



***"We are the source of what we are feeling.  
Anyone gets to feel anything, anytime, for any reason."***

Julia Colwell, PhD

## **RESPONDING TO LOVED-ONE'S EMOTIONS**

### **TIPS FOR RESPONDING WHEN SOMEONE YOU LOVE IS MOVING THROUGH PAINFUL EMOTION**

Unfortunately there is a common belief that being a caring partner, friend or family member means you 'should' get into the Drama Triangle with them. Joining them in the boxing ring when they are angry is not helpful. Let them shadow box. Apologizing for their bad day is not helpful. It's placating. Throwing yourself in the quicksand with them when they are feeling down is not helpful. They need you on solid ground and you need you on solid ground with **boundaries**.

- Trying to 'fix' or 'rescue' your loved-one from their emotional experience is not love nor empathy, it's ENMESHMENT.
- Love is allowing your loved-one to move through their emotions. Provide caring space. Be supportive.
- Remain CURIOUS with the Intent to Learn. Listening with curiosity is empathy. This is EMOTIONAL SUPPORT.

### **EXAMPLES OF WHAT NOT TO DO**

- 1** Don't respond or react - in any way - to their angry outbursts, attacks or name-calling. Provide space and time ASAP.
- 2** Don't apologize for their 'bad day,' stressors, their emotions or anything else that is not directly your fault.
- 3** Don't EXPLAIN or DEFEND yourself when they are triggered or are having intense emotions. It's not about you.
- 4** Don't try to 'fix' or make their emotions go away (this is a form of rejection). RESPECT and allow their emotions.
- 5** Don't take responsibility for their emotions. This is ENMESHMENT. Be in your Self with EMOTIONAL BOUNDARIES.

### **WHAT TO DO**

- 1** Keep breathing. Notice your breathing.
- 2** Remind yourself that their feelings are their own. Anyone gets to feel anything, anytime, for any reason.
- 3** Remind yourself their feelings have nothing to do with you. We are the source of our own emotions.
- 4** It's your job to have and process your own emotions. Allow yourself to notice your sensations and feelings.
- 5** Use Openhearted Listening. Stay out of the Dreaded Drama Triangle (DDT).
- 6** Decide if you're available to provide support at this time. You may say "I'm not able to be present right now."
- 7** Ask if they want you to help solve the problem or 'fix' it BEFORE giving advice.  
**Important Note:** Realize there's a difference between complaining and having emotions. We need to just vent at times! Complaining/venting usually means they're not ready to solve the issue yet. Which is okay! It can be cleansing for the complainer, but may feel draining for the listener if they are trying to 'save' or 'fix.' Asking what they need at the moment is helpful. "Are wanting to vent or wanting my help with solutions?"
- 8** Ask if there's anything they need or want. "I'm here. Let me know if there's anything you need."  
**Important Note:** Basic Simple Comforts and/or Physical Touch is sometimes what we really need! A hug. Holding hands. Some soup. Talking is overrated when it comes to moving through intense/painful emotions.