

# Empathy Buddies

**Would you like to deepen your NVC practice and also experience being deeply heard?  
With an empathy buddy, you can do both!**

**Here's how it works:**

## **1. Find an empathy buddy and make a date!**

- Ask someone you know who also practices NVC to be your “buddy.” It could be someone who attended a class or training with you.
- Decide where/when you'll meet. Many buddies meet via phone for an hour, and take turns (for 30” each) listening and empathizing with the other. You could also meet less often, for shorter times (say 15” each), or alternate weeks on who shares and who listens empathically. You and your buddy can decide what will best meet your needs. I would recommend meeting at least 2x a month to support connection and continuity.

## **2. Get your buddy date going...**

- Start each call with a brief check in (about 2-5 minutes each). How are each of you feeling in this moment? Is there anything especially “up” for you?
- Decide who will be the first to share and who will be the first to listen. If one person has something more “up” (in need of attention) than the other, you may wish to start with that person. They will be better able to listen and empathize once they've been heard.
- Agree on end time for the first “round.” Usually the person listening is the one to track time. It's sometimes helpful to give a “time check” about 5” before the end of the round, so the speaker knows to move towards closing.

### 3. Listen...and Be Heard!

- As listener, hold an intention to be completely present to the other person. If you notice thoughts and opinions coming through your mind, bring your attention back to the person you're listening to. Try listening with your whole body—so that every cell of your body is focused on listening.
- Start with silent empathy—silently guessing the other person's feelings and needs. Have the feelings and needs list out in front of you for reference to support your connecting with feelings that are free of judgment and needs that are free of strategy.
- Re-cap and pause to support connection, clarity and understanding. "Let me see if I've gotten what I've heard you say so far..."
- Once you've gotten the other person on a content level, you may wish then to guess out loud what they're feeling and needing. "Are you feeling\_\_\_\_ ? ...And you're needing\_\_\_\_?" Give the person space to take in your guess and respond. Base what you say next on what you heard them say so that you are responding in real time to what is most "up" for them in any given moment. Empathy is "live" practice---continually responsive to the moment!
- Remember to avoid non-empathic responses---fixing, advice giving, comparison, story-telling, etc. Your role is to listen deeply, re-cap when helpful to support clarity and shared understanding, and to guess their feelings and needs.
- Once the speaker has been fully heard, they will usually go to strategy on their own. You might also want to check in—are there any requests at this point that you want to make of yourself or another? Check first that they're ready to move to an action phase.

I hope you find it enriching and connecting to have an empathy buddy. Many in the NVC network have found these connections deeply satisfying and meaningful---a way to be heard, practice NVC, and build NVC community and support.