

How to Know A Person, by David Brooks

Quotes and information gleaned from my reading. HZ

Building a friendship or community involves
disagreeing without poisoning the relationship;
revealing vulnerability at the appropriate pace;
being a good listener; knowing how to
end a conversation gracefully;
ask for and offer forgiveness;
let someone down without breaking their heart;
sit with someone who is suffering;
host a gathering where everyone feels embraced;
to see things from another's point of view."

"On social media you can have the illusion of social contact without having to perform the gestures that actually build trust, care, and affection. On social media, stimulation replaces intimacy. There is judgment everywhere and understanding nowhere."

No one can fully appreciate their own beauty and strengths unless those things are mirrored back to them in the mind of another. There is something in being seen that brings forth growth. If you beam the light of your attention on me, I blossom.

Diminishers

make people feel small and unseen.
They see others as things to be used, not as persons to be befriended.
They stereotype and ignore.

Illuminators,

have a persistent curiosity about other people.
seeing other people requires training in the craft of understanding others

2 “HOW NOT TO SEE A PERSON”

REASON PEOPLE DON'T SEE OTHERS

1. **EGOTISM**

too self-centered

Let me tell you my opinion or this story about myself.

2. **ANXIETY**

Too much noise in their own heads to hear others

3. **NAÏVE REALISM**

assuming the way the world appears to you is the objective view, and therefore everyone else must see the same reality you do. ”

4. **THE LESSER-MINDS PROBLEM**

I am much more complicated, deeper, more interesting, etc

5. **OBJECTIVISM**

What market researchers, pollsters, and social scientists do. They observe behavior, design surveys, and collect data on people. This is a great way to understand the **trends** among populations of people, but it's a terrible way to see an **individual** person.

6. **ESSENTIALISM**

People belong to groups, thus the tendency to make assumptions

But they are all false and/or hurtful to some degree.

7. **THE STATIC MINDSET.**

people never updated their models to see you now for who you really are.

THREE: Illumination

That first gaze represents a posture toward the world. A person who is looking for beauty is likely to find wonders, while a person looking for threats will find danger.

A person who beams warmth brings out the glowing sides of people.

A person who conveys formality will find others stiff and detached.

This posture of respect and reverence, this awareness of the infinite dignity of each person you meet, is a precondition for seeing people well.

illuminating them with a gaze that is warm, respectful, and admiring. ... says, "I'm going to trust you, before you trust me." Being an Illuminator is a way of being with other people, a style of presence, an ethical ideal.

Illumination says

every person I meet is unique and superior to me in some way.

Every person I meet is fascinating on some topic.

ILLUMINATOR'S GAZE:

TENDERNESS

deep emotional concern about another being

perceives the bonds that connect us, the similarities and sameness

RECEPTIVITY

means overcoming insecurities and self-preoccupation

opening yourself up to the experience of another

resisting the urge to project your own viewpoint

ACTIVE CURIOSITY.

You want to have an explorer's heart.

What it was like to be somebody else who believe things I don't

AFFECTION

affectionate way of knowing.

GENEROSITY

If we see people generously, we will become generous

if we view them coldly, we will become cold

A HOLISTIC ATTITUDE

Every man bears within him the germs of every human quality,

and now manifests one, now another, and

frequently he is quite unlike himself, while still remaining the same man.

STATE OF AFFAIRS

Human beings, she finds, are self-centered beings, anxiety-ridden and resentful. We are constantly representing people to ourselves in self-serving ways, in ways that gratify our egos and serve our ends. We stereotype and condescend, ignore and dehumanize. And because we don't see people accurately, we treat them wrongly. We can, Murdoch writes, "grow by looking."

FOUR Accompaniment

When you're first getting to know someone, you don't want to try to peer into their souls right away. It's best to look at something together." E.g. playfulness. Through small talk and doing mundane stuff together your unconscious mind is moving with mine and we're getting a sense of each other's energy, temperament, and manner. We're becoming comfortable with each other,.... Nothing can be heard in the mind until the situation feels safe and familiar to the body.

Accompaniment,

an **other-centered** way of moving through life.

you're in a **state of relaxed awareness—attentive, sensitive and unhurried.**

You're not leading or directing the other person. You're just riding alongside

You're there to be of help, a **faithful presence**, open to whatever may come. Your movements are marked not by willfulness but by willingness—you're willing to let the relationship deepen or not deepen, without forcing it either way.

