

QC37 Supporting a Suicidal Young Person - Online

Transcript 1: Dr Brené Brown – Empathy

Dr Brené Brown

[MUSIC PLAYING] So what is empathy and why is it very different than sympathy? Empathy fuels connection, sympathy drives disconnection. Empathy, it's very interesting, Theresa Wiseman is a nursing scholar who studied professions, very diverse professions, where empathy is relevant, and came up with four qualities of empathy. Perspective taking, the ability to take the perspective of another person, or recognise their perspective as their truth, staying out of judgement, not easy when you enjoy it as much as most of us do. Recognising emotion in other people, and then communicating that.

Empathy is feeling with people. And to me, I always think of empathy as this sacred space, when someone's kind of in a deep hole and they shout up from the bottom and they say, I'm stuck, it's dark, I'm overwhelmed. And then we look and we say, hey, we climb down. I know what it's like down here, and you're not alone.

Sympathy is oh, it's bad, huh? No. You want a sandwich?

[LAUGHTER]

Empathy is a choice, and it's a vulnerable choice because in order to connect with you, I have to connect with something in myself that knows that feeling. Rarely, if ever, does an empathic response begin with at least.

[LAUGHTER]

I had a-- yeah-- and we do it all the time because you know what, someone just shared something with us that's incredibly painful and we're trying to silver line it. I don't think that's a verb, but I'm using it as one. We're trying to put the silver lining around it. So I had a miscarriage. Oh, at least you know you can get pregnant. I think my marriage is falling apart. At least you have a marriage.

[LAUGHTER]

John's getting kicked out of school. At least Sarah is an A student, but one of the things we do sometimes in the face of very difficult conversations, is we try to make things better. If I share something with you that's very difficult, I'd rather you say, I don't even know what to say right now, I'm just so glad you told me. Because the truth is, rarely can a response make something better. What makes something better is connection.

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