

# Empathy: The Art of Listening

We generally want to respond when people speak to us.

For example, someone says, "I'm so tired, I couldn't get any work done"

Some typical responses listed below are often said with the best of intentions, but can unknowingly create distance and disconnection.

We call these empathy blockers.

- **One-upping**  
"I'm so tired myself. I couldn't get any work done either."
- **Advising / Fixing**  
"Maybe you should get more sleep."  
"Maybe you should get some vitamins."  
"Maybe you should..."
- **Educating**  
"There's a good book you should get on sleep and productivity."
- **Analyzing**  
"You know, this seems to be a pattern of yours."
- **Consoling**  
"That's too bad. I'm sure tomorrow things will go better."
- **Discounting**  
"Okay, but shouldn't you just be glad you have a job?"

## Some things we can say to express empathy

- **"I hear you."** Said with sincerity, meets a person's need to be heard.
- **"Tell me more."** Said with sincerity, shows you are really interested.
- **"Wow."** Said softly, gives the speaker a sense you are listening.
- **"I don't even know what to say right now, I'm just grateful you told me."**  
When someone is in a difficult place, this may be all you have to say.



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