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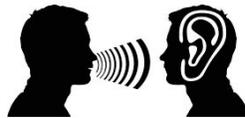
Ascension WI EAP

Compassionate Listening

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As Ascension associates witness and experience the unrest in our society it's important to remember that we are in this together and must look out for one another. Some of us may know individuals directly impacted; they may be family members, friends or co-workers. They may appear to be distraught, disappointed and/or grieving.

Here are some steps you can take to be a compassionate listener as you support those that are struggling.



1. Listen First

Step number one to being a compassionate listener is to simply listen to the people you are trying to support. Do not offer advice unless asked to do so. Just talk to the people in your life who are directly impacted by the cause. Before you add your voice make sure you've heard what the people who are part of those marginalized communities have to say. Try not to ask questions that imply judgement or make assumptions about how a person may feel.

Don't: Use "All lives Matter" as a response to "Black Lives Matter."

Do: Share that you are in support of equality-- just and equal treatment for all.

2. Speak Up But Not Over

Witnessing riots, looting, and discrimination sucks. You know what sucks more? Being the target of discrimination. Seeing your loved ones hurt, misused, and targeted is traumatic.

Identifying with individuals who have the same color skin as you, who have been hurt or had their lives senselessly ended is devastating and evokes feelings of fear, anger and even rage. To be a compassionate listener it is important to make sure you are not putting words into the mouths of the people you are working to support. No one feels supported if their feelings and thoughts are not actually being heard or if their words are being twisted.



Don't say: "It is appalling that black men are being killed but setting fire to property and looting has to stop."

Do say: "It is appalling that properties are being looted and set on fire but killing black men has to stop!"

3. Ask Questions. Be Prepared to Hear the Answers

If you want to know you are supporting someone in the right way, ask! Ask what more you could be doing and ask if there is anything

you are doing that feels uncomfortable. However, don't ask if you are not prepared to hear the answers as they may not always be what you want them to be. We all have personal biases and some we may not even be aware of. It is difficult to confront these biases, but this step is needed to truly support and not cause more harm.

Don't: Make comments like "I hope things change soon."

Do: Tell someone what changes you are going to make to confront your biases that will have a positive impact.

4. Listening is not your time to be heard

When attempting to be a compassionate listener this is not your time to preach about your own beliefs; this is not your teachable moment. It is ok to have a difference of opinion, but when someone is sharing deep pains and fears it is the time for emotional support and validation.

Don't: Preach about how wrong you may believe rioting and looting to be.

Do: Acknowledge that you may not understand how it feels to be discriminated against but can see the pain this type of treatment causes.

It is great to desire to be a more compassionate listener however that is not enough. The next step is to be an ally; to stand up against racial injustices. It is not enough to be an innocent bystander video taping these injustices; use your voice to take a stand against them. It can be scary, difficult, and may bring up feelings of uncertainty, lack of self-confidence, indecision,

or fear of making mistakes, but ultimately it is the moral human thing to do.

Intervene in situations where racism is being passed on. Have conversations with your children, friends, and family about equality.

The fight for equal rights for all is still very much a fight. Stay active. Stay committed. We will make it through, but to get there we need to work together.



If you notice your coworker, family member or friend does not seem like their usual self, make an attempt to check in with that person. Ask if they would like a listening ear. Provide support by being a compassionate listener and validate their feelings.

Being a supportive friend has its own challenges, so if you are in need of a compassionate listener reach out to EAP.

Ascension WI EAP

If you would like additional support please contact your Employee Assistance Program today. Services are free and confidential.

800-540-3758 | eap@ascension.org
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