



BECOMING

How to Be Empathic

EDUCATIONAL MATERIAL



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IN THIS MODULE YOU WILL LEARN

What is empathy?

What is the difference between empathic and unempathic person?

Tips on how to have an empathic conversation.

What not to do during an empathic conversation?

What helps to have an empathic conversation?

WHAT IS EMPATHY?

- ▶ It is the willingness to **tune in to other people's feelings**, to notice their unspoken wishes and understand their needs. We can be empathetic even to a person we barely know.
- ▶ It is a highly revered quality, it helps in both **personal and professional life**.
- ▶ It includes emotional states such as **caring and the desire to help others**.
- ▶ It is **not compassion or pity**. Just because we feel sorry for someone does not mean that we have empathy for them.

WHAT IS EMPATHY?

- ▶ It is a **key quality** for establishing and maintaining healthy interpersonal relationships.
- ▶ Compassion for others and understanding their emotions not only helps to strengthen relationships, but also enriches the "listener". It enables him to **see things from a different perspective and to develop his own personality.**
- ▶ It can be **inborn**, but it can also **be learned and strengthened.**

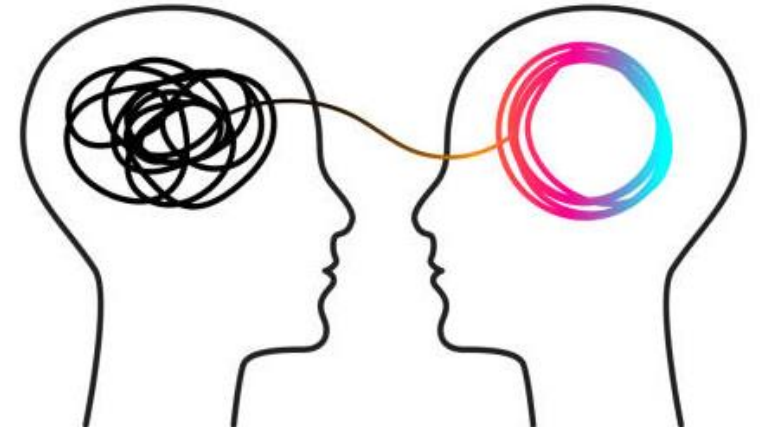


EMPATHIC AND UNEMPATHIC PERSON

► Empathic person

- tends to be very popular;
- often has good friends, relations with colleagues, partner relationship and used to be a good parent;
- can be a good communicator, which gives him/her a wide range of job opportunities,
- is often mindful, reflective, kind, and very thoughtful;

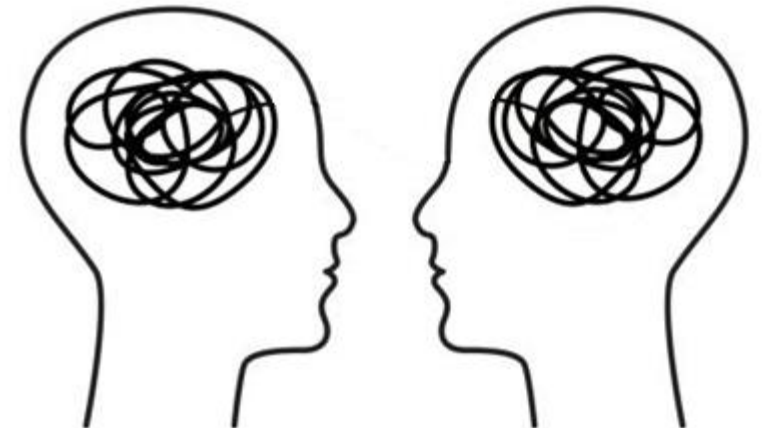
- mostly understands other people's emotions, respects their motives and diversity;
- can read other's minds from facial expressions;
- used to be supportive and open-minded.



EMPATHIC AND UNEMPATHIC PERSON

► Unempathic person

- cannot empathize with others;
- often does not understand others and is therefore often misunderstood himself;
- person with undeveloped empathy may not be heartless, he may just not understand the feelings of others, and quite possibly cannot understand own emotions;
- does not think about the fact that there are words that can hurt another, just because they do not hurt him.



TIPS ON HOW TO HAVE AN EMPATHIC CONVERSATION

- ▶ Having an empathic conversation and being more empathic overall doesn't have to be difficult. First of all, **reflect on your own emotions, respect others and their differences, and accept and listen to them.**
- ▶ Take inspiration from the following **tips** and learn the **basic techniques** of active listening:



TIPS ON HOW TO HAVE AN EMPATHIC CONVERSATION

1. Self-awareness

- if you want to understand people better, you need to **understand yourself first**;
- what you think of yourself or others **affects your emotions**, emotions affect your behaviour and all of this together causes the reaction of those around you;
- you **create** your **own reality**.

