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 things will go better tomorrow.”

- **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.
- **“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.

- **Empathy is Being Interested Rather Than Being Interesting** -

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