You are acting in a way that lets other people be perfectly themselves.

patience. Trust is built slowly.

the ability to hold back and be aware of the other person's timetable.

Accompaniment is a necessary stage in getting to know a person precisely because it is so gentle and measured.

When the hosts of retreats and workshops want the participants to get to know each other quickly, they encourage them to play together—"people are more fully human when they are at play. "

In the midst of play, people relax, become themselves, and connect without even trying.

Laughter happens when our minds come together and something unexpected happens

other-centeredness: you're signing on to another person's plan

The accompanist is not controlling the journey, but neither is she a passive bystander

accompaniment... honor another person's ability to make choices.

accompaniment

the art of presence. Presence is about showing up.

Showing up: weddings, funerals, grieving, laid off, suffered, setback or humiliation.

you don't need to say some wise thing; you just have to be there,

“FIVE What Is a Person?”

different people can experience the same event in profoundly different ways.

Experience is not what happens to you, it's what you do with what happens to you. In other words, **there are two layers of reality. There is the objective reality of what happens, and there is the subjective reality of how what happened is seen, interpreted, made meaningful.** That second subjective layer can sometimes be the more important layer. ”

each person takes the experiences of a lifetime and integrates them into a complex representation of the world. That representation, the subjective consciousness that makes you you, integrates your memories, attitudes, beliefs, convictions, traumas, loves, fears, desires, and goals into your own distinct way of seeing.

People don't see the world with their eyes; they see it with their entire life.

Constructionism

people don't passively take in reality. Each person actively constructs their own perception of reality.

each person processes and experiences any given event in their own unique way.

Your mind is continually asking itself questions like “What is this similar to?” and “Last time I was in this situation, what did I see next?” Your mind projects out a series of models of what it expects to see. Then the eyes check in to report back about whether they are seeing what the mind expected. In other words, **seeing is not a passive process of receiving data; it's an active process of prediction and correction.**

Perception, the neuroscientist Anil Seth writes, is **“a generative, creative act.”** It is “an action-oriented construction, rather than a passive registration of an objective external reality.”

R.g. invisible gorilla experiment.

If I want to see you, I want to see how you see the world. I want to see how you construct your reality, how you make meaning. I want to step, at least a bit, out of my point of view and into your point of view.

Constructionism

“I want to understand **how you construct your point of view**. I want to ask you how you see things. I want you to teach me about the enduring energies of old events that shape how you see the world today.

If we're going to become illuminators, we need to first ask questions and engage with answers. **We need to ask: How does this look to you?”**

SIX Good Talks Conversations

If you want to know somebody, **you have to ask them how they see things.** You have to have a conversation.”

MEANINGFUL CONVERSATION

A **good conversationalist** is capable of leading people on a **mutual expedition toward understanding , an act of joint exploration.**

Somebody floats a half-formed idea. Somebody else seizes on the nub of the idea, plays with it, offers her own perspective based on her own memories, and floats it back so the other person can respond. **A good conversation sparks you to have thoughts you never had before. A good conversation starts in one place and ends up in another.”**

“TREAT ATTENTION AS AN ON/OFF SWITCH, NOT A DIMMER”

SLANT method:

S it up,

L ean forward

A sk questions

N od your head

T rack the speaker.

Listen with your eyes. That’s paying attention 100 percent.”

BE A LOUD LISTENER: Everyone in a conversation is facing an internal conflict between self-expression and self-inhibition. If you listen passively, the other person is likely to become inhibited. **Active listening is an invitation to express.**

FAVOR FAMILIARITY.

People have trouble picturing and getting excited about the unfamiliar, but they love to talk about what they know. **To get a conversation rolling, find the thing the other person is most attached to.**

Good conversationalists ask for stories about specific events or experiences they want to know how you experienced what happened. They want to understand what you were feeling”

DON'T FEAR THE PAUSE.

Japanese businesspeople found that they are typically comfortable with eight-second pauses between one comment and another, roughly twice as long as Americans generally tolerate. They're wise to take that pause."

DO THE LOOPING.

That's when you repeat what someone just said in order to make sure you accurately received what they were trying to project."

The experts suggest that when somebody expresses something important, you respond to their story with a question

Looping forces you to listen more carefully

Looping is also a good way to keep the other person focused on their core point,"

THE MIDWIFE MODEL

good conversationalists "to make the person feel safe, but she is also there to prod."

KEEP THE GEM STATEMENT AT THE CENTER.

