



## New England Mental Health Technology Transfer Center (New England MHTTC)

# COMPASSION IN ACTION

## 9 Principles for Compassionate Conversations



*"The intention of Compassionate Listening is to access our deepest wisdom to transform separation and conflict into an opportunity for connection, healing, and peace."*

*Gene Knudsen Hoffman, International Peacemaker*

Compassionate Listening is...

- A personal practice – to cultivate inner strength, self awareness, self regulation and wisdom.
- A skill set – to enhance interpersonal relations and navigate challenging conversation.
- A process – to bring individuals or groups together to bridge their differences and transform conflict.
- A healing gift – to offer a compassionate listening session to a person who feels marginalized or in pain.

These principles, adapted with permission from the [Compassionate Listening Project](#), guide the engagements of the New England MHTTC's Racial Equity and Advancing Cultural Humility (REACH) for Organizational Change Learning Collaborative. We encourage you to use these principles as you engage in frank and honest conversations in the workplace. The principles are designed to keep the dialogue grounded so that you can focus your energy on cultivating compassion and respect for others; serving as a witness to another's truth; and listening and speaking from the heart.



### CULTIVATE COMPASSION

**Find ways to connect with the feelings of others and allow that to guide an atmosphere of respect and understanding.**



### LISTEN WITH THE HEART

**Quiet your mind. Stay grounded in your body and create the spaciousness to manage the tension created by a multiplicity of views and feelings.**



### LISTEN OPENLY

**Seek information and experiences that expand your mind. Listening with honesty requires an openness that accepts both the person and their thoughts.**



## RESPECT YOURSELF & OTHERS

Trust each person's ability to solve his or her own problems. Resist giving advice unless asked to do so directly. Be respectful of people's differing tolerance levels and capacity for managing conflict.

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## SUSPEND JUDGMENT OF YOURSELF & OTHERS

Remember to distinguish the impact of someone's words or actions from their intention. Use language that reflects non-judgment when asking questions or providing feedback to others.

## PRACTICE SELF-CARE & TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

With a focus on recovery-oriented care, the New England MHTTC encourages staff to engage in their own forms of self-care regularly. We prioritize the safety and comfort of staff and work to ensure that every team member feels confident in their ability to promote hope and healing. By modeling this principle, we aim to instill this practice among our collaborators and constituents.

## WELCOME CONNECTION YET SET RESPECTFUL LIMITS

Boundaries are all about respect—for yourself and for the other person. Remember, tone and clarity are important considerations when you feel the need to address a comment or practice that crossed a personal boundary or made you feel uncomfortable. If you make it clear that you respect the other person, it's much easier to communicate that you expect them to respect you as well, without anger, sarcasm, or criticism that will only serve to escalate tension.

## STAY CENTERED

Trust each person's ability to solve his or her own problems. Resist giving advice unless asked to do so directly. Be respectful of people's differing tolerance levels and capacity for managing conflict.

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## OFFER LISTENING AS A GIFT

Choosing to keep your opinions and interpretations out of the way is a compassionate way of connecting with and helping the healing of those who are marginalized or in pain.

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## MORE ABOUT COMPASSIONATE LISTENING

Compassionate Listening was conceived by Gene Knudsen Hoffman, founder of the US/USSR Reconciliation Program for the Fellowship of Reconciliation.

The Compassionate Listening Project offers trainings and workshops worldwide for everyday peace-building. The Project's curricula grew out of their many years of reconciliation work on the ground in Israel and Palestine, beginning in 1991.

For more information on the Compassionate Listening Project, visit <https://www.compassionatelisting.org/>