

ON BEING EMPATHIC, reprinted from Molly's blog

There are many gifts and challenges to being an empath. Here's some of what I have learned about being an empath, validating my empathic skills, and taking better care of myself as an empathic person.

WHAT IS AN EMPATH?

Being empathic is one way to describe a general ability to sense what people are feeling without conventional methods of information gathering. In other words, empaths often know what another person is feeling, even when the other person doesn't tell or show them this.

Empaths often have very accurate information without any conventional explanation for how they know what they know. Sometimes this extends to knowing what is going on physiologically for people, as well as knowing how they are feeling emotionally. Empaths have learned to read people's electrical patterns and translate this information into thoughts like, "This person is angry." or "That person is sad."

Empaths take an ability that lies latent in all of us, this ability to read each other's energy field, and developed this into a skill set. Some people are born more empathic than others, but often times this skill set is improved through conscious as well as unconscious use.

There are many reasons someone might develop this skill set. First, let's look at the situation for empathic children and why they might hone their empathic skills.

GROWING UP EMPATHIC

In general, growing up as an empath can be confusing. It is particularly confusing when an empathic child knows what people are feeling, but these emotions remain unacknowledged by the people feeling the feelings.

Another confusing aspect of being an empathic child is that adults often do not acknowledge it is possible that a person can empathically sense what other people are feeling. This can make an empathic child feel lonely and anxious that he or she is imagining things.

Even when no one acknowledges these skills, many empathic kids develop their empathic skills anyways. One motivation for developing these empathic skills is a self protective one. Take a common situation in which what is said in a family is out of alignment with what actually happens in the family. An example of this might be parents talking about what a harmonious and happy family they are, when the adults are actually unhappy and take this out on their children through abusive behaviors.

Empathic children find that in order to be prepared for what the adults in their life are actually going to do, versus what they say they are going to do, it helps them to hone their empathic skills and listen to the emotional subtext.

Empathic children zero in on this split between what people say and how they feel because it can help them be slightly more prepared for unpleasant events. However, this split between how adults talk about the world and how empathic children experience it can be very difficult for the child.

I told an empathic child I was writing this blog and asked her about her daily life. She said that it was very lonely. She mentioned the common occurrence of standing around with a group of peers. She said she can feel when someone who says nice things to her really doesn't like her. She said the difficult thing isn't this dislike, but that she has no other friend who feels the same

emotional subtext. If she mentions to another peer that a person doesn't like her, her peer will say, "What do you mean? She just said she liked your hair." This child empath said she felt very alienated from her peers because of many experiences like this.

No matter who we are, it is so important to have some other person contain and validate our experiences. However, for an empathic child, the adults in his or her life may be unable to validate their child's abilities or unwilling to contain the child's empathic awareness. This leaves the child with the choice to either cut off from this empathic part of himself or cut off and hide this part of himself from the people in his world who deny his empathic gifts.

People may have benign motivations for questioning an empathic child's experiences. They may not be aware that anyone can empathically know what another is feeling and therefore believe they are helping an empath by talking her out of her insights.

Sometimes however, people may be focused on controlling the flow of information in a situation by denying the emotional subtext. Parents of an empath may not be ready to look honestly at the situation that their child is seeing more clearly. Peers of an empath may not want to admit what a cut-throat situation they find themselves in socially. There are many reasons parents, peers, or other people may be unable or unwilling to validate a child's empathic experiences.

I love knowing there are empathic children who have parents containing their empathic experiences and acknowledging them as legitimate and real. What a wonderful way to develop one's empathic skill set- because a parent or mentor is acknowledging it and holding it to be authentic and valuable.

I suspect most adult empaths have not had this kind of childhood and therefore have a complicated set of issues to resolve in adulthood.

BEING AN ADULT EMPATH AFTER A CHILDHOOD WITHOUT VALIDATION

Empaths who have not been contained by an adult during their childhoods often have a difficult time containing themselves as adults. While they may have developed excellent empathic skills, they won't necessarily back up their sixth sense. Why? Because they have had no model for this process.