This is the truth underneath the disagreement, something you both agree on

If you can both return to the gem statement during a conflict, you can keep the relationship between you strong.

FIND THE DISAGREEMENT UNDER THE DISAGREEMENT.

Why, at heart, do we disagree?

What is the values disagreement underneath our practical disagreement?

When you search for the disagreement under the disagreement, you are **looking for the moral, philosophical roots of why you each believe what you do.** You're engaged in a mutual exploration.

DON'T BE A TOPPER.

7 The Right Questions

Sometimes a broad, dumb question is better than a smart question, especially one meant to display how well-informed you are.

When you are asking a good question, you are adopting a posture of humility. You're confessing that you don't know and you want to learn. You're also honoring a person"

If I'm going to get to know you, it's because I have the skill of asking the sorts of questions that will give you a chance to tell me about who you are.

The worst kinds of questions are the ones that don't involve a surrender of power:

Where did you go to college?

What neighborhood do you live in?

What do you do?

They imply, "I'm about to judge you."

These lead to a one-word answers

Closed questions are also bad questions. Instead of surrendering power, the questioner is imposing a limit on how the question can be answered....give the answerer the freedom to go as deep or as shallow as he wants.

A third sure way to shut down conversations is to ask vague questions

"Humble questions are open-ended.

They're encouraging the other person to take control and take the conversation where they want it to go.

These are questions that begin with phrases like

How did you...,"

What's it like...,"

Tell me about...,"

"In what ways..."

These answers result in the speaker explaining in a paragraph

Illuminator: " he'll ask questions that probe for commonalities."

"We were using each other's experiences to come to know something about each other and ourselves."

Illuminators ask big questions.

Big questions interrupt the daily routines and prompt them to step back and see their life from a distance. .. by asking questions about the positive sides of life

People are more eager to have deep conversations than you think.

People are longing to be asked **questions about who they are.**

Listen, listen, listen, listen, and if you do, people will talk,

They always talk. Why? Because no one has ever listened to them before ...

8 The Epidemic of Blindness

People who are lonely and unseen become suspicious
take offense
self-loathing and self-doubt
create self-delusional worlds
lash out, seek ways to humiliate those who they feel have humiliated them.

Loneliness thus leads to meanness
 The social breakdown manifests as a crisis of distrust
 Low-trust societies fall apart

Distrustful people assume that others are out to get them, they exaggerate threats, they fall for conspiracy theories

epidemic of loneliness and meanness
some contributing factors:
 social media,
 widening inequality,
 declining participation in community life
 declining church attendance,
 rising populism and bigotry,
 vicious demagoguery from our media and political elites

As a society, we have failed to teach the skills and cultivate the inclination to treat each other with kindness, generosity, and respect.

9 Hard Conversations

If you want to know someone well, you have to see the person in front of you as

1. a distinct and never-to-be repeated individual
2. a member of their groups.
3. see their social location—
insiders vs outsiders
at the top of society vs marginalized

In every conversation, there is some sort of power relationship between the participants.

Prior to entering into any hard conversation, it's important to think about the conditions in which this conversation is going to take place?"

every conversation exists within a frame:

What is the purpose?

What are our goals?

every conversation takes place on two levels:

The official conversation -the words we say about the subject

The actual conversation occurs in the underlying emotions that get transmitted as we talk.

With every comment you are either

making me feel a little more safe or a little more threatened,
showing you either respect or disrespect.

revealing something about our intentions:

Here is why I am telling you this.

Here is why this is important to me.

It is the volley of these underlying emotions that will determine the success or failure of the conversation.

When conversations go bad...

There's a temptation to try to yank the conversation back to your frame: Here's how the situation looks to me.

As soon as somebody starts talking about times when they felt excluded, betrayed, or wronged, stop and listen.

it's best not to try to yank the conversations back to your frame. Your first job is to stay within the other person's standpoint to more fully understand how the world looks to them. Your next job is to encourage them to go into more depth—seeing the world from the other's point of view—then all participants in the conversation are contributing to a shared pool of knowledge

When conversations go bad...

First, you step back from the conflict, and you try to figure out together what's gone wrong. You break the momentum by asking the other person, "How did we get to this tense place?"

Then you try to reidentify the mutual purpose of the conversation. That's done by enlarging the purpose so that both people are encompassed by it and take advantage of the fact that a rupture is sometimes an opportunity to forge a deeper bond.

Cognitive sciences: How you see a situation depends on what you are capable of doing in a situation.

