

# Compassionate Conversations



## A Compassionate Conversation:

*“Is the gift of Christian love and nurture from one who attempts to mediate the gracious presence of God to another.”*

**(David G Benner)**



# Why are compassionate conversations important?



- People need to know the love of God with “skin on”.
- Nobody cares how much you know until they know how much you care.
- Gateway for helping people to connect with God.

# Why are emotions/feelings important in compassionate conversations?

**My emotions/feelings are the way I am experiencing life right at the moment.**

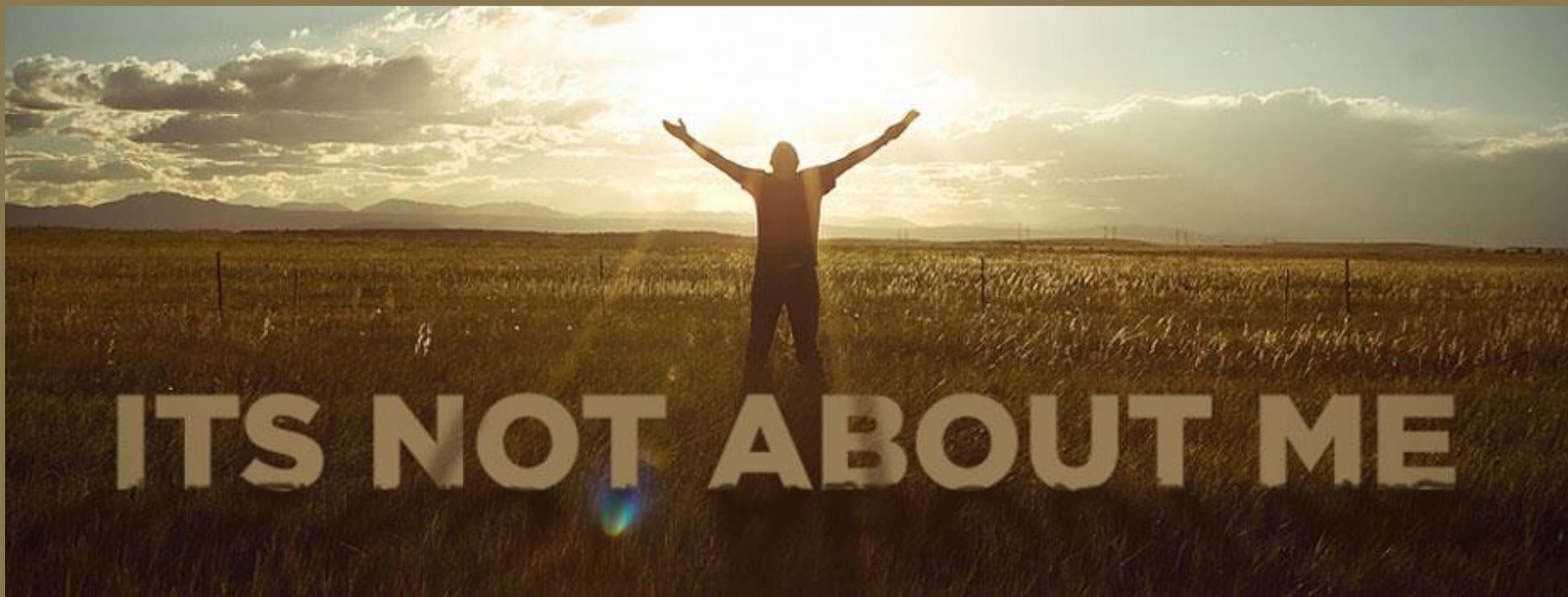
**If you don't hear and acknowledge my feelings you don't hear and acknowledge me!**



