Empathy Bingo

(Adapted from www.positivepsychology.com)

This activity can be played in groups or individually as you practice these skills to differentiate between empathy and other responses that may not be so helpful.

| Interrogating | One-upping | Advising | Correcting |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Consoling | Shutting down | Educating | Sympathizing |
| Explaining | Fixing it | Empathizing | Story-telling |

* Have another person tell a story or express a concern to the listener. The listener then responds using different kinds of statements. Cross out what kind of statement it is on the bingo sheet.

Example dialogues

These correspond to different squares on the bingo grid. Read over these to understand how it can be detrimental when we aren’t aware or skilled in showing empathy.

**Fixing It A:** I’m anxious about getting to the airport on time.

**B:** I’ll drive you.

**One-Upping A:** Check out this bruise from my fall down the stairs.

**B:** That’s tiny, look at what I got when I was hit by a bike.

**Storytelling A:** I couldn’t get a taxi for hours last night and had to walk home at 5 am.

**B:** That sounds like the time when...

**Consoling A:** I feel terrible that my student failed his exam.

**B:** You’re not to blame, you’re a brilliant tutor.

**Sympathizing A:** The dentist told me I need to have very painful root canal surgery.

**B:** Oh man, that’s terrible.

**Interrogating A:** I can’t get my mom to listen to my point of view.

**B:** What’s the problem, exactly?

**Shutting Down A:** My boss has cut my pay.

**B:** Buck up, let’s play some pool.

**Educating A:** I don’t know anybody at my new college.

**B:** See it as a chance to develop your social skills.

**Explaining A:** I’m annoyed because you left the kids waiting an hour after school.

**B:** That’s only because the traffic was terrible...

**Advising A:** I can’t understand where all my money goes after I get paid.

**B:** I reckon you should create a budget.

**Correcting A:** I think your essay about the greenhouse could be improved.

**B:** It was about a glasshouse, not a greenhouse.

**Empathizing A:** My whole house is flooded and everything in it is soaked.

**B:** Do you feel stressed out and in need of some support?

Examples of empathetic statements

1. I understand how you feel.
2. You must feel so hopeless.
3. I just feel such despair in you when you talk about this.
4. You’re in a tough spot here.
5. I can feel the pain you feel.
6. I wish you didn’t have to go through that.
7. I wish I could have been with you in that moment.
8. Oh, wow, that sounds terrible.
9. You must feel so helpless.
10. That hurts me to hear that.
11. You are in a lot of pain here. I can feel it.
12. That must have annoyed you.
13. That sounds infuriating.
14. That sounds frustrating.
15. Wow, that must have hurt.
16. I understand what you’re feeling.
17. Okay, I think I get it. So what you’re feeling is…
18. What I admire most about what you’re doing is...
19. That sounds a little frightening.
20. Tell me what you see as your choices here.

* ***empathy statements taken from The Gottman Institute Relationship Guide***

(www.couples-thrive.com)