Proffitt and co-author Drake Baer later wrote in their book Perception

We project our individual mental experience into the world, and thereby mistake our mental experience to be the physical world, *oblivious to the shaping of perception by our sensory systems, personal histories, goals, and expectations*
We perceive the world, not as it is but as it is for us

idea of affordances

Unconsciously, you and I are always asking ourselves, "What do my physical, intellectual, social, and economic capacities enable me to do in this situation?"

Our differences of perception are rooted deep in the hidden kingdom of the unconscious mind and we're generally not aware how profound those differences are until we ask."

TEN

How Do You Serve a Friend Who Is in Despair?

ELEVEN The Art of Empathy

Defenses that many people carry inside

AVOIDANCE. is usually about fear. Emotions and relationships have hurt me, so I will minimize emotions and relationships

DEPRIVATION. Some children are raised around people so self-centered that the needs of the child are ignored. The child naturally learns the lesson “My needs won’t be met.” It is a short step from that to “I’m not worthy.”

OVERREACTIVITY. Children who are abused and threatened grow up in a dangerous world. The person afflicted in this way often has, deep in their nervous system, a hyperactive threat-detection system.”

PASSIVE AGGRESSION. is the indirect expression of anger. It is a way to sidestep direct communication by a person who fears conflict, who has trouble dealing with negative emotions

Empathy consists of at least three related skills.

mirroring. This is the act of accurately catching the emotion of the person in front of you. A person who is good at mirroring smiles at smiles, yawns at yawns, and frowns at frowns. He unconsciously attunes his breathing patterns, heart rate, speaking speed, posture, and gestures and even his vocabulary levels. He does this because a good way to understand what another person is feeling in their body is to live it out yourself in your own body, at least to some extent.

mentalizing... figure out why they are experiencing what they are experiencing by relying on our own experience and memory. Mentalizing also helps us simultaneously sympathize with a person while also detaching to make judgments about them

caring involves getting out of my experiences and then understanding what you need may be very different from what I would need in that situation. Caring begins with the awareness that the other person has a consciousness that is different from my own. They might want me to hold their hand while they do some breathing exercises. I’m going to find that completely awkward, but I’m going to do it because I want to practice effective empathy.

Similarly, when writing a thank-you note, my egotistical instinct is to write a note about all the ways I’m going to use the gift you just gave me. But if I’m going to be an empathetic person, I need to get outside of my perspective and get inside yours. I’m going to write about your intentions—the impulses that led you to think that this gift is right for me and the thinking process that impelled you to buy it.”

Highly empathic people

enjoy deeper relationships

exhibit more charitable behavior toward those around them

show higher degrees of nonconformity and social self-confidence.

HOW TO BE MORE EMPATHETIC

CONTACT THEORY. it's hard to hate people close up.

DRAW IT WITH YOUR EYES CLOSED. People become more empathetic when they take the time to closely observe the people around them

LITERATURE. reading biographies or complex, character-driven novels and plays like Beloved or Macbeth, in which the reader gets enmeshed in the changing emotional life of the characters, induces more empathy

EMOTION SPOTTING

people who are good at recognizing emotions are more empathetic

emotions have two core dimensions, energy and pleasantness.

mood meter: pleasantness vs energy

high pleasantness, high energy: happiness, joy, exhilaration.

high pleasantness, low energy: contentment, serenity, ease.

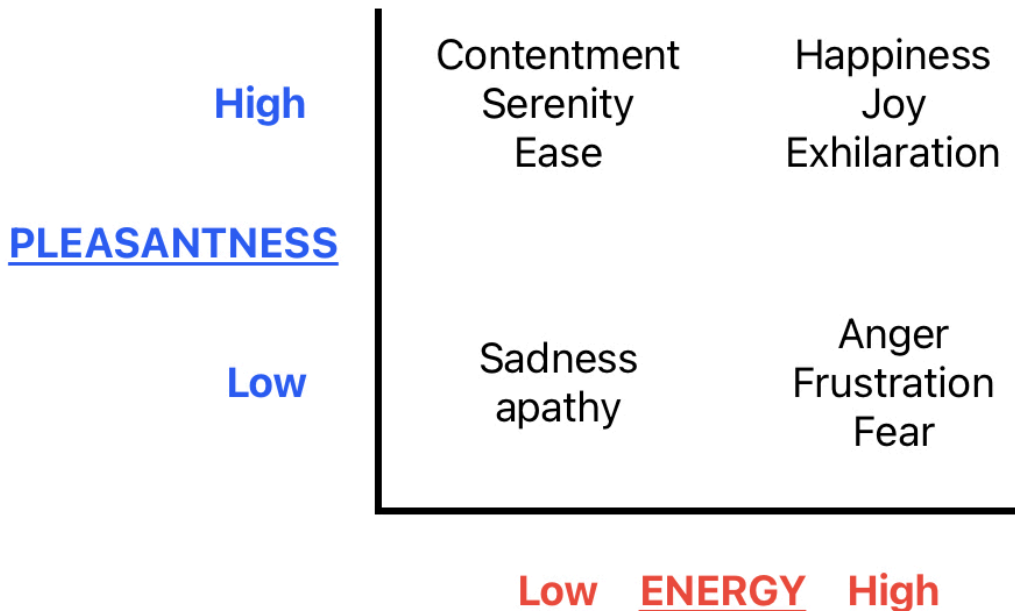
low pleasantness, high energy: anger, frustration, fear.

