teller's feelings
 - iv. Guessing at the Story Teller's needs
 - v. Anchoring your guesses to a specific thing the Story Teller said
 - vi. Connecting specific feelings with specific needs

Part 2:

- 1) The Listener/Empathizer from Part 1 is now going to play the role of the other person in the Story Teller's story
- 2)
 - a. The Story Teller will speak directly to the Listener/Empathizer as if they were the other person in their story. They do not have to use NVC. Again, the **Story Teller simply wants to be heard**. They're not looking for apology, or explanation, or any other kind of response.
 - b. The Listener/Empathizer will listen with empathy, using the same Listening/Empathy skills as in Part 1.
 - c. **IMPORTANT** Listener/Empathizer can stop the role play and “**Dial the Difficulty**” as needed. That means you can ask the Story Teller to use more or less “pointy” communication to give you the challenge you want...not too easy, and not too hard. (Pointy communication = Judgment, Blame, Shoulds, Right/Wrong thinking, Demands, Threats, Harsh tone, Loud voice etc.)

Debrief:

Break out of the role play and discuss what you noticed during each part of the exercise. Some questions that might be helpful:

- What were the differences between Part 1 and Part 2 for each of you?
- For each of you, which kind of listening did you enjoy most?
- Was there a particular moment that stands out for you?
- Do you have any new insights or questions resulting from this exercise?