

# Modalities For Empathy

- by Brian Baetz

## 1. Speaking Tradition

- i** • We borrow this notion from Washington and Lee University in Lexington, VA, where students are asked to say hello to one another as they cross paths. Not just to friends, but to everyone that comes into their zone. And not just to students and professors, but to the folks who live in homes adjoining the university and the folks in downtown Lexington. Saying hello to a person is an acknowledgment of your shared humanity. This comes with the understanding that many of us have been raised in urban centres where we were taught not to say hello to strangers. But this has led to a growing lack of connection amongst the wide range of people who live in a community. So I encourage you to start saying hello to more of the people who cross your path (some level of discernment is always encouraged, given the time of day and other contextual conditions). Some may not return the favour, but at least you made the attempt. And there may be a point down the road where your repeated greetings finally yield fruit, and the person responds in kind. And this practice will serve you well in the workaday world, where your boss will make note of your personable nature and your connection to colleagues.

## 2. Hand-Written Notes

- i** • Far too much of what we read is on a screen or in a word-processed format on a sheet of paper. But deep inside of us is the desire to read content that is hand-written. So rather than send a text or an email to someone for their birthday or their anniversary or their promotion, get a pack of simple, in-expensive cards and hand-write a note to your friend or family member. Or make your own card out of a piece of paper or cardstock, and then inscribe a few sentences on the inside in handwriting. Do this in a work setting, and/or for raising money for your favourite charity, and you will see incredible results over time. Handwritten notes—nostalgic, whimsical and endearing.

### 3. Visualization and Feeling

- i** • Athletes do it, performers do it...they project forward to a future situation and they visualize in their mind's eye that they are a huge success. They play a future tape where they finish strong and take the gold at the line, or do an amazing job at acting or singing and they can see the audience applauding wildly. Visualization can be done for any situation, for anything you do in your life, and it is a very powerful modality. Visualization is based on thought and is tied directly to the functioning of your brain.
- To crank up the possibility of a positive future situation, consider going beyond visualization to feeling the outcome. Feeling is tied directly to your heart, and the heart as an organ is much stronger than the brain from an electrical and a magnetic energy perspective. The technique here is different than thinking through to a situation, instead you believe that the positive situation has already happened, and you experience the appreciation and gratitude that you would feel in your heart when it actually happens. By doing this in advance of the situation, you create a powerful electrical and magnetic field from your heart that then brings the positive situation into being. Individually, you can create the life you want through feeling it through your heart. Collectively, we can create the world we want by feeling it through our combined heart-based efforts.
- In summary, visualizing something is powerful. Feeling it through your heart, as if it were already reality, is even more powerful.

### 4. Gratitude Attitude

- i** • What if you went about your day, constantly and consistently feeling grateful? For every person whose path you cross, for every piece of food you eat, for every glass of water you drink, for the clothing in your closet, for the opportunity to learn new things every day, for your parents and other elders who have nurtured you to get you to this point in your life? Sounds like a good way to live, and it may differ considerably from the prevailing perspectives that we see in our modern world.
- Holding this attitude is a practice, a form of meditation. For a few minutes each day, for everything you see or experience, have gratitude for it and for the people and systems that create or maintain its elements. Ultimately this becomes a spiritual exercise, because everything that we see is supported by the Earth and the deep Mystery that allows all of this to occur.

## 5. Deep Listening

- i** • How many times have you felt that you just said something and the person you spoke to did not hear what you said? Or that you are trying to listen to somebody, but are formulating your response to what they are saying while they are still speaking? We're all guilty on both counts, and this points out the need to develop strong listening skills.
  - To aid this, a modality called Deep Listening has you working with a partner with the following algorithm:
  - You speak non-stop for N minutes (where  $3 < N < 30$ ), on any topic(s) of your choosing, while your partner deeply listens to what you are saying. Beyond some head nodding and the odd “hmhhh”, your partner doesn't speak, but simply listens. Deeply.
- Reverse the above, where your partner becomes the speaker for N minutes, and you become the deep listener.
- Practice the above with some classmates/friends, and you will become a better and more engaged listener. And this capacity will serve you very well, both in your downstream personal and professional lives.