low pleasantness, low energy: sadness, apathy

SUFFERING: another way we grow more empathetic is simply by living and enduring the slings and arrows that life generally brings.

**Emotions have two core dimensions,
energy and pleasantness**

"MOOD METER" for assessing emotions



I've been trying to emphasize how physical emotions are, that **becoming more empathetic is not some intellectual enterprise; it is training your body to respond in open and interactive ways.**

You may think that the things you see and hear influence what you feel, but it's mostly the other way around: What you feel alters your sight and hearing." People who are scared take in a scene differently. Our ears, for example, immediately adjust to focus on high and low frequencies—a scream or a growl—rather than midrange frequencies, which include normal human speech. Anxiety narrows our attention and diminishes our peripheral vision. A feeling of happiness, by contrast, widens our peripheral vision. A person who feels safe because of the reliable and empathetic presence of others will see the world as a wider, more open, and happier place.

Illuminator ideal.

People need recognition from others, someone to look into their eyes with loving acceptance.

morality is mostly about the small, daily acts of building connection
gaze that says "I respect you,"
the question that says "I'm curious about you,
"We're in this together."

It is trying to be generous and considerate

the Illuminator is not just there to see the depths of your pain, she's there to see your strength, to celebrate with you in your triumphs.

**When we have traumatic experiences,
IF we remain "open"
we will incorporate these experiences and
build our new world model,
which tells us how the world works,
and grow as a result.**

**Without these traumatic experiences, we do not necessarily
grow as we would otherwise.**

12 - How Were You Shaped by Your Sufferings?

People who are permanently damaged by trauma seek to assimilate what happened into their existing models. People who grow try to accommodate what happened in order to create new models... To know a person well, you have to know who they were before they suffered their losses and how they remade their whole outlook after them.

13 Personality: What Energy Do You Bring into the Room?"

The Big Five personality traits

understanding personality traits is one key to knowing how to treat them appropriately. people get better as they **age**. They become **more agreeable, conscientious, and emotionally stable** versions of themselves.

Extroversion

are highly drawn to all positive emotions.
excited by any chance to experience pleasure, seek thrills, win social approval.
motivated more by the lure of rewards than the fear of punishment.
tend to dive into most situations looking for what goodies can be had.
are more sociable , fun-loving, affectionate, talkative
quick to anger. take more risks
low on extroversion: creative, thoughtful, intentional. Have deeper relationships

Conscientiousness

excellent impulse control.
disciplined, persevering, organized, self-regulating.
ability to focus on long-term goals
a bit perfectionist, and have high achievement motivation
tend to display more competence and grit.
sometimes workaholics
more guilt

Neuroticism

respond powerfully to negative emotions.
feel fear, anxiety, shame, disgust, and sadness very quickly and acutely,
sensitive to potential threats.
more likely to worry than to be calm
more highly strung than laid-back
more vulnerable than resilient
more emotional ups and downs
quick to see threats and negative emotions
higher rates of depression, eating disorders, and stress disorders
a lot of negative emotions toward themselves

Agreeableness

compassionate, considerate, helpful, and accommodating.
tend to be trusting, cooperative, and kind—good-natured
emotional intelligence
is basically being kind

Openness

describes their relationship to information.
motivated to have new experiences and to try on new ideas.

