

The EmpathyWorks Project
Course Workbook



**EMPATHY ROADMAP TO THE
WE SPACE**

Empathy-Skills Training Program

— WORKBOOK —

EMPATHY ROADMAP TO THE WE SPACE

Empathy-Skills Training Program

Presented by The EmpathyWorks Project and
Village Counseling & Licensed Clinical Social Work Services PLLC

WELCOME

Welcome to our comprehensive, process-focused empathy-skills training program, the Empathy Roadmap to the WE Space. This course deconstructs empathy and provides practical tools to enhance your natural empathic ability and improve outcomes when working with others.

The course provides a practical understanding of the most current science and research on empathy by focusing on Empathy's **hard-wired neurobiology** and **cognitive components**. To deepen the learning process Empathy Games® and experientials are introduced to elucidate and integrate the theoretical material presented.

OUR MISSION

The EmpathyWorks Project is dedicated to delivering education & training in emotional intelligence and support for emotional well-being to healthcare practitioners, professionals and broad segments of society via digital technologies.

OUR GOAL

Our goal is to empower individuals, healthcare professionals and care-takers with the practical tools needed to sustain an empathic stance when working with others, and the ability to recognize and repair breaks in empathy in moments of crisis and disruption.

HOW IT WORKS

Empathy Roadmap to the WE Space The Journey begins!

Step One

The course is presented in 3 Modules that provide an in-depth **theoretical discussion** and **step-by-step empathy-skills training process**. To access the Course Schedule, please return to the COURSE INDEX as you progress through the program.

Step Two

Take the course and reference printed materials on your own schedule. **You can stop, start and replay the lessons at any time.** The course is presented in 3 Modules, estimated to be 9 hours overall.

Step Three

Select **1. Certificate of Course Completion**, or **2. CEU Certificate worth 9 CEs** (offered to NYS LCSWs & LMSWs - **FAQs**). Choose your Certificate Program, Create an Account and join us on a stimulating & transformative journey!

OUR GOALS

- Provide practical and sustainable tools that enhance emotional intelligence & empathy-skills, improve positive outcomes and promote professional and personal efficacy.
- Provide a comprehensive learning process that strengthens specific skills key to empathic attunement (e.g. empathic listening, empathic inquiry, mirroring and feedback, and repairing breaks in empathy).
- Integrate theoretical constructs and experiential learning with Empathy Games® and interactive exercises in a fun, organic and transformational process.
- Strengthen respect for cultural, individual, and role differences through greater empathic awareness and sensitivity to all aspects of age, gender identity, race, ethnicity, cultural, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language, and socioeconomic status.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

You Will Discover How To...

- Differentiate what empathy is and what it is not, (i.e. understand the difference between compassion, empathy, sympathy and pity).
- Understand how relationships work on a cognitive, intuitive and feeling level.
Understand why some fail and others succeed.
- Recognize the co-created nature of relational interactions and the impact that one's personal perspective has on others.
- Practice & strengthen the specific skills key to empathic attunement (e.g. empathic listening, empathic inquiry, mirroring & feedback, and addressing breaks in empathy).
- Apply practical and sustainable tools that improve your empathy-skills when engaging with colleagues, clients and in personal relationships.

ORGANIC LEARNING METHOD

The Experience



Theory

First, you will watch short videos presenting theoretical discussion & exploration of each teaching point.



Assimilation

A quick review and Q&A reinforce the assimilation & retention of the teaching points in the videos. In addition, each of the 3 Modules has a “Final Exam,” which will be scored as part of the Final Exam for the course. (To qualify for your Course Certificate, you must score 80% on the Final exam.)



Experiential

Interactive exercises & Empathy Games® are provided to deepen the learning process and integrate the didactic discussion on an organic & practical level. These practice experientials will prepare you to start applying the theory immediately.



Feedback

You will be given the opportunity to provide your personal feedback upon completion of the course, which we greatly appreciate.



Reference Materials

A free Course Workbook and reference materials are available for you to print throughout.

TEACHING METHOD

Organic Learning Method (OLM) - Our teaching approach is designed to engage the organic process that allows empathic ability to develop in the human psyche. Anchored in research in the fields of Neurobiology, Dynamic Systems Theory, Relational Self-Psychology and Intersubjectivity Theory, the goal of OLM is to re-engage a developmental process that may have been dormant since childhood.

