



E.A.R. a Collaborative Response in Difficult Situations

The following is a simple technique that is effective when responding to people in a conflict situation. This technique will let you connect with the person and calm them.

The technique is called **E.A.R.** It stands for

Empathy

Attention

Respect

The technique allows you to connect with the person's experience and their feelings without necessarily agreeing with them or putting you in a position of having to defend yourself. People want empathy, attention and respect. You can just give it - it is free and you don't sacrifice anything! You are connecting with them around solving a problem, whether you agree or strongly disagree with their part in the problem.

The advantage of E.A.R is also that your calm and matter of fact response will be contagious and hopefully mirrored by the other person. You are setting the tone and calibrating the rest of the discussion.

Example;

Someone says to you, *"You are always so slow in getting things done. You put my work to the bottom of the pile! You are not supporting me!"*

Your response might be: *"I can hear you are very upset and frustrated. I agree we need to solve this. Tell me more so we can work it out. I respect that you are saying this to me to try to find a way forward."*

The above response has the following aspects of EAR.

Empathy: *"I can hear you are very upset and frustrated."*

Attention: *"I agree we need to solve this. Tell me more so we can work it out."*

Respect: *"I respect that you are saying this to me to try to find a way forward."*

Empathy

Remember empathy is not sympathy. Empathy is feeling another person's pain because emotions are contagious. Empathy is about treating the other person as a peer who you are concerned about and who you can relate to as an equal in distress.

Other words you may consider using:

"I can see how important this is to you"

"I understand this can be frustrating"

"I know this process can be confusing"

"I am sorry to see that you are in this situation"

"I'd like to help you if I can"

"Let's see if we can solve this together"

Attention

Getting attention is one of the most important concerns for many people. If you show you are willing to pay full attention for a little while, they often calm down.

Other words you might consider using to signify that you are paying attention include:

"I will listen carefully"

"I will pay attention to your concerns"

"Tell me what's going on"

"Tell me more"

Consider your body language to ensure you are demonstrating they have your attention. You might:

- > have good eye contact
- > nod your head
- > lean in
- > be open in your posture

Respect

Anyone in distress needs respect from others. Even though you may be feeling negative towards this person, you will be able to find some quality in them that you can respect.

Other words you might consider using to show your respect include:

"I can see that you really want to sort this out"

"I can see that you are trying"

"I respect your commitment to solving this problem"

"You have important skills that can help with this"

While you practice E.A.R statements, remember stay calm and remind yourself the other persons upset "is not about you". Don't take it personally. It's about the person's own upset and lack of sufficient skills to manage his or her own emotions.