

Lightbulb Moments

Insights into Empathy (No. 1 in a series of 15)

Empathy - the capacity to recognise the concerns of other people, to be able to take their perspective and, to some extent, share feelings (such as sadness or happiness).

Empathy is

- 💡 the ability to understand your own emotional range and response
- 💡 the ability to read the behaviours and actions of others in order to understand that person's emotional state

Empathy is essential for effective understanding, communication and relationships by building trust.



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Insights into Empathy (No. 2 in a series of 15)

Empathy has to be Learnt

Empathy is not innate it has to be taught, modelled and learnt.

Empathy may not just help to regulate emotions; it may create a huge breakthrough in integration and possibility.

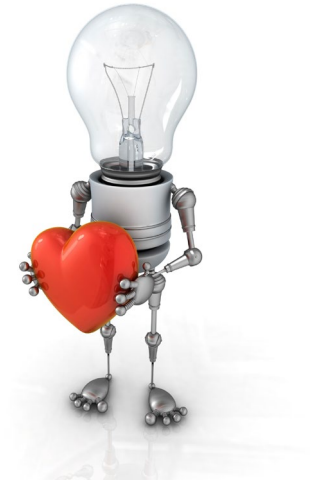
Modelling empathetic behaviours means others are more likely to adopt these behaviours themselves than when they are told how to behave.



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Insights into Empathy (No. 3 in a series of 15)



Empathy is NOT Sympathy

Empathising with another person is not the same as sympathising with them. When you show sympathy you take a position of superiority. Sympathy is taking pity or feeling sorry for another person.

Empathy is an act of listening and understanding feelings whilst sympathy is an act of reacting to emotions to prevent or alleviate suffering.

Sympathy sets people apart; empathy brings people together.



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Insights into Empathy (No. 4 in a series of 15)



Human Beings Regulate Each Other in Interactions

The neural networks in the brain learn from experience and transform themselves.

Exposure to other people's behavioural patterns not only activates neural patterns; it strengthens them (known as limbic revision).

A reciprocal process occurs simultaneously to create a stable, properly balanced pair over time. Long standing relationships and togetherness writes permanent changes.



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Insights into Empathy (No. 5 in a series of 15)



Humans remain social animals. They require a source of social stabilisation outside themselves.

This open loop design means that, in some important ways, people cannot be stable on their own - not should or shouldn't be, but can't be.

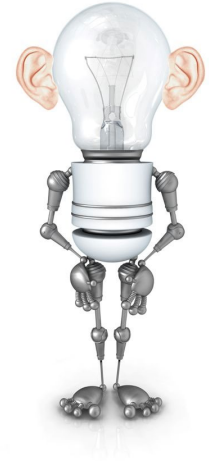


Lewis, Amini, Lannon; A General Theory of Love (2000)

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Insights into Empathy (No. 6 in a series of 15)



Empathetic Listening – a way of listening and responding that improves mutual understanding and trust.

The Benefits of Empathetic Listening

- 💡 Creates a safe environment
- 💡 Allows for emotional release
- 💡 Helps clarify thinking
- 💡 Reduces tension
- 💡 Helps understanding of context
- 💡 Builds trust and respect
- 💡 Uncovers further information



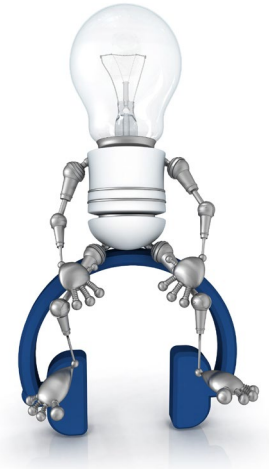
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Insights into Empathy (No. 7 in a series of 15)

How to Listen Empathetically

- 💡 Create a trusting environment
- 💡 Acknowledge the speaker
- 💡 Take in information without passing judgement
- 💡 Actively attempt to understand the other person's point of view
- 💡 Model empathetic practices
- 💡 Allow for the expression of emotion and the sharing of problems



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Insights into Empathy (No. 8 in a series of 15)

Listening Empathetically – Some Things To Do

- 👂 Create a positive atmosphere
- 👂 Be attentive
- 👂 Be interested
- 👂 Be alert
- 👂 Allow the other person to bounce ideas off of you
- 👂 Indicate that you are listening
- 👂 Reflect your understanding back to the other person



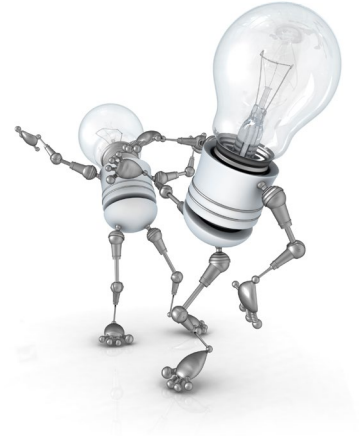
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Insights into Empathy (No. 9 in a series of 15)

Listening Empathetically – Some Things To Avoid

- 💡 Interrupting
- 💡 Interrogating
- 💡 Giving advice
- 💡 Changing the subject
- 💡 Ignoring the other person's feelings
- 💡 Letting the other person engage you in an emotional exchange



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Insights into Empathy (No. 10 in a series of 15)

How To Enhance Your Empathy (I)

Understand your own emotions

To increase your empathy you need to start with yourself.

Pay close attention to your feelings and your emotional state. Try to identify, recognise and understand these feelings. Note what situations change your emotions – what gives rise to emotions that you like and emotions that you don't like. Use this knowledge to understand how others respond emotionally.



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Insights into Empathy (No. 11 in a series of 15)

How To Enhance Your Empathy (II)

Interact with a wide range of people

Get to know people of all ages, ethnicities, sexual orientation, socio-economic backgrounds and levels of physical ability.

The more types of people that you know, the more experiences you will have to draw on as you work to increase your empathy.



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Insights into Empathy (No. 12 in a series of 15)

How To Enhance Your Empathy (III)

Seek out similarities between you and others

When you stress difference between yourself and other people, the harder it is to understand others.

Seek out areas of shared interest, common purpose or similarities with people that you do not like or you disagree with.



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How To Enhance Your Empathy (IV)

Practice taking on another person's perspective

Train your mind to be open to views or ideas other than your own.

Try to immerse yourself in a different perspective to get a better understanding of the issues. This can be done on a personal level – it doesn't have to involve just political or moral ideas.



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Insights into Empathy (No. 14 in a series of 15)

How To Enhance Your Empathy (V)

Examine the lives and works of famous empathetic people

It's easier to become empathetic when you have good role models.

Choose people deeply involved in a social cause you respect and read their biographies to gain a better understanding of how they used their empathy.



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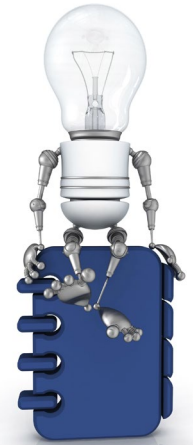
Insights into Empathy (No. 15 in a series of 15)

How To Enhance Your Empathy (VI)

Read good fiction and poetry

Fiction generally contains accounts of how defined individuals react to situations and circumstance. This is emotionally evocative viewed from their perspective and will help you to understand people's internal states.

Try to experience the emotions contained within poetry to experience how emotions are created with words through metaphors and similes.



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