Our focus is on the developmental process, rather than behavioral change. This process involves working with both the conscious and unconscious mind, including hard-wired and cognitively learned mental patterns. Whereas traditional teaching approaches stress the cognitive, OLM introduces emotion/feeling as co-equal elements in the relational learning process.

COURSE CONTENT

Module 1 – Deconstructing Empathy

Introduction – Empathy Roadmap to the WE Space

TOPIC 1 - Deconstructing Empathy

Lesson 1 – Why Empathy?

Lesson 2 – Definition by Comparison

Lesson 3 – The Impact of Sympathy, Empathy & the “As If” Stance

Lesson 4 – Practice Exercise “Pro-Social Responses”

Lesson 5 – Experiential “Who Gets You?”

Lesson 6 – Empathy as a Two-Way Process

TOPIC 2 - The Hard-Wired Aspects of Empathy

Lesson 1 – Empathy’s Hard-Wired Components

TOPIC 3 – The Cognitive Aspects of Empathy

Lesson 1 – Empathy’s Cognitive Components

Lesson 2 – Theory of Mind/Intuitive Psychology & Perspective-Taking

Explanatory Note – “Mirroring”

Lesson 3 – Conclusion & Review: Deconstructing Empathy

Module 2 – Relational Dynamics and the WE Space

TOPIC 1 - Understanding Relational Dynamics

Lesson 1 - Co-Created Mutual Impact Dynamic

Lesson 2 - Quick Overview Relational Dynamics

TOPIC 2 - Positive Impact of Empathy and the WE Space

Lesson 1 - We Space Defined

Lesson 2 - Practice Exercise: My Phone Broke - Impact of Non-Empathic Response

Lesson 3 - Conclusion & Review – Relational Dynamics & the WE Space

Module 3 – Empathy Roadmap to the WE Space

Introduction – Empathy Roadmap to the WE Space

TOPIC 1 - E-Roadmap Step 1 - ME: Self-Attunement

Lesson 1 - Self-Attunement: Self-State Awareness

Lesson 2 - Self-Attunement: Brain Direction

Lesson 3 - Self-Attunement: Perspective Taking

Review - Empathy Roadmap Step 1: "ME - Self Attunement"

TOPIC 2 - E-Roadmap Step 2 - YOU: Attunement to Other

Step 2 - Lesson 1 - Attunement to Other: Empathic Listening

Lesson 2 - Attunement to Other: Empathic Inquiry

TOPIC 3 - E-Roadmap Step 3 - WE: Empathic Flow

Lesson 1 - Empathic Flow: Mirroring and Feedback

Lesson 2 – Empathic Flow: How to Repair Breaks in Empathy

Lesson 3 - Quick Review: Empathy Roadmap Steps 1, 2 & 3

Course Final Review

MODULE DETAIL

Module 1 - **Deconstructing Empathy** (3 Hours)

Module 1 deconstructs empathy by exploring various aspects of the empathic attunement process. Chris compares the different **impact of the pro-social behaviors** pity, sympathy & empathy. Then he takes a deep dive into the **hard-wired** and **cognitive** aspects of Empathy, Theory of Mind and the importance of the “as if stance,” where the concept of Empathy as a two-way communication process is introduced. You will gain a comprehensive and practical understanding of what empathy is and what it is not, as well as how it works.

LEARNING GOALS

- Learn how and why the pro-social behaviors pity, sympathy & empathy have a different, and sometimes negative impact on the recipient.
- Discover how we are all hard-wired to be empathic with others and how empathic attunement can be learned and developed.
- Discover the “as if stance,” what it is, how to apply it and why it is important in protecting your personal boundaries when working with others.

Module 2 - **Relational Dynamics and the WE Space** (2 Hours)

Module 2 unpacks relationships and how they work. This discussion adds context to Module 1 as it explores **co-created relational dynamics**, the **mutual impact dynamic** and the importance of the **We Space** in relationships. You will appreciate and understand why some relationships work and some do not.

LEARNING GOALS



- Discover and explore the concept of the “Mutual Impact Dynamic” and its’ role in all relationships.
- Learn how relationships are co-created as a result of the “Mutual Impact Dynamic.”
- Learn how the concept of the Mutual Impact Dynamic can be applied to help navigate and improve negative relational dynamics and strengthen positive ones.
- Learn about the “We Space[®]” and why it is an essential aspect of any healthy relational dynamic.

