

MARCH 15

*Check with your body. It knows almost instantly
if the connection is a good one.*

—Sark

Empathy vs. Sympathy

When we sympathize, we relate an aspect of someone's story to ourselves, such as when we say: "Oh, I know just how you feel. Last week he did the same thing to me." Another example is: "It's going to be OK. You'll see. I've been through this. Next week you'll feel much better about it!" When we empathize, we reflect the feelings and needs of the other, saying something like "So, you're really worried and want resolution soon?" or "Are you shocked and seeking clarity about why this happened?" Both methods have their value, but in a Nonviolent Communication process, we prefer empathy because it helps people connect more deeply to their own and other's pain, and helps resolve issues with clarity and ease. Empathy is a profound healing technique.

Be aware of when you are giving someone sympathy
rather than empathizing today.



MARCH 16

*Every thought is new when an author expresses
it in a manner peculiar to himself.*

—Marquis de Vauvenargues

Idiomatic vs. Formal Compassionate Communication

Do you sometimes feel awkward when you use the four components of Compassionate Communication (observation, feeling, need, request)? The four components are a tool to help people interact with others in a connected and compassionate manner. Formal use of the language is very valuable for people just learning the Compassionate Communication process. However, the true foundation of Compassionate Communication is to maintain a consciousness that values everyone's needs. If you can truly maintain that consciousness without using the formality of the four components, go for it! For example, formal use of the four components might be: "When you make applesauce with sugar, and I'm allergic to sugar, I feel frustrated and confused, because I value my health. Would you be willing to make another batch for me that doesn't have sugar?" Idiomatic Compassionate Communication could sound like this: "Your applesauce has sugar in it? Oh, I'm really bummed cause I was excited about having some, but I get sick when I eat sugar. How would you feel about making a small batch without sugar for me?" Both methods mentioned an observation, feeling, need, and request. To some, the second method would sound more fitting for everyday conversation. Both of them, however, are honest and connecting.

Be aware of when you are using idiomatic or formal
Compassionate Communication today.

