

Empathy

Ice breaker

Divide the participants into groups of 2 or 3 and have them discuss things they have in common, such as gender or eye color. Take 5 minutes to find as many common facts as they can. Share with the group the most unique things you discovered in common!

Introduction

Do you ever hear the word **empathy** and think, now what exactly is that? Empathy is a noun meaning the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. We are not born empathetic. Empathy is cultivated over time. Depending on personality, temperament and family interaction – we may be skilled in this area – or not so much.

There are several ways we can cultivate empathy. One is by *interacting with people*. Through the ups and downs of life, as we laugh and cry with our friends and family, we begin to empathize with them. Another way is through stories, as you engage with the thoughts, feelings and perspectives of those you listen to or read about.

Watch This

This 4 minute video by Brene Brown illustrates different responses we might have – even when we think we're really good empathizers. <https://youtu.be/1Ewgu369Jw>

Discuss

1. In her talk, Brene Brown differentiates sympathy from empathy. She states that sympathy drives disconnection while empathy (feeling with people) fuels connection. Would you describe the family you grew up in as empathetic? If so, what did that look like?
2. What's one way you can demonstrate empathy? How can you show you are listening?
3. Read Romans 12:9-15. What does Paul say about empathy?
4. In your marriage, what is your natural response when emotion surfaces? Ignore it, excuse it, attempt to fix it, deal with it, or something else?
5. How can our prayer request time as a group be an opportunity to practice empathy?
6. The video mentioned four qualities of empathy: perspective taking, staying out of judgment, recognizing emotion in others, and communicating the emotion you see. Why do you think it's challenging to stay out of judgment?

Take away

Decide a way you can honor your spouse this week.