Module 3 - Empathy Roadmap to the WE Space (4 Hours)

Module 3 – Chris guides you through the Empathy Roadmap a powerful, step-by-step empathy skills training program. Each step in the E-Roadmap is clearly defined and then practiced experientially preparing you to successfully apply the empathic attunement process in any relational context. In **Step 1 (Self-Attunement)** you explore your personal self-state to discover how it affects your ability to tune in to others. In **Step 2 (Attunement to Other)** you learn how to accurately tune in to the other’s feelings and inner experience. Then in **Step 3 (Empathic Flow)** you learn & practice the most complex part of the empathic attunement process – “mirroring” the other’s inner experience, seeking feedback to confirm your assessment of their feelings, as well as how to recognize and repair breaks in empathy.

LEARNING GOALS

- Discover how important your personal self-state is to the empathic attunement process.
- Learn how to tune in to the other’s inner feeling-experience.
- Learn how to build trust with others to share their vulnerability with you.
- Practice the skills key to empathic attunement - Empathic Listening, Empathic Inquiry, Mirroring & Feedback and how to Repair a “break in empathy.”

DISCLAIMER

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MODULE 1

Deconstructing Empathy

Module 1 – Deconstructing Empathy

Course Content

Introduction – Empathy Roadmap to the WE Space

Topic 1 - Deconstructing Empathy

Lesson 1 – Why Empathy?

Lesson 2 – Definition by Comparison

Lesson 3 – The Impact of Sympathy, Empathy & the “As If” Stance

Lesson 4 – Practice Exercise “Pro-Social Responses”

Lesson 5 – Experiential “Who Gets You?”

Lesson 6 – Empathy as a Two-Way Process

TOPIC 2 - The Hard-Wired Aspects of Empathy

Lesson 1 – Empathy’s Hard-Wired Components

TOPIC 3 – The Cognitive Aspects of Empathy

Lesson 1 – Empathy’s Cognitive Components

Lesson 2 – Theory of Mind/Intuitive Psychology & Perspective-Taking

Explanatory Note – “Mirroring”

Lesson 3 – Conclusion & Review: Deconstructing Empathy

Module 1 – Deconstructing Empathy



INTRODUCTION – Empathy Roadmap to the WE Space

Welcome to “The Empathy Roadmap to the WE Space,” our empathy-skills training program designed to enhance your empathic ability.

The following questions are addressed;

1. Why are some people naturally more empathic than others?
2. What determines how empathic you are in the moment?
3. When you are the recipient of someone’s empathy, why does it feel so good?
4. How can one enhance their empathic ability?

The program is presented in 3 Modules;

MODULE 1 - Deconstructing Empathy

MODULE 2 - Relational Dynamics & Understanding the “WE Space”

MODULE 3 - The Empathy Roadmap to the “WE Space”

We employ the “Organic Learning Method” throughout that helps integrate the theoretical concepts with a feeling frame of reference.

TOPIC 1 – DECONSTRUCTING EMPATHY



Topic 1/Lesson 1 – Why Empathy?

WHY EMPATHY?

Empathy a pro-social behavior, is often confused with the other pro-social behaviors pity, sympathy, compassion & altruism.

Understanding these differences and how empathy supports personal growth can help you improve positive outcomes when working with your colleagues, clients, or in personal relationships.

We Believe:

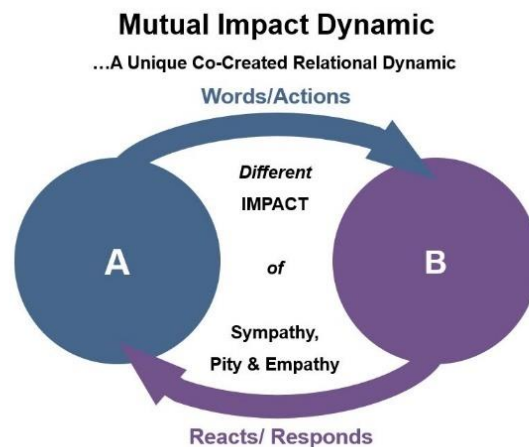
- Success in life requires the ability to establish and maintain happy, healthy and productive relationships
- Empathy is the highest form of emotional intelligence and is essential to creating productive relationships at all levels
- A society that values and practices empathy will be a more harmonious society
- Empathy is not a mystery and can be deconstructed, learned and enhanced through a fun step-by-step process

Topic 1/Lesson 2 – Definition by Comparison

PRO-SOCIAL BEHAVIORS

1. The term “pro-social behavior” describes a general **attitude** of openness, friendliness and caring toward others. Pro-social **behaviors** are things we do which reflect this general attitude.
2. The terms empathy, pity, sympathy and altruism refer to our **pro-social interactions** and are often used interchangeably but have important differences.
3. The key difference is in the giver’s **perspective** and the **impact** that perspective has on the recipient.

