

Ring Theory: AKA Comfort In, Dump Out.

The person in the center ring can say anything she wants to anyone, anywhere. She can kvetch and complain and whine and moan and curse the heavens and say, "Life is unfair," and, "Why me?" That's the one payoff for being in the center ring. Everyone else can say those things too, but only to people in larger rings.

When you are talking to a person in a ring smaller than yours, someone closer to the center of the crisis, the goal is to *help*. Listening is often more helpful than talking. But if you're going to open your mouth, first ask yourself if what you are about to say is likely to provide comfort and support. If it isn't, don't say it. Don't, for example, give advice. People who are suffering from [trauma](#) don't need advice. They need comfort and support. So say, "I'm sorry," or, "This must really be hard for you," or, "Can I bring you a pot roast?" Don't say, "You should hear what happened to me," or, "Here's what I would do if I were you." And don't say, "This is really bringing me down."

If you want to scream or cry or complain, if you want to tell someone how shocked you are or how icky you feel, or whine about how it reminds you of all the terrible things that have happened to you lately, that's fine. It's a perfectly normal response. Just do it to someone in a bigger ring.

"Comfort *in*, dump *out*."

[RingTheory.png](#)

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