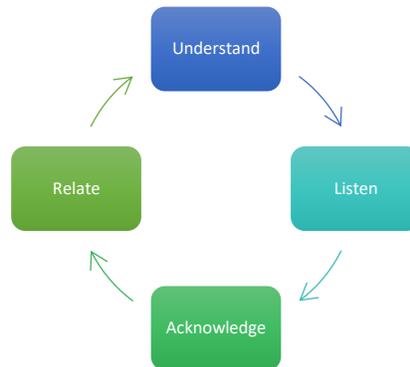




*bringing clarity to employee benefits*



## **Virtuous Circle of Empathy**

**July 13, 2016**

Author, Kristi Hedges came up with the "virtuous circle of empathy". Her writing is extraordinary. And, her writing spoke to me with recent events in my life as well as in yours as an American...

Being empathetic boils down to being open, listening, and acknowledging what you hear. But, it's hard to be empathetic when conflict presents itself. Listening, in particular, seems to be absent. We want our voice heard but our voice won't be heard unless we stop and listen. Empathy gets lost in the heat of the moment.

**Empathy** - why now? Americans have been hit with tragedy. We've watched horrible violence on our TV's (and other media) for years and, most intensely, the last few

months where there seems to be no end in sight. Real leadership seems to be missing. Where are the leaders of oral eloquence and real influence? Where are the intelligent peaceful eloquent leaders of color, of government, of community, and of worship? We have... Too much greed. Too much selfishness. Too much politicking. We are under siege by narcissism.

### **Empathy is the opposite of narcissism.**

**Understanding** - During my 32 years of professional employee benefits communication, I've learned that my job, first and foremost, is to try to understand everything that I can about a person, which includes the business and their employees. I try to put myself in their shoes. And, when I do, it is the right beginning...

**Listening** - It takes a lot of strong effort to listen. It's much easier for us to talk about ourselves. I've learned to listen. But, by nature, I am curious. Listening is a skill to be learned and I've practiced it a lot. Not all professionals are trained to listen. Innate curiosity gives rise to finding solutions. Employers need to listen to their employees at all levels and employees need to listen to their employers. Ultimately, the employer needs to be a leader from whom the employee wants to learn, listen and grow. And, the curious employee will succeed all day long.

**Acknowledgment** - Don't we all like to be acknowledged? Don't we all like to have our positions validated? I've learned to acknowledge without surrendering my beliefs or myself. In some instances, I've had to acknowledge that doing business with some is not beneficial to me or them and walking away is the best for us both. Leaders acknowledge and know when to back off.

**Relate** - Being able to relate to one another on the basis of similar experiences is all that we have. You get to the final state of excellent "relationship" by mastering the previous three steps. How are you able to relate to someone if you first have not taken

the truest time to understand, listen or acknowledge? And, hopefully, when you do understand, listen and acknowledge, you find peace in knowing that the best relationships are based on reality.

So, in America, we need to find and support leaders who know how to demonstrate an empathetic leadership style so that we produce positive results in community engagement, motivation to do good, and camaraderie among all Americans. It sounds Polly Anna-ish, but I don't think it's stupid. It's the highest of human intelligence. For me, I promise my family, my friends, my colleagues, my clients and their employees, and my future clients and their employees that I will continue to practice the "virtuous circle of empathy" to produce the most positive results imaginable.

Hello America.



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