innovative, imaginative and associative rather than linear, curious
tend not to impose a predetermined ideology on the world
really enjoy cognitive exploration, just wandering around in a subject.
Artists and poets are the quintessential practitioners of openness”
good at divergent thinking. e.g name a 4 legged animal and they say armadillo
**One study showed that having a mystical experience while consuming
mushrooms led to a sharp increase in openness even a year later.**
anything moderately familiar to be boring.”
People tend to get more open as they enter young adulthood
Those who are able to retire often become more open to new experiences

14 Life Tasks/Stages of life:

THE IMPERIAL TASK,
THE INTERPERSONAL TASK,
CAREER CONSOLIDATION,
THE GENERATIVE TASK,
INTEGRITY VERSUS DESPAIR

Not everybody does the tasks in the same order, and not everybody performs all the tasks

if you want to understand someone well, you have to understand what life task they are in the middle of

The psychologist Daniel Gilbert has a famous saying about this: "Human beings are works in progress that mistakenly think they are finished."

THE IMPERIAL TASK

Trying to establish a sense of our own agency
can be quite self-centered

In Kids:
Taking control

In Adults:
intense desire to see himself as a winner,
Reacts strongly against any sign of disrespect.
relationships tend to be instrumental. The person is always angling, manipulating the situation to get what he wants. He is emotionally sealed up, hiding any vulnerabilities, even from himself
They can't see the world from the perspective of another person. They can't internalize another person's affection for them (sounds like republicans)

THE INTERPERSONAL TASK,

in adolescence,
establish your social identity.
Friendships and social status become the central obsessions
The interpersonal person's ultimate question is: Do you like me?

CAREER CONSOLIDATION,

Job, parent, etc career, life task
develop a more individualistic mindset: I am the captain of my own ship,
The person at the end of this task realizes that there is a spiritual hunger that's been unmet, a desire to selflessly serve some cause, to leave some legacy for others.

THE GENERATIVE TASK,

During the generative life task, try to find some way to be of service to the world.

how can I give back to the world—

replaces the meritocratic logic of the career consolidation years.

The generative person often assumes the role of guardian. A person with this consciousness is often leading or serving some institution,

respect for the institution she has inherited.

gives others the gift of admiration—seeing them for precious creatures.

She gives the gift of patience—understanding that people are always developing. He

gives them the gift of presence

INTEGRITY VERSUS DESPAIR

Integrity is the ability to come to terms with your life in the face of death.

feeling of peace that you have used and are using your time well.

a sense of accomplishment and acceptance.

Despair, by contrast, is marked by a sense of regret

People in this stage often have a strong desire to learn.

Wisdom at this phase of life is the ability to see the connections between things. It's the

ability to hold opposite truths—contradictions and paradoxes—in the mind without wrestling to impose some linear order.

It's the ability to see things from multiple perspectives.

15 - Life Stories

16 How Do Your Ancestors Show Up in Your Life?

“The challenge in seeing a person, therefore, is to adopt the kind of double vision I mentioned in the chapter on hard conversations. It means stepping back to appreciate the power of group culture and how it is formed over generations and then poured into a person. But it also means stepping close and perceiving each individual person in the midst of their lifelong project of crafting their own life and their own point of view, often in defiance of their group’s consciousness. The trick is to hold these two perspectives together at the same time.

I am an infidel Jew. I can scarcely read Hebrew any longer; I have only a smattering of Jewish history, literature, and religion. Yet I know that I am a Jew in every fiber of my personality. It is as silly and as useless to emphasize it as it is to disavow it. The only possible attitude toward it is to acknowledge it as a fact.

17 what Is Wisdom?

Wise people

“take in your story, accept it, but

push you to clarify what it is you really want, or to name the baggage you left

probe into what is really bothering you,

search for the deeper problem underneath the convenient surface problem

don’t tell you what to do;

help you process your own thoughts and emotions.

They **enter with you into your process of meaning-making**

help you expand it,

create a safe space where you can navigate life's ambiguities and contradictions

prod and lure you until your own obvious solution emerges into view.

Their essential gift is receptivity, the capacity to receive what you are sending.

creates an atmosphere of hospitality,

Encourage you to set aside fear of showing weakness and confronting

themselves.

Create an atmosphere in which people swap stories, trade confidences.

The knowledge that results from your encounter with a wise person is personal

and contextual, not a generalization

Wisdom is a social skill practiced within a relationship when people come together to form what Parker Palmer called a **“community of truth”**

people are interested in seeing and exploring together,

trying on each other’s perspectives

take a journey with another person’s eyes.