



Want to be helpful? Avoid the No.1 pitfall...

Being helpful is one of the virtues that makes the world go round and a much better place. Our children need to learn how to be compassionate and kind adults. Having people around who can be counted on in times of need is infinitely comforting. Yet, there's a problem...most people don't know how to be helpful effectively. 'Helping' when it goes awry, can lead to people feeling patronised, pitied, resentful and conflicts, even with the best of intentions.

This is the No.1 mistake most people make...

They try and make it better based on what they assume will help.

Jumping into 'fix it' mode, when someone is struggling, before taking time to jump in the puddles with them (metaphorically speaking), can thwart good intentions. Statements like, "At least..." (that minimise the discomfort and put a positive spin on things) or "You should/n't..." (opinion or advice giving) or simply taking charge of a difficult situation, diminishes the experience for the other person. It doesn't support them to feel hopeful, able or competent. It drives the problem deeper, adding to the sense of helplessness and dependency. How can you trust yourself if everyone around you is telling you what's best for you? If other's don't believe you're capable, why should you? These thoughts are triggered by well-intentioned helpers.

Jump in to jump out

It's more useful to 'get messy first'. This means, engaging in real empathy (not sympathy). What is empathy? Empathy is having a willingness to hear and see someone's struggle with absolute acceptance and without feeling the need to 'make it better'. True empathy requires trusting someone enough to allow them to have their experiences their own way and to believe that they are enough and able to handle the struggle. It's not easy to be empathetic! It's messy and raw and it feels like jumping off a cliff without a parachute because it requires giving control of the situation to the other person. Jumping into the emotions, sharing the story, listening without trying to change things, is counter-intuitive for caring people, yet it's what really helps. So the next time a friend needs help, jump into the experience and share the story. The shared experience can be enough to help them to jump out again knowing you're by their side.

Bare Hands is run by allied health professionals committed to helping women embrace positive change by providing access to practical education. To find out more give us a call, email us or visit www.barehands.com.au.

©Bare Hands 2015

- ✓ Being helpful is a virtuous thing, if you know how to do it
- ✓ No.1 mistake helpers make - 'fixing it'
- ✓ Get messy first - sit with the emotions and hear the story without offering a solution

"Our days are happier when we give people a piece of our heart rather than a piece of our mind."

Anonymous

Did you find this helpful? Want more strategies like this...

The power to choose a different attitude that makes life more content and satisfying. Find out how to do a quick attitude adjustment in our quick emotional health course... **Sticky Strategies** There's more free weekly tips [here](#).



Bare Hands
Practical life strategies for women