

**Asking Powerful Questions & Listening With Empathy**

**Training For GIVEN Mentors – Session Two**

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*“The first service that one owes to others in the fellowship consists in listening to them.*

*Just as love for God begins with listening to His Word, so the beginning*

*of love for the brethren is learning to listen to them.”*

– Dietrich Bonhoeffer

**Learning Objective:**

Cultivate empathic encounter (especially through asking powerful questions, deep listening, & making reflective observations).

Reflect on a time you were listened to deeply by someone responsible for your formation. What were the characteristics of that listening? What impact did it have upon you?

Reflect on a time you were not listened to well by someone responsible for your formation. What were the characteristics of that listening? What impact did it have upon you?

*“Communication is the most important skill in life. We spend most of our waking hours communicating. But consider this: You've spent years learning how to read and write, years learning how to speak. But what about listening?”*

*– Stephen Covey*

**Empathic Encounter: *Asking Powerful Questions***

Empathic encounter often begins when we approach another with questions that express sincere interest in truly getting to know him/her. Consider these types of questions and the impact they have on drawing out the other.

* **Closed Questions**: can be answered with a simple “yes” or “no.” (“Do you like sushi?”)
* **Leading Questions:** suggest or prompt an answer. (“Isn’t Mumford & Sons a great band?!)
* **Open-ended Questions:** encourage a full, meaningful answer using the subject's own knowledge and/or feelings. (“Tell me about yourself.”)

*Now, circle back to your experiences with the different type of formators you reflected upon above. What sorts of questions did they ask?* The depth and kind of our listening is often expressed by the sorts of questions we ask.

Come up with three open-ended questions for a fellow mentor oriented toward getting to know her better.

**Empathic Encounter: *Reflecting Content & Feeling***

**Basic Elements of Empathic Listening**

*“The essence of empathic listening is not that you agree with someone; it’s that you fully, deeply, understand that person, emotionally as well as intellectually.” - Stephen Covey*

Open-ended questions are not the only way to empathic encounter but they do invite it. They set a tone of openness to and interest in the other, which is vital for facilitating authentic sharing and thus deep listening. There are two basic parts to listening with empathy:

1. **Rephrase content.** Do not simply mimic content (this can feel like you are parroting the person) but rephrase it so as to let the person know you are really listening intellectually.
2. **Reflect feeling.** This does not have to be exactly proportionate. But you should express some measure of how the person is feeling. In this way you show emotional understanding as well.

**Empathy is NOT:**

* sympathy, which implies agreement
* soft and passive (it requires strong self-possession)
* violence to self-identity

**Edith Stein on Empathy**

*“The soul of woman must therefore be expansive and open to all human beings; it must be quiet so that no small weak flame will be extinguished by stormy winds; warm so as to not benumb fragile buds…self-contained, so that no invasions from without can imperil the inner life; empty of itself, in order that extraneous life may have room in it; finally, mistress of itself and also of its body, so that the entire person is readily at the disposal of every call.”*

*– St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein)*

**Demonstration**

**Interactive Exercise**

Break Into Pairs. One will be interviewer and the other will be respondent. Interviewer takes 5 minutes using the questions she drafted above and practicing skills of empathic listening

Switch hats and go for another five minutes.

**What fruit did you experience? What challenges to being empathic did you face?**

Identify three persons that you want to know better with whom you can speak directly over the next two weeks.

**Homework Assignment!** Between now and June 14th (when we have our third training session) draw the three people you identified above into conversation with open-ended questions and practice being empathic!