The Impact of Pity



REVIEW

1. The Mutual Impact Dynamic represents a relational dynamic between two people. For example, “A” says or does something to “B” and “B” reacts/responds, in turn impacting “A.” This mutual reaction & response dynamic is unique to the dyad, and becomes an habitual pattern.
2. Pity can have a negative impact on the recipient, as the observer may feel sorry for the recipient and respond from an **emotional distance (far)** that may reflect some **personal judgement** about the recipient.

NOTES:

Personal Reflection – The Impact of Pity

Coaching Note: These questions are meant for you to reflect on your personal experience and are not scored. Questions do not have right or wrong answers, and all answers are completely confidential. (Take the time you need and be as true to yourself and as accurate as possible.)

1. Can you remember a time someone pitied you?
 - Yes
 - No
2. How did it feel? Did you feel understood?
3. Do you remember what you said in response, or what you may have wanted to say?
4. Can you remember a time that you pitied someone else?
 - Yes
 - No
5. How did you feel about them and the situation they were in?

6. Do you remember what you said?
 - Yes
 - No
7. How did the other person respond?
8. What is your current feeling in the moment with this exercise?
9. Did your current feeling effect the way you answered the above questions?
 - Yes
 - No
10. How did your feelings effect the way you answered?

Thoughtful Q&A – Impact of Pity

Coaching Note: These questions are meant for you to think about what you have just learned and are not scored. Not all questions have right or wrong answers, and all answers are completely confidential.

1. Do all pro-social behaviors have the same impact on the recipient?
 - Yes
 - No

HINT

The Impact of Pro-Social Behaviors Pity, Sympathy & Empathy

- **Pity** is an emotionally distant response that can project some negative judgement about the recipient.
- **Sympathy** is potentially projecting your feeling of caring and concerns onto the other.
- **Empathy** is tuning in to the “what” & “why” of the others’ feelings without projection or emotional merger. Empathy has the potential to change the relational dynamic positively by helping the other feel safe, seen, understood and more connected.

2. Can pity have a detrimental impact on the recipient?
 - Yes
 - No

3. Is pity an emotionally “near” (connected) or “far” (emotionally distant & judgmental) experience for the recipient?
 - Near
 - Far
4. Are you generally aware of the impact you have on others?
 - Yes
 - No
5. How do you feel when someone pities you?
 - Yum
 - Yuck
6. If you answered “Yuck” to the above question, why did you feel that way?
7. What is the potential impact of Pity on the recipient?

HINT

The negative impact of Pity & Sympathy can contribute to the recipients feeling;

- Disempowered
- Judged
- Emotionally distant
- Loss of personal agency

Topic 1/Lesson 3 – The Impact of Sympathy, Empathy & the “As If” Stance

THE IMPACT OF SYMPATHY

1. Sympathy is closely related to Pity because both responses are triggered by observing another’s **negative circumstance or situation**.
2. But, sympathy involves a sense of projected **emotional alignment** by the observer and possible **emotional merger** between the observer and recipient that often results in taking some action on the other’s behalf.
3. Sympathy can be **disempowering** to the recipient by **undermining their sense of agency**, thus reinforcing an insecure sense-of-self organized around persistent feelings of victimhood, powerlessness and low self-esteem.

Experiential – The Impact of Sympathy

Coaching Note: Now take a few calming breaths and reflect on the following questions.

1. When you were the recipient of someone's sympathy, how did it feel?
 - Yum
 - Yuck
2. If your answer was YUM, why did you feel that way?
3. If your answer was YUCK, why did you feel that way?
4. Do you ever feel YUM & YUCK simultaneously?
 - Yes
 - No
5. Do you think this response would be mostly conscious or unconscious?
 - Conscious
 - Unconscious
6. What kind of response is this? "How awful, you poor thing! I'd be devastated!"
 - Sympathy
 - Pity
 - Empathy
7. Explain why...
8. What kind of response is this? "I'm really upset hearing about this! I think I'm going to have a talk with that guy!"
 - Sympathy
 - Pity
 - Empathy
9. Explain why...

