

Sympathy, Empathy or Compassion?

Sympathy, Empathy and Compassion – we hear these terms often.

What is the difference, and why should it matter?

There are big differences between the three, and those differences matter – a lot. If you have ever felt like you were responsible for or immersed in another person's problems, consider this:

Sympathy – I feel your problem. I think about it often. Your problem is a source of anxiety and concern for me. I wish I could solve it for you. If I could solve it, I would feel much better. Often I feel your problem in my body or in my personal space. It has become *our* problem.

Sympathy is almost always an *unconscious* process.

Here is an example of an unconscious sympathetic connection: I cannot move ahead in my life until you get out of your depression or addictions. My life essence is so enmeshed in your issues that I am totally preoccupied with them. I may even be plagued with phantom pains and emotions.

While it is true that some Hindu, Christian and shamanic mystics have demonstrated the ability to take on and transmute energy for another, this should be done only by one who has a high degree of self-knowledge, the Higher Self permission, and the power to do so.

Empathy – I feel your problem. I know that it is your problem, yet sometimes I can feel it as if it were mine.

As a conscious process, one can tune in to another person's energy and identify it. If I reflect it back to you, perhaps you will understand yourself better. This can then assist you in making *your own* conscious choice. Conscious empathy is a loving act of acknowledgement and intimate human connection. It is personal.

Those with a high degree of emotional sensitivity have empathy naturally. We have to learn to keep empathy from turning into sympathy or feeling *for* another. For example, unconsciously

feeling for another might look like your shoulder beginning to ache when you meet someone with a shoulder injury. Or you might feel irritable after spending time with an angry person. We don't want to do that.

Compassion – I feel your problem. I sense how difficult it is for you to resolve it. Perhaps I can assist you in discovering a way to empower yourself or together we can co-create a solution. Or I can sit with you and be present to this moment with you. I am holding sacred space for you and with you. Often we need do nothing but hold witness with someone.

Compassion is bigger than the personal – you step into your larger self, your Higher Self. Compassion is not a *doing* activity. It is more of a way of *being*. We simply are compassionate.

What happens energetically...

Sympathy – Generally, the first, second, and/or third chakras are hooked up by energy cords. When you feel sympathetically, you pull the other person's energy into your energetic body – and that will affect how you feel, how you see yourself, and how you see the world. Again, not good.

Empathy – As a conscious process, you touch or sense into that person's energy temporarily in order to feel and understand it. You energetically enter their body or their aura to scan it and determine what is there. You do not merge with them. You are a momentary visitor – and you leave completely and cleanly when you are done visiting. Usually there is little or no energy drain for you, and none of their energy remains in your field.

Compassion – Energy and Light comes from Source and moves from or through you to the other person. It is a conscious process. You *both* receive benefit from the experience – it strengthens and blesses *both* of you.