Empaths have so often been at the receiving end of personalities who would rather have them not mention what they know. This means the self edit button and the self judgment button are often well developed and well used by empaths. It is a worthwhile but challenging process to begin to validate what our empathic self knows.

Another difficulty for empaths involves discerning what emotions belong to whom. While empaths can probably read the emotional context of any given group of people extremely accurately, if they have not had a mentor explaining to them how to discern what emotions belong to whom, they have little or no frame of reference about what is going on and can easily get confused about whose feelings they are reading.

After all, empaths have accumulated a lot of shaming experiences in which other people have told them they are imagining other people's negativity, so they often come to the conclusion that any negativity they sense must be their own.

Say an empathic adult without any positive mentoring goes to a party where everyone is acting very festive. The empath may feel at once that there is great tension and anxiety in the room and that nobody is having a good time. The empath has probably seen it a thousand times before and can read the situation with great skill. However, the empath may be predisposed to think she is

imagining the bad mood of the gathering or spoiling the mood of the party with her own projection of negativity. That's probably what she was told enough times when she was a child to make her conditioned to own the whole experience as her problem. In point of fact, the empath is probably accurately reading what is going on and the tense emotions do not belong to the empath.

The empathic skills from childhood to read a gathering and then brace for what may happen can continue to leave an empath feeling isolated, unless she also learns to back herself up. In this case, backing herself up might mean leaving the party where everyone is trying too hard to have fun and finding genuine fun elsewhere. It would mean trusting her read on the situation and not feeling like she has to defend her read before a court of law in order to know it is accurate. It would also mean not taking the emotions of the party on as her own creation therefore making it her job to fix the party by leaping on a table and trying to entertain the crowd or in some way trying to soak up every sad piece of energy in the room.

It is a big understatement to say that many empaths believe that everything they are feeling is their stuff. They usually have had no one offer them the understanding that a lot of the feelings they experience are from moving through other people's energetic or electrical fields and DO NOT belong to them. In fact, as I mentioned before, they probably have had a lot of experiences in which people told them the feelings DID belong to them.

This confusion about who owns what can be a consequence of growing up in a household where empathic skills are not recognized. If, as a child, there is a lot of emotional business not being acknowledged in a household, the empathic child STILL feels these unacknowledged feelings. A few instances in which an empathic child mentions whatever is going on and gets told that she is imagining things can leave this child with a life long tendency to take everything on. Once this pattern gets set, it's not a leap before the person believes if all the emotions are her emotions, then all the clean up is hers also.

I am sure that there are lots of other complicated factors here, but it does seem to be a pattern for most empaths to feel responsible for everything they feel. This can set up a lifelong pattern of confusion about whose business ANY problem is.

In the best of all possible worlds, a child might learn not only that her empathic gifts are real, but also that while it is sometimes appropriate to do something with her insight, oftentimes there is nothing that she needs to do with what she knows but LET IT GO.

HOW TO HEAL THE CONFUSION

It is a terrible burden to feel responsible for cleaning up so many feelings, but it is also a logical conclusion to draw when the adults in an empath's childhood deny all the emotions swirling about.

One fellow empath continually reminds me to be gentle with myself as I try to figure out what problems belong to whom. My own tendency has been to add insult to injury. When I realize I have taken on somebody else's emotional problem as my own, I don't just let go. I let go and then give myself a hard time about my confusion. It is important to realize that empaths live through intense situations without any guidance for how to handle these situations. As we learn management skills for our empathic skills, kindness to ourselves is so appropriate and helpful.

One difficulty that occurs when we think everything we feel is ours is that we often keep all these feelings in our own energy system versus watching them come and go without any sense of personal responsibility. This is very hard on our energy system and is something that negatively affects our health and well being.

There are many reasons why carrying other people's emotions as our own does not help anyone. First, it prevents people from dealing with their own business. If an empath takes on another's energetic business, the empath prevents this person from getting on with the work of solving his own problems. But please no shame here! If you have a tendency to take on other people's emotions as your own, it is almost certainly because as a child you were encouraged to do so. As you get clear about why it is not helpful to do this, try to course correct without self-judgment!

