



# EMPATHY BLOCKERS

There are things we do as parents/adults that block empathy and shut down conversation with our young people...

## WHICH EMPATHY BLOCKER ARE YOU?

**Check the box** of the Empathy Blocker that best describes you. **Flip it over** and ask your young person to **check the box** they think best describes you.

☐ **The Advisor/Fixer**

Jumping in with advice can feel like you don't think they can handle their situation. Young people tell us they want to be heard before they are helped.

**Instead:** Let them feel heard by saying "I hear you" or "Tell me more."

☐ **The Catastrophizer**

Jumping to worst-case scenarios adds your anxiety to theirs. It can make young people feel misunderstood and less likely to tell you things in fear you will over-react.

**Instead:** Message calm by saying, "I have confidence you will sort this out."

☐ **The Minimizer**

Downplaying your young person's feelings can make them feel like their emotions don't matter.

**Instead:** Validate their feelings with phrases like "That sounds hard" or "I can imagine how frustrating that must have been."

☐ **The Interrogator**

Too many probing questions can feel overwhelming. It can shut down the conversation and make your teen defensive.

**Instead:** Ask them: "How can I be helpful?" or "Do you want advice, or do you just want to vent?"

☐ **The Historian**

Bringing up "back in my day" stories shifts the focus to you instead of your young person and can make them feel unheard.

**Instead:** Recognize times are different with phrases like "I know it can be harder today with social media and technology."

Adapted from "Empathy Blockers" in Healthy Relationships 101 by Michael Jascz



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