

G.R.A.C.E.

Roshi Joan Halifax

GATHER YOUR ATTENTION Pause, breathe in, give yourself time to get grounded. Invite yourself to be present and embodied by sensing into a place of stability in your body. You can focus your attention on the breath, for example, or on a neutral part of the body, like the soles of your feet or your hands as they rest on each other. You can also bring your attention to a phrase or an object. You can use this moment of gathering your attention to interrupt your assumptions and expectations and to allow yourself to be present.

RECALL YOUR INTENTION Remember what your work as a therapist is about: to be of service to your client with congruence, empathic understanding and unconditional positive regard. Your motivation keeps you on track, grounded, and connected to your values.

ATTUNE by first checking in with yourself, then with your client. First notice what's going on in your own mind and body. Then, sense into the experience of whom you are with; sense into what the other person is saying, especially emotional cues: voice tone, body language. Sense without judgment. This is an active process of inquiry, first involving yourself, then the other person. Open a space in which the encounter can unfold, in which you are present for whatever may arise, in yourself and in the other person. How you notice the other person, how you acknowledge the other person, how the other person notices you and acknowledges you... all constitute a kind of mutual exchange. The richer you make this mutual exchange, the more there is the capacity for unfolding.

CONSIDER what will really serve the other person by being truly present and letting insights arise. As the encounter with the other person unfolds, notice what the other person might be bringing in this moment. What are you sensing, seeing, hearing, learning? Ask yourself: What will really serve here? Draw on your expertise, knowledge, and experience, and at the same time, be open to seeing things in a fresh way. This is a diagnostic step and the insights you have may

fall outside of a predictable category. Don't jump to conclusions or respond too quickly.

E **NGAGE ethically.** Then **END** the interaction and allow for emergence of the next step.

Part 1: **ENGAGE** Compassionate action emerges from the sense of openness, connectedness, and discernment you have co-created with your client. You draw on your expertise, tools, intuition, and insight. What emerges is principled compassion: mutual, respectful of all persons involved. You use your knowledge and experience to take action and to be of service to your client.

Part 2: **END** the interaction. Mark the end of the interaction with this client. Explicitly recognise when the encounter is over, so that you can both move cleanly to the next interaction or task. Acknowledge what unfolded.

“We live in a time when science is validating what humans have known throughout the ages: that compassion is not a luxury; it is a necessity for our well-being, resilience, and survival. My hope is that the G.R.A.C.E. model will help you to actualise compassion in your own life and that the impact of this will ripple out to benefit the people with whom you interact each day as well as countless others.”

This extract by Roshi Joan Halifax has been edited to fit with a therapeutic model of working.