Another profoundly important reason why it is not a good idea to take on other people's emotional business is that it wears on our electrical and physical systems to carry all this stuff that is not ours.

When I was growing up, there was a little old lady living next door named Hermina. Her life was one business transaction after another and she financially triumphed in every situation. She owned several houses in our neighborhood and her annual rent negotiations were epic battles. Her killer instinct extended into all realms of life.

When I was about ten, I noticed that yet again, the ripe berries in Hermina's berry patch were going to the birds. I asked her if I could pick her berries. I have a thing about berries. Even then, it made me feel upset to see ripe berries going unpicked. Hermina's deal with me was that I would pick all her red currants and raspberries and she would give me half of what I picked. I am certain she never gave the fairness of this arrangement with a ten year old a second thought. A more uneven trade with Hermina came when I was about fifteen. I painted her entire house in exchange for a heavy Nikon camera that she could no longer use, because she could not hold it steady.

Okay, so I was not the sharpest tool in the shed when it came to negotiating with this woman, but honestly, I do not know of any story about Hermina in which she did not get the best end of the bargain. Nor can I remember any instance in which she did a thoughtful thing for another person, even an infrequently visiting grandchild. The point of this story is that she lived way into her nineties in the pink of health. She never had an empathic moment in her life and therefore never carried anyone else's burden for even a moment. No doubt there were many other contributing factors to her good health, but her lack of empathy put less stress on her energy system.

I am not advocating living like Hermina. It is a tragic way to engage with the human community. However, it is an excellent practice to be helpful in any way we feel called to help AND THEN make sure we have cleared our own energetic fields and are no longer carrying anyone else's emotions or energetics in our fields.

I have had a lot of difficulties learning to be more meticulous about clearing my energy field. I had the usual confusion about who owned what emotions and often didn't realize what a spring cleaning I needed. It also took me years to realize I needed to ask if it was my job to take on other people's emotional business. This would seem to be a straightforward enough question with a straightforward enough NO answer, but I often lapsed into the confused thinking of my childhood in which it worked for the adults around me to have me own their emotional garbage, work to cheer them up, or in some way try and "fix" them.

This is another part of the dynamic for an empath. We seem to often attract people who are happy to have us carry their emotional stuff for them. It is a challenge to remember that their personalities and our personalities may not make the wisest decision about who should carry the emotional baggage in any situation. Our divine selves do a better job of knowing that we all need to carry our own stuff and no one else's.

As a young adult, I had a dramatic learning lesson in a situation in which no one was asking me

to carry anything for them. I thought because I could read the energy of a gathering of people, it was my job to “fix” their energetics. There were many problems with my process, including this idea that there was anything to fix, but first the story.

Way back in the early 1990’s, I was giving a talk to a couple hundred people at the annual American Dowsing Convention in Vermont. This was before I had much practice seeing my own patterns of over responsibility at work or had any tools to shift my patterns. But let me tell you, did this experience ever motivate me to learn some new tricks!

Dowsers are incredible networkers and information gatherers, but they don’t always take the time to ground what they are learning into their bodies. At their annual convention, many dowsers walk around with so much mental energy and new information collected above their heads that it’s amazing they can stand up. As I began my talk to the convention, I sensed the ungrounded nature of the crowd and decided, without being asked and without checking with my own guidance, to “help” them out by grounding all the mental energy for them through myself. I don’t exactly know what I did or exactly why I did it, but I sure experienced consequences for my decision.

I walked into my talk in good health and after my “helpful” gesture, I staggered out of the meeting hall with full blown pneumonia. Whoa! Talk about a wake up call!

A year later, when I returned to speak to this group again, I went with trepidation. I had thought a lot about the event during the intervening year, but I wasn’t completely convinced I had figured out what had happened or how I could correct it. I didn’t want to live frightened of such situations, so I knew I had to go back and try again. I had to see if I had learned anything during my year of searching for answers.

