

Listening with your Heart - Holding Space



Have you heard the expression ***we listen to respond not to understand?***

This cartoon above from www.lunarbaboon.com is a great example of the power of what I call ***holding space***. When this happens, the person sharing feels heard and validated. It doesn't mean that the listener always completely understands,

but they are demonstrating that they value the person enough to let them share whatever is on their mind and most importantly in their heart.

Too often we are jumping in to someone's sharing and finishing their sentences for them, thinking about what we want to say next, or even worse, jumping in with one of our own stories totally taking the focus off the person sharing and focusing on ourselves. You know when that happens, it's usually goes like this; someone is sharing with you and you jump in with something like "you think that's bad? Let me tell you what happened to me!", sound familiar?

Holding space means to be present, fully present with another person for whatever it is that they are going through and wanting to share, without judging them or trying to "fix" them or telling them what they "should" do. When we are holding space for someone, we open our hearts and offer unconditional support.

When we come from trying to "fix" someone we take away their personal power to come to their own conclusions. Judging them and telling them what to do, or that they "should" have known better only deprives them of the opportunity of their own personal growth. When someone makes their own choices, they are more apt to invest in them. Have you ever given someone your well-intended advice and they didn't take it? Even if they asked for it you were probably upset that they didn't do what you told them to do, right? If you truly want to support someone and come from your heart, they will have a better chance of moving through and beyond what they are going through by you holding the space for them to feel their way through and come up with their own next steps. For you parents, reflect for a moment on when your child learned from natural consequence of their behaviors as opposed to you telling them what they should or shouldn't have done or be doing. Something to think about...

So, I invite you to practice holding space this month and see what your experience is. Here are a few tips:

1. Validate the person's feelings (ie., "I hear that you are really upset", "I hear that you are worried" ...
2. Listen to understand the best that you can
3. Close your mouth and open you heart
4. Don't freak out with silence, you do not need to fill the void

5. Don't give advice. If they ask, "what should I do?" say "I don't know, but I am here for you until you can figure that out".
6. When it appears that they have completed sharing (for now) ask "How can I support you going forward, is there anything that you need"?

Give this a go this month and notice how it has the potential of transforming your relationships with people.

I would love to hear from you how it went! patriciajoy@timeforjoycoaching.com