

Handout: Showing Empathy

There are three types of things you can do to have and show empathy:

1. Understand What Prevents People from Practicing the Promoted Behaviors

- Ask ADRA to **share with you findings of their research** on why people do not practice the promoted behaviors and what could motivate them to do so.
- Remember that telling people what they should be doing usually does not change their behaviors. Be curious and **keep discussing with people**:
 - What do they think about the promoted behaviors?
 - What makes it difficult for them to practice the behaviors?
 - What could make it easier for them to practice the behaviors?
- When you talk to people, **use open-ended questions** as they give you more useful information.

2. Listen Actively

- When a person says something, think about what s/he means by it.
- Use brief verbal responses ('hmmm', 'yes', 'I see', 'uh huh' ...) to show interest and encourage the speaker to continue.
- Use listening and reformulating skills to explore further what a person said (e.g. *"Do I understand correctly that ..."* or *"What I hear you saying is that ..."*).
- Whenever relevant, respond to / build upon what a person said – do not just continue with your 'talk' (e.g. *"You are right that this practice helps. Have you considered also ...?"*).

3. Read and Respond to People's Emotions

- When you meet people, pay close attention to:
 - What they say (the content)
 - How they say it (are they bored? interested? frustrated?)
 - Their facial expressions
 - Their body language
- Adjust your communication to the emotions you see / feel (e.g. if people's attention is fading, you can engage them by asking about their opinion or experience).
- When you know your advice will create difficulties for the community member(s), begin with an empathetic statement that shows you understand their feelings. Then explain why the change you are suggesting is important and the reason for it. For example: *"I realize it is hard to walk two miles to the clinic. I can understand why you would rather just go to the corner store. But it's important that you only get the real medicine they give at the clinic because the store medicine won't work."*