First of all, I realized there was nothing wrong with the crowd. They were just being their curious selves. I also realized their ungroundedness was their business, but that because of my empathic nature, it was difficult for me not to tune into it this ungroundedness and click into my pattern of “fixing” this, because I did not like the feeling of such ungroundedness myself.

I decided to begin my talk with a guided meditation in which I gave everybody a chance to ground themselves. This gave them a free will opportunity to ground or not. I tried not to move any energies through my own body. I also offered a Sunflower Flower Essence to anyone who wanted to take it to help with this grounding process. I decided to try not to feel into the energy of the crowd in any way, shape, or form but just give my talk and then let go.

It was a moment of satisfaction, relief, and gratefulness as I walked out of the talk in good health. I cannot tell you that I never goofed up again during the years I was out talking to large crowds, because I did, but this was a moment of getting to see I had learned something!

An additional thing that I would do now in the same circumstance is stop after my talk to do a short meditation to clear my field. Here is this process which you may recognize as a variation of the land clearing process I described in my blog.

PROCESS TO CLEAR YOUR ENERGY FIELD

Ground yourself to the heart of the Earth and anchor yourself in the heart of God. You can spend a few moments and feel this connection to the highest and purest of God as it comes into your energy system through your crown chakra, down through your third eye and throat, grounding in your heart. Expand this energy and move it through all your limbs, out through your arms and legs and down through your third, second and first chakra. You can see yourself moving this energy all the way to the heart of the Earth if you like.

Ask your Godself to clear from your energy field all energies that are not pure God that you have taken on subconsciously, unconsciously, or consciously. This includes clearing your field of all emotions, thought forms, entities, beliefs that are ancestral, karmic, psychic, psychological, or from the mass consciousness. Cleanse your physical, emotional, mental, and etheric bodies.

Send all the energies that you are releasing out through a christed grid. THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT! A christed grid is not a religious thing. Using a christed grid means that the energies will be purified as they leave you so that they will return to where they came from anonymously. The energies are received back from where they came in a way that doesn't encourage a new cycle of back and forth emotions to be created.

For example if you picked up Jane Doe's anger and then return it to her through a christed grid, she just gets her own energy back to deal with. If you don't use the christed grid, Jane Doe might feel that you were personally sending her new anger not her old stuff, and she might want to send you the anger right back.

The christed grid is useful for another aspect of this process. Sometimes we leave a part of our highest, purest God self with someone else or somewhere else for various reasons. Now is the time to call that energy back, again moving it through a christed grid on its return so that it is washed clean and doesn't create a new cycle of exchange.

When the clearing and cleansing is done, ask God or your Godself to fill in the space with more of God's purest and highest loving vibration. No sense leaving a vacuum that can be filled with any old stuff! I ask God to pour pure divine light and love through me and then visualize God literally pouring a pitcher of liquid divine light down through every part of my body.

SOME SUGGESTED FLOWER ESSENCES FOR EMPATHS

Flower Essences offer us the healing balancing and strengthening divine wisdom of Flowers in a more durable form than a fresh Flower. They are not chemical. Instead they offer electrical information. Because empaths are so sensitive to electrical information and are so good at reading this information, we can easily learn from the kind of energetic wisdom on offer in a Flower Essence.

Here are some Flower Essences that may be particularly helpful for empaths.

Golden Armor- While we have often stressed Golden Armor's support to buffer out machine made electrical dissonance, it also helps keep inharmonious emotional energies out of our field too. This Flower Essence combination mix contains our best Flower Essences for maintaining the sanctity of our energetic boundaries. I can't recommend it too highly for empaths,

Flee Free- This mix offers more support to keep your energetic field clear. The Angels often work very metaphorically with Essences, so think of using this one if you have someone who is being a pest in your life.

Watch Your Back- Another one to keep your field clear, but remember to think metaphorically here too ie this might be a good one if you are shouldering burdens that are not yours to carry, you need to get another's person off your back, or you feel someone is back stabbing you, etc.

