

# Empathy Busters, Definition of Empathy, and Empathy Formulas

## S.U.D.S. (things that don't help a friend who is upset):

### 1. Solving the problem

Examples: "I'll fix it." "I'll talk to her for you." "I'll get you a new one."

*Many people make this mistake when trying to comfort a friend. It is common to think everything would be fine if we could just solve the problem! Problem solving is a useful skill, but the timing must be right. What is helpful initially when another person is upset is simply expressing empathy, validating the other person's feelings, and inviting him or her to talk about his or her feelings. Rushing to solve the other person's problems often makes the person feel as if his or her feelings are being dismissed or invalidated.*

### 2. Unsolicited advice

Examples: "Well, if I were you...." "I think you should...." "Why don't you just...?" "I recommend that you go ahead and...."

*Again, offering advice right off the bat is not usually helpful or welcomed by a friend who is hurting. Instead, wait for advice to be sought. In the meantime, express empathy and actively listen. Just be there.*

### 3. Dismissing feelings

Examples: "It's not that big a deal." "You shouldn't feel that way." "I'll give you something to cry about." "Get over it." "That's no reason to be upset."

*This response makes it seem as though the person is wrong for feeling a certain way. Feelings are not right or wrong ... they just are.*

### 4. Sarcasm

Examples: "That's just a such a tragedy!" "Oh, it's just the end of the world." "Boo hoo, whah, whah, what a crying shame."

*Sarcasm will make an upset friend feel put down and/or misunderstood.*

**Definition of Empathy:** This refers to trying to understand what someone is thinking and feeling and conveying that back to them. For example, a friend is crying, so you say, "You seem upset."

## Empathy Formulas (ways to talk to a friend who's upset that will help):

1. "You seem \_\_\_\_\_" (insert feeling word).

2. "You look \_\_\_\_\_" (insert feeling word).

3. "You sound \_\_\_\_\_" (insert feeling word).