Trauma is damaging, but science shows that relationships can heal.

Empathy is how we connect. It is the ability to understand what another person is experiencing and then communicating this understanding. Empathy helps us build stronger relationships and regulate emotions. In the aftermath of traumatic events, empathic listening helps a person process so they are better able to understand what they are feeling, self-soothe, and cope with stress. Below are quick tools for empathic listening and communication to help you connect with students, colleagues, parents, friends and family.

**FOUR COMPONENTS OF EMPATHY**

1. **Taking Others’ Perspectives**
2. **Recognizing Emotion in Others**
3. **Staying Out of Judgment**
4. **Communicating Understanding of Others**

We communicate empathy through **MIRRORING**

**Mirroring** is when we put words to someone’s experience - their problems, needs, feelings, beliefs, thoughts, or values - to show them that we understand.

**STEPS TO MIRRORING**

1. **Listen Carefully and Attentively**
2. **Imagine Their Perspective and Feelings**
3. **Stay Out of Judgment (Avoid Blockers)**
4. **Paraphrase Their Feelings and Problems**

Practice **mirroring** using sentence stems and avoid **empathy blockers** - well intentioned statements that may communicate judgment by shifting the attention away from the person who needs to be heard.

**MIRRORING SENTENCE STEMS**

- **It sounds like you are feeling...**
- **I’m hearing you say that you...**
- **I wonder if you feel...**
- **It seems like you are needing...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>COMMON EMPATHY BLOCKERS</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Silverlining it</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Reassuring, cheering up, downplaying, trying to make them feel better or differently</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fixer Upper</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Offering your solutions, advice, beliefs, or opinions</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Interrogating</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Probing, analyzing, evaluating</td>
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