Violet Transmuting Flame Violet- This one is helpful with cleansing work because you can use the Violet Flame Flower Essence and process to help yourself AND the people whose stuff you have inadvertently picked up. This addresses the common empath desire to help others. Working with this Essence, you help yourself but also don't shame the wounded part of yourself that thinks it's

not nice to clear your own field at another's expense. It's good to remember that you are just sending people back their own stuff, but this Violet Flame process helps erase all the negativity, so working with this tool you don't send back as much stuff because a lot of it has been transmuted. It is a win- win situation.

The Alignment Garden- This powerhouse helps to keep us on purpose and in alignment with our divine self and authentic mission in life. This helps us not fall into old patterns of taking on stuff that is not ours. Perhaps this is why it makes people feel so lighthearted!

All Ego Contracts Null & Void- This is a tremendously helpful Essence when we want additional support to cut ourselves free from old ego agreements we have with others to carry their burdens or inappropriately take care of them.

Spiderwort- Offers help to discern what is our business and what is not.

Thistle- Any Thistle Flower or spiky Flower blossom helps empaths when they feel their energy system in being invaded or dumped on. Lots of spiky Flowers including two Thistles are in Golden Armor and Flee Free, however you may get called to a specific one of these Flowers for a specific situation.

Abutilon and Wild Abutilon- These two are for better protection from inappropriate sound vibrations. These two Flowers help empaths who have sensitive hearing. You know you are one of these folks if you cannot stand listening to a lot of music without feeling really rocked emotionally. The Abutilons helps with all kinds of hearing sensitivities.

To Thine Own Self Be True- This mix offers more clarification about our true calling and life purpose as opposed to ideas we might have picked up in childhood or from the mass media like, "I am here to be someone's doormat." This mix helps us find momentum on the road to our own true life.

To Hear the Angels Sing- This mix offers guidance about staying on mission and support to feel at one with our divine self that knows the perfect balance between self and selflessness, service without servitude.

The Family River Trio of Black Currant, Borage, and Bloodroot- This trio is helpful if you are working on the issue of not taking care of family member's emotional stuff because, "they are family and you owe them". See the blogs "The Emperor's New Clothes" and "More on the Family River or Farewell to Rusty Plumbing" for more info on this topic.

Abandonment & Abuse- When other people get demanding in a way similar to what happened in our family of origin, we can trigger back into thinking we are back in this circumstance and must respond as we were trained to respond by picking up whatever emotional garbage they want to dump. This Essence combination helps us to heal this wound and our PTSD reaction so we no longer fall into this old pattern, but can experience this kind of triggering situation with a new confidence that we are in a new life where we can deal with any situation with appropriate love for all, including ourselves.

Loving What Is- This Venus Garden combination mix is excellent for empaths who were trained by their family of origin to think it was their job to fix everything. This really helps an empath to finally know that everything is okay just as it is.

Flow Free- Keeps everything moving out of our fields! A must have for empaths as far as I am concerned!

ONE FINAL THOUGHT

Sometimes it is not so simple to clear our energy field, even when assiduously doing this meditation or using some of these Flower Essences. In my own life, I sometimes I need to examine my patterns in conversation with myself or with another's in order to see my confused thinking and get the click that helps me to let go of someone else's stuff. One thing I have to watch for in myself is that I often pick up the energies of people that remind me of some of the adults from my childhood. Their archetypal behavior can trigger my old responses of over responsibility. Sometimes it is not enough to remind myself of the logic of a situation. Yes, I know it is better for someone to take care of his or her own emotional business, but my own patterns can get activated almost subconsciously. This is why I try to check my system after finishing this clearing to see where I am still holding on. Sometimes it takes awhile to let stuff in my field go, but persistence with Essences, the cleansing practice and the examination process helps. As I see the patterns in my daily life more clearly, I may suddenly know I have some more energetics that are not mine to clear from my field. This is an ongoing process.

For all the difficulties with being empathic, there are also the amazing gifts of being able to feel what it is like to walk in another's shoes. This can open such floodgates of love and oneness. I am most grateful for these experiences. Empathic skills are infinitely precious. They are skills we need to honor, acknowledge, and support!