## 6. Silence

- i** • We are surrounded by sound. People talking, music playing, construction pounding, buses rolling—the list is endless. But we often have sound coming to us that we have initiated, through our screen time or through other devices. So try for a few moments each day, to court silence. Turn everything off, and simply sit in silence. This could be done for as little as a minute, or as long as you are able, but will yield tremendous benefits in the recalibration of your internal landscape.

## 7. Heart of Peace and Joy

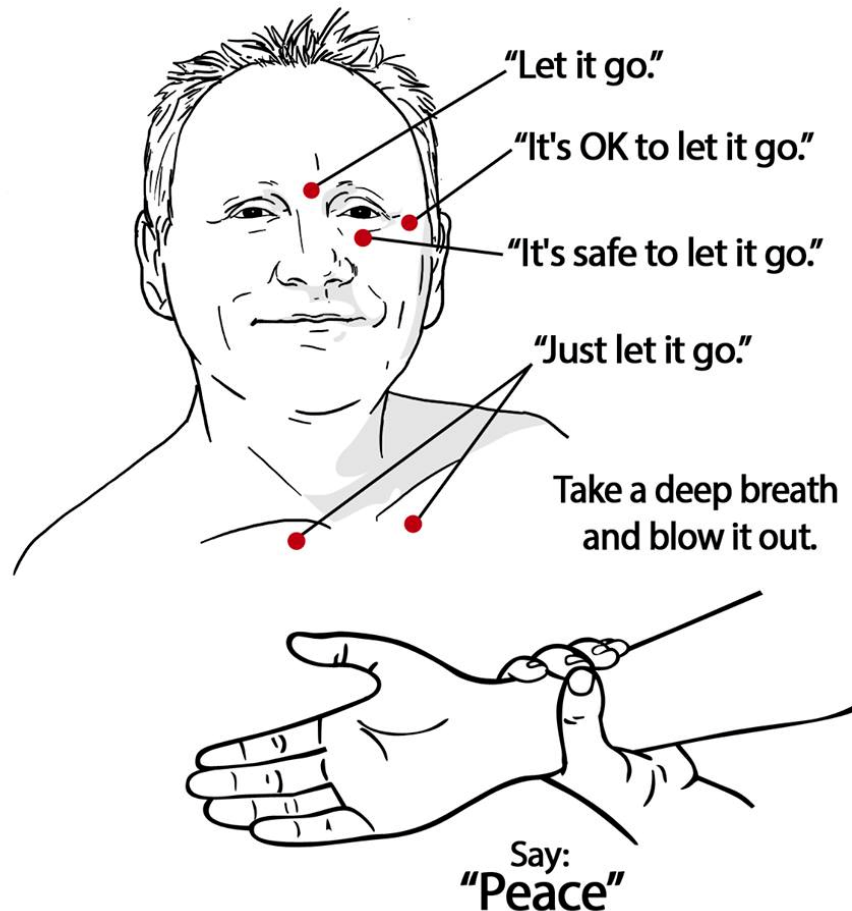
- i** • We say things like “This town has heart”, or “Put your heart into it”, to suggest an intangible quality which is pretty important. Our heart chakra, which is close to our physical heart, is linked to the thymus gland and has also been shown to have strong connectivity to our brain and to the Earth. Some mystics have called the heart chakra the window to our soul, and it may be actually more important for meditation than our third eye. One way to experience this spiritual portal connection is to do a heart-based meditation. Judith Orloff suggests doing this with your eyes closed, and with one hand resting on the centre of your chest. Hold this for as long as you have time, while visualizing that you are making a deep, meditative connection with the Divine. This can be very effective on its own, or as a way to jumpstart your normal meditation if you are feeling restless or unable to focus.
- An extension to this meditation modality is to visualize your heart centre expanding, so that it becomes a spherical volume of a metre or more in diameter. Take your awareness to that space, and imagine it being filled up with equal parts of Peace and Joy. Hold the mental concept of Peace for a moment, and then hold the mental concept of Joy for a moment. Then visualize the mixing of these two concepts, and visualize your heart being absolutely full of this peaceful and joyous blending. Stay in that visualization space as long as your schedule allows. And as you go about your day after this meditation, approach every task you do and every person you meet with the knowing that your heart is full of Peace and Joy!

