

## Week 27 Practice

Empathy is the spontaneous response of our soul to the full range of human experience. So, when we have difficulty empathizing, it is because something—usually our defensive, judging, critical mind—is interfering with the natural response of our truest self. As you go through your week this week, you will have many opportunities to empathize with people around you: stories in the daily news, the postings of people on Facebook, and interactions with strangers, co-workers, friends, and family. Inevitably, you will discover that something interferes with your ability to empathize. So this week:

1. *Monitor yourself.*

2. *In a notebook or on your phone, record which of the five barriers to empathy are interfering with your empathy: “I don’t want to go first,” “I don’t agree with you,” “I don’t want to get it wrong,” “I don’t want to feel that,” and/or “It’s not my job to fix you.” If necessary, identify additional barriers I did not list.*

3. *As you begin to get a sense of your biggest barriers, begin to list the values, beliefs, or opinions that are the foundation of that barrier (e.g., Don’t ever let anyone take advantage of you, What’s right is right and what’s wrong is wrong, If you can’t do it right then don’t do it at all, Pain should be avoided at all costs, What’s the point of talking about something if you can’t fix it?). Consider exchanging that value for the higher value of connection and belonging.*

4. *Enter into at least one interaction with one of your people with the goal of overcoming that barrier and providing empathy.*

Choosing who we will invest our time, energy, and vulnerability into is a big decision. Finding and cultivating graceful places of belonging is some of the most important and complicated work of life. But you can simplify it a little. Empathy is the building block of all true belonging. This week, begin to ensure your belonging is built on this solid foundation.