# Compassionate Conversations: Model

## Attentive Body Language





**ITS NOT ABOUT ME**

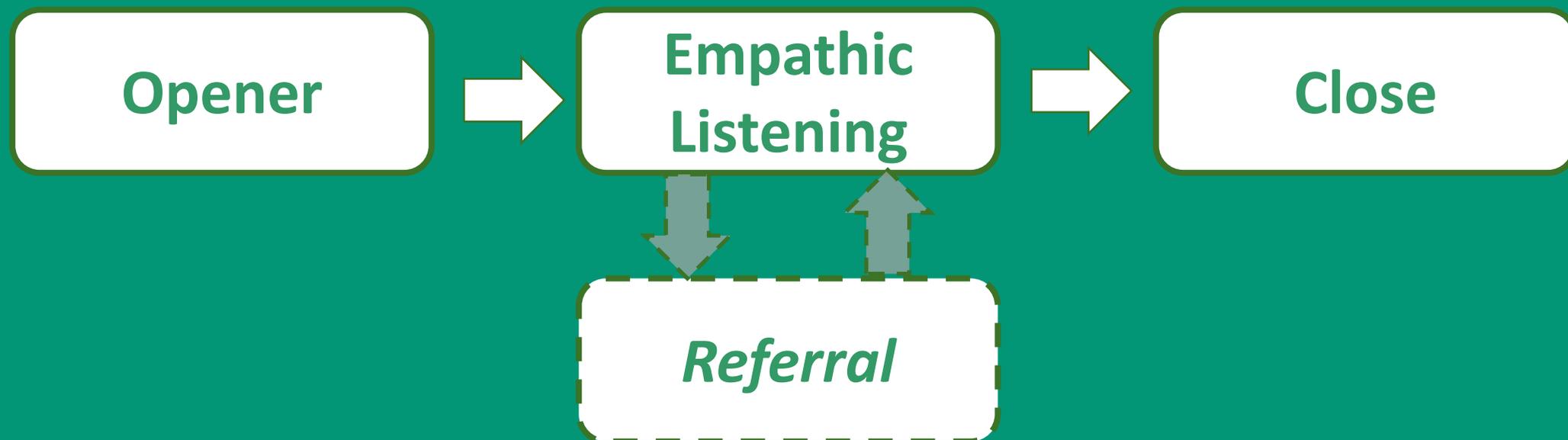
# Attentive Body Language



- Face the person
- Natural eye contact
- Lean forward
- Open posture
- Head nods
- Appropriate touch

# Compassionate Conversations: Model

## Attentive Body Language



# Opener

- **Greeting:**
  - Hi, how are you?
- **Noticing display of emotion:**
  - You seem happy
  - You seem to be upset
  - You seem to be weary
- **Noticing something about the person**
  - That is nice scarf, is that new?



# Purpose of the Opener



Give the person a cue that it is okay to speak about themselves and what is going on for them. That we are interested in them. To encourage them to share more about themselves.

# Compassionate Conversations: Model

## Attentive Body Language



# What is empathic listening?



Is paying attention to the content and feelings of another person's communication in such a way that the person feels acknowledged, understood and valued.

The key thing  
to avoid is...



*“I don’t want you to solve  
my problem I want to  
hear and acknowledge  
my emotions.”*



## Three Key Skills:

**1**

**Reflecting Feelings**

**2**

**Paraphrasing**

**3**

**Appropriate  
questioning**

# Reflecting Feelings



When you reflect a feeling you:  
share with the person the  
emotions you are noticing from  
their words, tone and/or body  
language.

You enter their world!

# Paraphrasing



When you paraphrase you reflect back both the person's feelings and the content of their speech to them.

You communicate that you really get their world!

# Asking Appropriate Questions



Questions are a good way to demonstrate your ongoing interest in the person and helps them to keep expressing themselves.



## Closed vs Open Questions

### Closed Questions

Can be answered in a few words. They usually serve the purpose of getting information quickly.

### Open Questions

Cannot be answered in a few words. They encourage the person to share more deeply.



# When asking questions...



1. Don't ask too many questions
2. Use appropriate questions dependent on the context

# Compassionate Conversations: Model

## Attentive Body Language



# Referring – Two Top Tips



**1**

**“I wonder”**

**2**

**Frame as question**

# Referral



Referral is the “problem solution” part of the conversation.

It involves suggesting another source of assistance to the person.



# Referral should only be used...

1. After a lot of empathic listening
2. If that is what the person wants
3. If you know where to refer the person to
4. In a gentle manner

# Sharing Scripture



- Only after a lot of empathic listening
- Story form is most effective
- Be sensitive in choice of Scripture
- Be brief
- Follow the leading of the Holy Spirit

# Barriers to compassionate conversations



- Me-too-isms
- Giving advice
- Labelling/diagnosing
- Moralising
- Reassuring/humouring
- Ignoring emotions
- Arguing
- Directing/controlling
- Interrogating

# Compassionate Conversations: Model

## Attentive Body Language



# Ending well

It is important to close the conversation in such a way that the person feels valued.



# End well – Tips



**1**

**Pray for the person**

**2**

**Acknowledge**

**3**

**Assure**

# Prayer



- Ask
- Bring a sense of God's love and compassion
- Be brief
- Mention the person's name
- Summarise key points
- Don't add
- Avoid religious jargon

# Acknowledge & Assure

## Acknowledge

The person for sharing with you and the trust they have demonstrated in you.

## Assure

The person of confidentiality and your ongoing concern (if appropriate).

## Example of Ending well

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“It has been great chatting with you today. Thank-you so much trusting me about the things that are concerning you.

Be assured our chat will stay between us. I wish I could stay, but I have another meeting to attend.

I will be keeping you in prayer and will give you a call in the next couple of weeks.”