The Impact of Empathy & the “As If” Stance

REVIEW

1. Empathy encompasses the full spectrum of someone’s feelings, including someone’s happiness and success and not just their difficulty, sorrow or pain.
2. Empathy shows concern for the other, but the focus is to tune in to their inner experience without merging with them or projecting our own feeling onto them. This is called maintaining the “**As If**” stance. (We will discuss this in more depth in Module 2.)
3. The goal is to understand the “what” and “why” of the other’s inner experience, “As If” it were your own, and to reflect it back to them while retaining the self/other objectivity.

Key differences between Sympathy & Empathy

- **SYMPATHY** is potentially projecting your feelings of caring and concerns onto the other.
- **EMPATHY** is tuning into the “what” and “why” of the other’s actual feelings without projecting ones own feelings, or emotional merger.
- **EMPATHY** includes mirroring the other’s positive & negative inner experience, as well as their natural strengths and sense of agency.

NOTES:

Thoughtful Q&A – As If Stance

1. What is the “As If” stance? (Which answers are correct?)
 - I understand both the “what” and “why” of your feelings.
 - I understand the full spectrum of your feelings, both positive and negative, while retaining self/other objectivity.
 - I experience your feelings as if they are mine. I feel very connected and emotionally merged with you.

HINT

- Empathy encompasses the full spectrum of someone's feelings, including someone's happiness and success and not just their difficulty, sorrow or pain.
- While we are concerned for the other, we also try to tune into their inner experience without merging with them or projecting our own feeling onto them. This is called maintaining the **"As If" stance**.
- The goal is to understand the "what" and "why" of the other's inner experience, as if it is your own, and to reflect it back to them while retaining the self/other objectivity.

2. Why is the "As If" stance important in empathic attunement?

HINT

With empathy we try to tune into the other's inner experience without merging with those feelings. We try not to project our feelings, but rather understand the "what" and "why" of the other's inner feeling experience. This is called the "as if stance."

3. Can "sympathy" mirror someone's happiness and strengths?

- Yes
- No

4. Can "sympathy" undermine ones' sense of agency?

- Yes
- No

HINT

Sympathy can undermine the recipient's sense of agency and reinforce an insecure sense-of-self organized around persistent feelings of victimhood, powerlessness and low-self-esteem.

5. Are you aware of when you are projecting your own feelings onto someone else?

- Yes
- No

HINT

Pause and ask yourself, is this their feeling or my own? Without awareness of how to maintain the "As If" stance we often confuse whose feeling it is, yours or the other person's.

6. How do you tend to respond to someone sharing their feelings with you? What is your first thought/feeling?

7. How hard is it for you to tune into another's inner experience from an "As If" stance?

Topic 1/Lesson 4 – Practice Exercise “Pro-Social Responses”

MY FRIEND’S IN JAIL

1. Match (drag & drop) the appropriate response to the Pro-Social attitudes.

- Empathy
- Sympathy
- Pity

“That’s such a shame, the poor guy! To end up in jail like that and now he’s blaming you, you poor thing!” _____

“That really sucks! What a lousy time for your phone to be off. I’d feel guilty too! Come on, let’s go down there and bail him out so you can show him what a good friend you are!” _____

That really sucks!! I think I can understand why you’re upset..., I know how you’re always there for him and what a good friend you are. How are you doing with him blaming you like this? _____

HINT

Keep in mind the different impact that each of the pro-social responses (Pity/Sympathy/Empathy) can have on the recipient, and how Tom may feel with each of these responses from Jane.

Pity can have a negative impact on the recipient, as the observer may feel sorry for the recipient and respond from an **emotional distance** that may reflect some **personal judgement** about the recipient.

Sympathy can trigger a sense of projected **emotional alignment** or **merger** between the observer and recipient. Sympathy can be disempowering to the recipient by undermining their sense of agency, thus reinforcing an insecure sense-of-self organized around persistent feelings of victimhood, powerlessness and low self-esteem.

Empathy is tuning into the “what” and “why” of the other’s actual feelings without emotional merger.

Empathy includes mirroring the other’s positive & negative inner experience, as well as their natural strengths and sense of agency.

Thoughtful Q&A

Coaching Note: Now that you have selected which response is pity, sympathy or empathic, let’s review your answers and consider the reason(s) why you selected the response that you did. Considering the following may help;

1. How do you think your choice for Sympathetic response would impact Tom?
2. Why would a sympathetic response impact him that way?
3. How do you think your Pitying response would impact Tom? Why?
4. How do you think your Empathic response would impact Tom? Why?

Topic 1/Lesson 5 – Experiential “Who Gets You?”

REVIEW - Who Gets You?

