

## WEDNESDAY 8<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2020 EASTER SUPPLEMENT 2 STAYING CONNECTED AND CURIOUS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

### Knowledge and understanding of attachment and trauma

#### *Individual and collective grief and loss: Developing empathy*

We're going to return today to Karen's video about individual grief and loss. Yesterday, we considered our own losses. Today, I want to face outwards and look at the losses of others, particularly during the pandemic, but always keeping in mind that what we learn during this time will have significant relevance for our understanding of the impact of trauma and loss, going forward.

Watch the video again:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n9a79NeUARo&feature=youtu.be&app=desktop>

Dr Karen Treisman talks about how the current situation is triggering grief and loss both in the individual and in our whole communities. It's particularly powerful in terms of loss: loss of role, physical contact, income, safety, freedom ... not only loss of a loved one through the virus. Think again about your personal losses, and remind yourself of how you can manage your feelings.

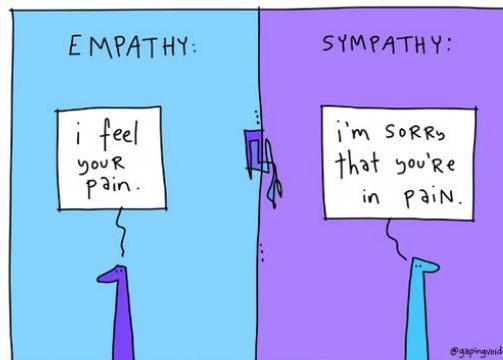
#### **Return to yesterday's questions for reflection**

What losses are the people in your immediate and wider family experiencing?

#### **Action**

Look at the visual representation you made yesterday.

How can you support these others in your life during this time? How can you show true empathy? Empathy is not sympathy:



It's also not

Pity (which can be slightly contemptuous, superior, disempowering)

Thinking without feeling

Taking away the pain

Distracting the person from painful feelings

Empathy is the ability to make sense of the person's feelings and to understand those feelings and convey this understanding to the person, without being overwhelmed ourselves by the feelings. It means being able to think, imagine and feel the pain of another.

It takes courage to think, feel and imagine into the person's experience:

What does it feel like to be a fourteen-year-old who can't go on the school trip, ski-ing in the Italian Alps?

How does it feel to be a 75-year-old who develops a cold and is worried that he is showing symptoms of Coronavirus and cannot receive personal connection with his adult children?

Non-empathic reassurance is characterised by statements that gloss over the child's (or adult's) worry, such as "Don't worry", "Relax", or "It will be OK, there's always next year", "Things could be worse; you probably haven't got the virus."

Empathic reassurance describes the loss and doesn't attempt to minimize or reduce it. Feelings are acknowledged and validated:

"I can see that you're really disappointed that the trip isn't going ahead. How painful for you, you've looked so forward to it."

"Those symptoms must be scary, Dad. And it's particularly tough having to deal with it alone. I'm not surprised you're having difficulty sleeping. It's a very anxious time."

Once this is done, descriptive reassurance can be offered:

"School have told me that the money will be refunded in full. I'm going to open a separate account and put it in there so that it's ring-fenced for whenever the trip is rescheduled. Is there anything else I can do to help you? How about we only eat Italian food for the week you should have been away?!"

"Dad, I'm going to ring the GP and ask her to call you. Write down your symptoms and then when she rings, you'll have the information in front of you. Remember that nothing is trivial, so include everything you've told me. Would you like to make the list together, while we're on the phone?"

Think about those in your immediate and wider circle. What losses are your loved ones dealing with at this time? How can you support them with truly



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empathic responses? Have a go at writing down some scenarios, as above, to clarify and organise your thoughts.

Later this week we shall be considering Questions 3 to 6, so keep your visual representation available.

Don't forget your self-care today: enjoy the sunshine!

Have a good day, keep safe and healthy and ring or email me to chat if that would help. *Jenny x*