

SUPPORTING CLIENTS IN “SELF-ASSIGNED HOMEWORK HANDOUT

I believe if people want to learn and develop their skills with empathic communication, as with learning any complex skill such as a musical instrument, a sport, etc., it is necessary to study and practice multiple times a week, preferably something, however small, every day. I have also found that it is important that the client decides what they want to study/practice and how much. In addition to self-learning and practice, I believe it's vital that people plug into what I like calling “empathic community” — others who are learning and practicing empathic communication skills, and who are also willing and happy to give and receive emotional support and care.

So, beyond hopefully inspiring clients to want to commit to regular study/practice and building empathic community, I try my best to help them figure out what *they* want to do about this (rather than me pushing), and then to be their compassionate accountability partner, checking in how it's been going doing what they said they wanted/were going to do since last time we met. I like to talk about this briefly at the beginning and end of each session. The “map” I use to check in about this is Mourn Celebrate Learn. If they didn't do what said they would, we can mourn together the unmet needs, and then we can celebrate whatever needs were met. We can then learn and plan together new strategies for the future.

I tend to think of self-assigned homework as being of two kinds — self-learning/practice, and practicing with others in empathic community. Both I feel are equally important. Here are ideas I offer, and then point them to my webpage: www.johnkinyon.com/learning-resources/.

For self-learning/practice:

- Working with Feelings & Needs lists and/or cards
- Starting a daily meditation practice if they don't have one (see apps)
- Reading
- Watching or listening to recordings
- Journaling

For practicing with others in empathic community:

- Try to find an NVC practice group/empathy circle
- Start their own Ongo group (www.zenvc.org/ongobook/)
- Ask people in their life to practice with them
- Do some workshops to build community

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