This feeling of really being understood by someone is your “feeling frame-of-reference” of the recipient’s experience of empathic attunement. This is an experiential touchstone to remember as we move through the course.

Also, remember, empathic attunement can be part of loving, but you can love someone and not really “get” them and vice-versa, someone can “get” you but not necessarily love you.

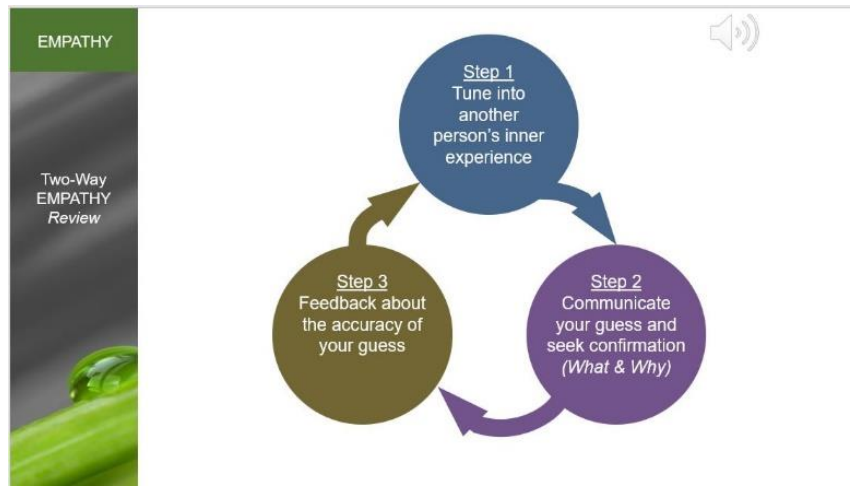
Empathy is synonymous with feeling understood.

Organic Learning Method

The goal of the Organic Learning Method is to help you get in touch with your personal feeling frame of reference for being empathized with and feeling understood. We believe that creating a parallel feeling-experience will help integrate the cognitive learning of the didactic information being presented.

Topic 1/Lesson 6 – Empathy as a Two-Way Process

EMPATHY AS A TWO-WAY PROCESS



“Two-Way Empathy” Working Definition – Empathy is a multi-step, bi-directional communication process between two people. Key elements include...

1. The observer attempts to put him/herself in the other person's shoes by attempting to tune in and accurately access and understand the **what** and **why** of the other's inner experience, while maintaining their own perspective.
2. This assessment is then communicated to the recipient in order to seek confirmation about the accuracy of the observer's assessment, and to discover more about the context of the other's feelings.
3. To complete the two-way process, the recipient then provides verbal or non-verbal feedback about the accuracy of the observer's assessment.

If the observer receives confirming feedback that they have understood the other and accurately reflected the recipient's feeling back to them, it is called **mirroring**, and two-way empathy has been completed.

Thus, **the recipient is the final judge if two-way empathy happened**. If they didn't feel accurately understood, it still registers as an attempt to achieve empathic connection. When this happens don't give up and try again!

Thoughtful Q&A

1. Who is the final judge about whether an attempt to understand the other's feelings is empathic?
 - Giver
 - Recipient
2. If the recipient of your empathy doesn't feel that you understood them accurately, is it empathy?
 - Yes
 - No
3. Is forming a supposition about what the other person is feeling always a conscious effort?
 - Yes
 - No

HINT

Your attempt to put yourself in the other person's shoes and tune in to their inner experience is done by forming a guess, either unconsciously or consciously, about the “**what** and **why**” of their feelings.

4. Will the recipient's feedback to your guess about what they are feeling always be verbal?
 - Yes
 - No

TOPIC 2 – THE HARD-WIRED ASPECT OF EMPATHY



Topic 2/Lesson 1 – Empathy's Hard-Wired Components

REVIEW

Humans are born with a hard-wired capacity for a basic form of empathy.

1. Neuroscience brain-mapping research on Macaque monkeys led to the discovery of the “Mirror Neuron” in the pre-motor cortex. (The pre-motor cortex maps out all actions, before the motor cortex sends instructions to complete the anticipated action to the motor cortex.)

