



BEST PRACTICE

5 WAYS TO BE A BETTER LISTENER

WE LIVE IN AN AGE THAT PROMOTES INDEPENDENCE AND BEING ABLE TO GET THROUGH 'ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING' BY YOURSELF, BUT IT'S OKAY TO REALISE THAT SOMETIMES YOU NEED SOME EXTERNAL SUPPORT, SAYS MENTOR, COACH AND AUTHOR DR KATHERINE ISCO.

About a decade ago, I was unexpectedly dumped by a guy who, in my mind, was going to be my husband. 'I just don't love you,' he said.

Of course, being the drama queen I was, I fell to the floor (literally) and started to wail. For days, I couldn't sleep. Once I even drove to his house and climbed through his bedroom window just to be with him. I'm quite positive that I coined the term 'stage 5 clinger'.

While the pain has long passed, the memories of my support network's actions are still vivid. I can easily separate them into two categories:



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GIVING ADVICE IS A NATURAL INSTINCT, BECAUSE DOWN DEEP WE ALL WANT TO BE SAVIOURS. ♪

Category 1: The Cheerers

These make up the majority. These are the friends and family members who hate seeing you hurt which, by the way, is a beautiful thing. As such, they say things like 'keep your chin up' and 'there are other fish in the sea!'

Category 2: The Listeners

These make up the infinitely small minority, my father being one of them. They do one thing, and they do it well: they listen.

Yep, that's it.

After the dramatic dumping incident, I called my father, expecting him to magically make everything better. As I poured my heart out, I expected quick-fix solutions in return. Annoyed and frustrated, I snapped at my dad and said, 'You're my dad, make it better!'

Here's what I got back from my dad, calling me by my childhood nickname: 'Squigs, I wish I could make it better for you, but only time can do that, and I'll be with you every step of the way.'

At the time, I didn't get it. But a few days later, it sunk in. The fact is, giving advice is a natural instinct, because down deep we all want to be saviours. Yes, our natural instinct to incite the God complex goes into overdrive.

We want to be the ones who magically make everything better. But to really help someone, you need to put your ego aside and remember that just being there is the most powerful antidote to pain there is. **AMP**

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5 TIPS ON LISTENING (NOT FIXING)

1. If your mouth is open, you're not listening. Keep it shut and don't be afraid of blocks of silence, as this is where introspection works its magic.
2. Remove the words 'at least' from your vocabulary. Saying 'at least you're still young' is equivalent to a slap in the face after a chemical peel.
3. Connect. Listen to what they're saying and try to find something that reminds you of their pain. If you were in their shoes, how would you be feeling?
4. Don't push. Sure, getting fresh air and going to a party might seem like a good idea at the time, but you can't push someone to do something they clearly don't want to do. In time, when they're ready, they'll let you know.
5. Laugh. No, not at them, but don't be afraid to crack a joke when the time is right. As Charlie Chaplin says, 'Laughter is the tonic, the relief, the surcease for pain.'