Sentence Starters to Speak With Empathy

Empathy is a powerful tool that can help you better understand another person. Use these sentence starters to begin conversations with empathy.

1. Gather Information

Make sure you know enough about the situation.

- Would/could you tell me a little more?
- Can you tell me what you need right now?
- Is there anything else you'd like to share?
- Would you like my help in figuring this out?

2. Clarify Understanding

Reflect back what you think you've heard.

- Let me see if I have this right….
- I want to make sure I understand what you're telling me. What I'm hearing is….
- What I hear you saying is…. Is that right?

3. Model Listening

Show you're listening and paying attention to body language.

- It sounds to me like this might feel….
- I can see that you are feeling [emotion]….
- I can hear how [emotion] you are feeling.
- Your face is telling me that….
- I can hear in your voice that….

4. Affirm Feelings

Acknowledge vulnerability and affirm that feelings aren't right or wrong.

- Thank you for sharing this with me.
- I understand you feel that way.
- That sounds like an [adjective] experience.
- I hear you.
- I'm not sure what to say right now, but I'm here to listen.

Understood
for Educators