2. The startling discovery was of a special set of neurons in the observing monkey’s brain that were mirroring what was happening in the other animal’s brain “as if” the observer was about to complete the same goal directed action (eat or drink) that it was observing.
3. Researchers discovered that humans have Mirror Neurons in every major area of our brain and are so numerous they are referred to as “**Mirror Neuron Systems.**”
4. The function of mirror neurons in humans goes beyond goal directed actions, providing a hard-wired connection between our individual minds that **helps us feel each other’s feelings and emotions kinesthetically in our body.**
5. This “**Embodied Simulation**” experience helps humans experience the actions, emotions and intentions of others in your body, automatically, “as if” they are your own.
6. The human embodied simulation experience can lead to the “emotional contagion” phenomenon, exemplified by the “infant distress crying syndrome,” as well as “facial mimicry” in infants as research led by Michael Gazzaniga identified.
7. Research concludes that **mirror neurons and embodied simulation underpin automatic mimicry and emotional contagion, giving us the ability to feel each other’s feelings “as if” they are our own, and can thus be considered the fundamental hard-wired component of empathy.**
8. Research from the neuro and cognitive sciences concludes that an embodied understanding of the other’s experience is primary to cognitive understanding, and therefore plays a fundamental role in informing all aspects of human interaction. **However, the hard-wired mirroring mechanism does not preclude the existence of more cognitively driven brain processes involved in analyzing and understanding the intentional acts of others, rather it provides kinesthetic information, making cognitive processes more effective.**

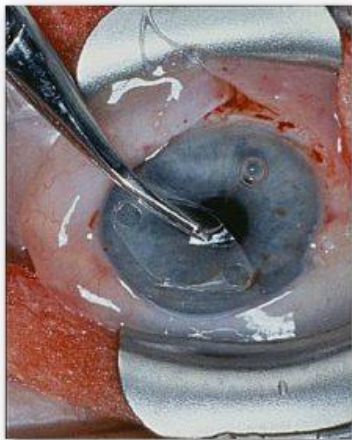
NOTES:

THOUGHTFUL Q&A – Embodied Simulation

1. What is the **kinesthetic phenomenon** that allows us to automatically & unconsciously sense the other's feelings, actions and intentions?
 - Embodied Simulation
 - Emotional Upset
 - Mirror Neuron Systems
2. Mirror Neuron Systems are the source of our embodied simulation experience which helps us to:
 - Feel each other's feelings and emotions kinesthetically in our body as if they were our own.
 - Understand the other's experience by informing cognitive processes related to all aspects of human interaction.
 - Experience automatic mimicry and emotional contagion.

HINT

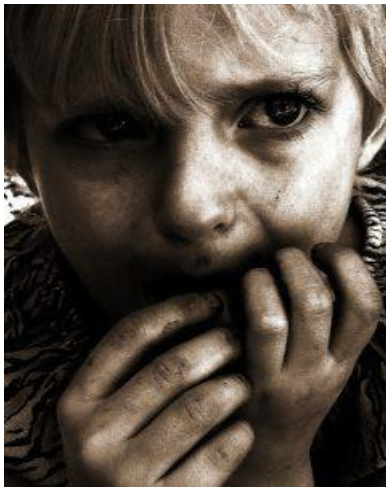
“Mirror Neuron Systems” in our brains provide a hard-wired connection between individual minds that helps us feel each other's feelings and emotions kinesthetically, in our bodies... This “embodied simulation” experience helps humans experience the actions, emotions and intentions of others automatically “as if” they are our own.
There are 3 correct answers to this question.



3. Observe your inner experience as you look at these images. Can you recognize your embodied simulation experience? What is your first reaction?
 - Yum
 - Yuck



4. What is your first feeling?
5. What is she feeling?



6. Does your reaction change as you continue to look at this photo?
 - Yes
 - No
7. How would you describe how your feelings did or didn't shift? Do you know why?



8. What is your first feeling when you look at this picture? What is your body telling you?
 - Yum
 - Yuck



9. What is your first feeling when you look at this picture? Do you like it or not?

Yes

No

TOPIC 3 - COGNITIVE ASPECTS OF EMPATHY



Topic 3/Lesson 1 – Empathy’s Cognitive Components

REVIEW

1. Empathic ability is a hard-wired potential and (like language) must be nurtured to develop beyond rudimentary levels.
2. Empathic “ability” starts in childhood. The experience of empathic attunement creates neural representations in the child’s brain that allows the developmental process of empathy to strengthen and unfold naturally.
3. Empathic ability coincides with normal cognitive development as the human mind/brain becomes adept at its’ primary function – prediction, anticipation and adaption in the physical and psychological realms.
4. Predicting and adapting to human behavior and intentions is highly complex. While it begins with hard-wired mirror neurons and embodied simulation, it also requires cognitive psychological attunement and insight.