## 8. Affectionate Writing

- i** • As was mentioned under the Hand Written Notes modality, far too much of what we read is on a screen or in a word-processed format on a sheet of paper. Deep inside of us is the desire to read content that is hand-written. But Affectionate Writing takes this even further. Get that pack of simple, in-expensive cards, or make your own card, and hand-write a note to a beloved friend or a significant family member. Take your time, and choose your words carefully. Be sure to tell the person how special they are to you, and what their presence in your life really means to you. Recall some examples when they went out of their way to help you, or give you their unconditional support. Chances are the receiver will be very touched by your gesture, and may even retain your note or letter for repeated downstream reading.
- Affectionate Writing, in a handwritten format—heartfelt, impactful and enduring.

## 9. Faster EFT (Emotional Freedom Technique)

- i** • We have all suffered emotional pain, and for some of us we hold on to that pain and repeatedly suffer from the holding of negative thoughts or feelings of loss and inequity. This can lead to anxiety and even depression, which can in turn create a downward spiral of negative emotion. A simple technique to release negative emotions is Faster EFT, or tapping. This process is tied to the meridians of the body that are accessed when a person gets acupuncture, and the tapping of these points (with your index and middle fingers joined) along with a verbal release statement can be a very effective way of letting go of negative feelings and thought patterns. The diagram for Simple EFT is given below:, and you are encouraged to practice this to learn how simple and potentially effective this technique can be.



(from Robert G. Smith, [www.fastereft.com](http://www.fastereft.com))

## 10. Entraining Peace

- i** • This is a form of meditation, and could be done for a substantial period of time, or very short micro-bursts of time if you are in a stressful situation. So we start with some kind of mental vision of what peace means to us. It could be a peaceful setting, or the encapsulation of how we feel when we feel peaceful, or the holding of Peace as a noble human virtue. So this vision is held, and we imagine that the vision is entrained within us. To entrain means “to draw in”, so we could imagine the aspects of the mental vision of peace coming into our bodies, into our minds, into our actions. And as we entrain Peace more and more into ourselves, we become Peace. Our minds become peaceful, our bodies relax and become peaceful, our words become peaceful. This is a practice that can be done with other modalities (such as walking meditations, radiation of Inner Love), and once it is well-practiced, it can be a one-second meditation in the midst of a stressful situation.

## 11. Empathy for Others

- i** • We live in a complex world, where considerable inequities exist and even the strongest among us can face considerable personal challenges. But we also live in an increasingly isolated world, where many people live alone and where everyone looks at a screen more than the faces of those around them. As a result, empathy appears to be on a decline, and the lack of compassion felt for others can exacerbate feelings of suffering and loneliness.
- So the challenge is, how can we show more empathy for others? One way is to develop greater connections to those around us. Charles Eisenstein suggests we ask ourselves a simple question when we encounter any individual, ‘What is it like to be them?’ And with that question, really contemplate what it would like to be in deep physical or emotional pain, to be a member of a marginalized or disenfranchised group, to be a person of great wealth, or to be a person who exhibits truly hate-filled behavior? This introspective process will not be easy, but it can perhaps lead us to greater understanding and acceptance of all members of our community. And this will be a huge step towards the healing of our communities, and those individuals interacting within them.

## 12. Radiating Inner Love

- i** • Inspired by John Lennon's lyrics, two Reiki masters from Hamilton came up with an idea to inspire their students. The Love Project, as conceptualized by Ellen Sutherland and Jane Vok, is based on a relatively simple practice. As you encounter anyone on your path in any given day, you take a second and move your consciousness to your heart, and then radiate your Inner Love out to the other person. Not romantic love, but brotherly/sisterly Love [Philos].
- No words need to be spoken (but certainly can be), no smile needs to be given (but certainly can be), just the radiation of the Love that is inside of you. This practice is very simple, but very powerful. And even more powerful, perhaps exponentially so, when done together by a group of people. The recipients will feel the outburst of Love being radiated towards them, so be prepared for an acknowledging smile. This is an absolutely great way to live, simply radiating your Inner Love out to all those individuals you encounter on your path.