2. Step into skin of another

- try to see the world through the **eyes of the other person** - being empathic means being able to imagine yourself in the shoes of the person you are talking to;
- **everyone is unique in their diversity** should be respected;
- take the others **seriously**, listen to them, express understanding even if you silently disagree with them.

3. Do not rate

- **each person is an expert on his own life**, so we have no right to judge what is good for the other person and what is not;
- don't give unsolicited advice, just **offer your opinion**;
- if you want to evaluate someone, don't describe the person, but what they do, and try to say it in **positive language**.

TIPS ON HOW TO HAVE AN EMPATHIC CONVERSATION

4. Be kind

- **kindness creates kindness** again, if you are considerate, generous and helpful, you will make your environment happy and bring positive changes in your life;
- in addition, follow **the golden rule**: "What you don't want others to do to you, don't do to them."

5. Avoid prejudice

- think about your **own prejudices** and consciously try to **avoid** them when communicating with others;
- look at the **other person without initial expectations**;
- **give** the person **a chance** to express himself, listen to him, talk to him and then form a picture of who he is or what he is telling you.



WHAT NOT TO DO DURING AN EMPATHIC CONVERSATION?

- ▶ Many **ways you communicate and behave** send signals to the other person that he is not accepted, is not interesting to you and may stop confiding in you and seeking your company. **Avoid the following** in particular:
 - **Downplaying** - always take the person seriously and do not downplay his experience. You may not understand the other person because you are not in his shoes, but fully respect what he is telling you.
 - **Unsolicited advice** - different people have different life experiences and different personalities, so something different works for everyone. At some moments, a person doesn't want to hear your advice and solutions, which can cause pressure on him to take an action. He may then feel unsupported, incapable, and helpless.



WHAT NOT TO DO DURING AN EMPATHIC CONVERSATION?

- **Labelling** - if you frequently tell a person that he is incompetent, for example, he will behave accordingly because he identifies with how he is perceived by his environment. People commonly determine their own worth by the other's opinion.
- **Psychologising** - you tend to offer explanations or solutions based on your own experience, but unfortunately this tends to shift the focus away from the original problem and does not help the person.
- **Taking over the attention** - if the other person's words resonate a lot with you, you may tend to take over his topic and start talking about yourself. However, this communicates that you are not interested in the other person.



WHAT HELPS TO HAVE AN EMPATHIC CONVERSATION?

- ▶ **The elements of active listening** can help to have an empathic conversation. That is responding continuously during the conversation, thereby showing our participation and acceptance of the other:
 - **Silent listening** - a necessary space for sharing. It is enough to say from time to time that you understand and comprehend.
 - **Encouragement** - for example, by the phrase, "I believe you can do it" or "Can you tell me more about it?".
 - **Paraphrasing** - repeating what the other person says to you to express your presence and understanding.



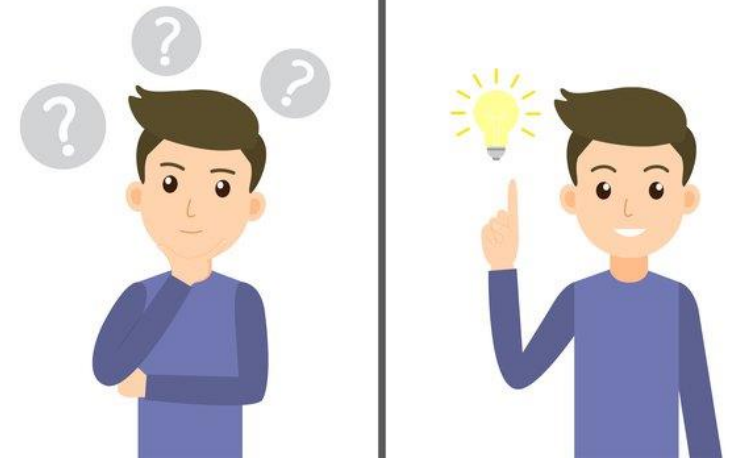
WHAT HELPS TO HAVE AN EMPATHIC CONVERSATION?

- **Normalizing** – trying to explain that it is perfectly okay to express the emotion and that other people in his situation would probably do the same. You give the person a sense that they are just normal and that they are not alone in this.
- **Appreciation** - telling the other person that he is brave, that he is a good father, that he is doing well, etc.
- **Naming the feelings and needs** – expressing understanding while anchoring the person in the present, for example, with phrases such as "I can see you are upset" or "I believe you need help at a time like this, can you tell me how can I help?"



WHAT TO TAKE FROM THIS LESSON

- ▶ In the pursuit of empathy, it is **important not to forget ourselves**.
- ▶ Empathy has its **downsides**, too. Empathizing with others by putting their problems above our own is certainly not the right or healthy solution. It is always **most important to feel good** about ourself.
- ▶ **Being an empathic** person brings **lots of positives** and it would definitely be a shame not to try to **empathize with others** at least once in a while and **try to understand** their difficulties.



You just completed this training unit.

Congratulations!



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