

Week 6 - Deepening Understanding; “Witnessing Without Fixing”

“They sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great.” — Job 2:13

“Compassion is not a relationship between the healer and the wounded. It’s a relationship between equals.” — Pema Chödrön

Education: Why We Practice Witnessing without Fixing

- Fixing/advising interrupts important emotional processing.
- Witnessing without fixing, or being fully present, allows the speaker to feel fully seen without the listener shifting the focus to their own solution or agenda.
- Offering another perspective too soon can interrupt an opportunity for deepening your own understanding which can bridge a divide.
- You can understand and even empathize with someone else’s worldview without agreeing with it or validating it.
- Tolerating our own discomfort is key to this skill.

Ways to Be Present with Discomfort:

- Push feet into the floor
- Slow down your exhales
- Remember that sensations and emotions you feel are not harmful
- Count to 5 or 10 in your mind before responding
- Practice open ended questions and cultivate curiosity
- When in doubt: go back to your reflection skill!

Discussion Scenarios with Open Ended Question and Presence Practice (Groups of 3-4, 1 person listens, one person asks open ended questions with curiosity):

1. Have you or anyone you know ever been “called out” for problematic behavior? What was the experience like?
2. Did you grow up in a messy or clean living space? How did this affect you?