



EMPATHY IN LEADERSHIP – WHY IT MATTERS

EMPATHY is action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings of another without having them fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner. *also* : the capacity for this. (Webster Merriam Dictionary)

Gerard Egan, professor and Emeritus of Loyola University in Chicago, wrote *The Skilled Helper* book and *The Skilled Helper Workbook*. His model proposes in order to be empathetic with someone, it is critical to have clarity three aspects: feelings, experience/context and behavior/action which is shown in the figure below.

THREE ASPECTS OF THE EGAN MODEL

1. EXPERIENCE/CONTEXT
2. FEELINGS
3. BEHAVIOR/ACTION

FEELINGS

EGAN

EXPERIENCE/CONTEXT

BEHAVIOR/ACTION

“In order to have empathy for someone, it is critical to have clarity.”

JESÚS DE LA GARZA



When listening to another person, Egan proposes that the three aspects of the triangle be as equal as possible. This will ensure that if the person is only sharing feelings without context or behavior, you will not be able to connect to that person in an empathetic way.

One of the biggest challenges with Empathy is the ability to be empathetic with those we are closest to. We just want to fix the problem without considering his or her feelings. For example, if your son or daughter comes to you with a difficult situation the tendency is to solve the problem, rather than connecting and being empathetic, in this case, the triangle may not be equilateral and you focus on one of the three aspects and jump to just finding a solution.

Another challenge has to do with making assumptions. Usually, in a conversation after a few minutes, the listener makes an initial hypothesis of the other person's issue, after this, any questions or comments are to prove their initial hypothesis right or wrong. Keeping the triangle in mind may be an effective antidote to prejudging.

In our businesses and families, we rush to conclusions to try to solve the problem quickly without further explanation. Instead we should keep in mind the balance of the triangle and let he or she discover what is at the core of the issue and explore alternatives.

If the leader has the problem-solving hat on all the time it will be extremely challenging to connect empathetically with the people around them.

THINK ABOUT THE LAST TIME YOU HAD YOUR PROBLEM SOLVING HAT ON AND JUMPED TO CONCLUSIONS. IF YOU HAD USED THIS MODEL, WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED DIFFERENTLY?

In response to the initial question, yes, Empathy can be a very useful tool for Transformative Leadership if the person is willing to master listening skills and can think beyond the end result.

CHECKLIST

- Call: 956.530.0907
- Email: Jesus@monarchleaders.com
- Visit: monarchleaders.com
- Set up a Workshop



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