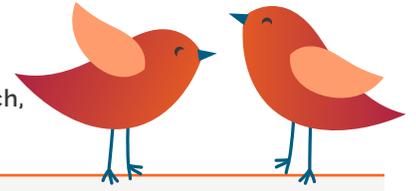


Deepening your connection to others

This document was developed in partnership with the PNH community and Dr. Guy Winch, psychologist and renowned expert in the science of emotional health.



The PNH effect

PNH can at times make you feel lonely or disconnected. So how can you build deeper, more meaningful connections? There are three interpersonal skills that contribute to having longer lasting and more satisfying relationships: **Perspective taking**, **Empathy**, and **Emotional validation**. Each of them is simple to understand, but surprisingly tricky to execute. The below techniques can help.

Three steps to make a change

1

Switch your perspective

Perspective taking involves understanding the other person's priorities and motivations and how they think. As easy as that sounds, we tend to favor our own perspective, neglecting to consider the other person's point of view. Perspective taking requires you to take the time to think through the other person's view to better understand how they see their world.

- **Think of someone in your life with whom you'd like to deepen your connection.** Now consider their priorities, motivations, and perceptions about an issue that is meaningful to them. Write them down.

- **Then, test them out.** Review this with the person and ask them to correct any faulty assumptions you made. Write down their corrections:

2

Be empathetic

While perspective taking involves figuring out how someone thinks, empathy requires you to step into their shoes to figure out how they feel. To do this, direct your awareness to a place your mind does not go of its own accord — what it feels like to be another person — linger there for a moment, and then return to your own reality.

Let's try it

Imagine you call your medical insurance company to dispute a fee. You're aggravated about the charge. You call once, get put on hold, and then get disconnected. Now you're really steamed. You finally get through and are about to unleash on the customer service rep. Pause for a moment and try this:

- **Close your eyes and envision their world** in as much detail as you can. Write down what you imagine (examples: a cubicle, a script to follow):

- **Then consider who this person might be** and write that down. A single parent? A student working to pay for school?

- **Finally, imagine how most callers behave** (example: angrily) and write down what you think the customer service rep's day is like:

Now, imagine you're the customer service rep

Ask yourself:

- **How would you feel** if an angry customer demanded you correct 'your' mistake, even though it's not your error? How much effort would you give to help?
- **How much would you help** a person who was polite and explained the problem without blaming you?

Empathy comes more naturally to some than to others. However, by taking time to paint a picture of what it's like for the other person, we gain valuable insights and deeper connections.

Now choose a person to practice with

Explain a scenario in which you'd benefit from better understanding how they feel. Do the empathy exercise together, then answer:

- What did you learn about how they feel?

- How might the information help you change how you deal with them about this issue?

3

Emotional validation

When someone is angry with you, you might think it would fan the flames to say they have every right to feel the way they do. But when you convey that message — from a place of sympathy and understanding — magic happens. Rather than fueling their fire, your message douses the flame. Emotional validation is something we all crave. When we're upset, what we want most is for the other person to 'get it,' to understand and validate our feelings with sympathy or compassion.

- Now, using the empathy exercise you completed above, write down a statement of **emotional validation**. In the example with the customer service rep you might write: "Wow, it must be tough dealing with angry people. Especially since they're calling to resolve problems that are not your fault. I can imagine the anger must be hard to tolerate." Try it for the person in your life:

- **Read over your text.** Does it convey the exact feelings you had when you put yourself in their situation? If not, how can you improve it, to sound more accurate?

REMEMBER!

No one is perfect at communicating — it requires practice, patience, and time. But you can do it!



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