NOTES:

Thoughtful Q&A – Empathy’s Cognitive Components

1. Can empathy be developed?
 - Yes
 - No
2. Is the potential for empathic ability hard-wired?
 - Yes
 - No
3. Is the hard-wired aspect of empathy all that is required to adapt to the psychological surround?
 - Yes
 - No
4. What childhood experience allows the developmental process of empathy to occur naturally?
 - Embodied simulation
 - Emotional contagion
 - Empathic Attunement by others
 - Mirror neurons

HINT

Empathic development coincides with normal cognitive development in childhood (and adults). The experience of empathic attunement creates neural representations and synaptic firing patterns in the brain that naturally strengthen overtime with repetition.

Topic 3/Lesson 2 – Theory of Mind/Intuitive Psychology & Perspective-Taking

REVIEW – Theory of Mind/Intuitive Psychology & Perspective-Taking

1. We assume that others have a mind that operates like our own.
2. We project our internal mental and emotional states onto others, assuming they see the world and process experience much as we do.
3. The assumption that the other has a sense-of-self similar to our own, makes it easier for us to understand the other’s thoughts and feelings.

Perspective Taking – The Importance of Cognitive Override

REVIEW

1. The ability to put yourself in the other person's shoes is a complex process that requires separate but overlapping brain areas.
2. We have separate brain cortices that activate when thinking about oneself, or the other person. However, there is functional overlap between these separate brain areas.
3. When the "I/Me" brain area is engaged, **the "Other" perspective is also partially engaged and vice versa**. Thus, our brain has a "Self/Other" system and thinking about self or other is not an either/or proposition.
4. The degree of engagement of these Self/Other brain areas is largely an unconscious process as you focus on yourself, or on the other person.
5. The extent to which you will entertain one perspective or the other (Self/Other) will largely depend on five psycho-social factors;
 - Social, moral & ethical context
 - Level of emotional distress involved
 - Nature of your personal history in relationships in general (going back to childhood)
 - Your personal history with this particular person
 - The perceived similarities between Self and Other in terms of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender
6. The Self/Other system naturally develops as a protection against emotional contagion and the potential of being overwhelmed by the other person's feelings.
7. Paradoxically, without the cognitive ability to override the embodied simulation and emotional contagion phenomena, **we would be in a constant state of confusion about our emotional boundaries**. Early in our development we unconsciously learn how to cognitively shut off the hard-wired components of empathy to help maintain an autonomous sense-of-self.

NOTES:

Thoughtful Q&A – Perspective Taking

1. Is Perspective Taking a cognitively developed or hard-wired function?
 - Cognitively developed
 - Hard-wired
2. What is the primary function of the “perspective taking” process?
 - Determines the social, moral and ethical differences between yourself and the other person.
 - Helps us understand that others see the world as we do.
 - Protects us from confusion about our psychological and emotional boundaries with others.
3. Why is the “cognitive override” important? (Which of the following statements are correct?)
 - It permits us to shut off the hard-wired components of empathy (embodied simulation, emotional contagion) and help maintain an autonomous sense-of-self.
 - It permits us to maintain the “as if” stance between Self & Other when tuning into another person’s inner experience and feelings.
 - It helps us to recognize the difference between whose feeling you are experiencing, yours or the other’s.
 - It will trigger my “Other” brain cortices ONLY, when I want to understand the other’s inner experience.
4. Which of these **phenomena** are aspects of the cognitive process associated with empathy?
 - When attempting to put yourself in someone else’s shoes, both the “Self” and “Other” brain areas are engaged simultaneously, but to varying degrees.
 - We assume that others think and feel the same as we do.
 - Without cognitive override, the hard-wired aspect of empathy could cause confusion about whose feeling you are experiencing, yours or the other’s.
 - Psycho-Social factors may affect how inclined you are to take your perspective or the other’s.

HINT

Theory of Mind: We assume others have a mind that operates like our own and project our internal mental and emotional states onto them.

EXPLANATORY NOTE – “MIRRORING”

Because the term “**Mirroring**” is used here to describe two different (but related) processes, we feel it is important to clarify its usage. First, we will describe the term as used in non-cognitively mediated processes and then its use in cognitive processes, each an important component of empathy.

“**Mirror Neuron Systems**” – Mirror neurons are so numerous in the human brain they are considered to comprise hard-wired systems in the brain that operate to produce a non-cognitively mediated “embodied simulation experience.” This provides an automatic, hard-wired, connection between individual minds that helps us feel each other’s feelings and emotions without cognitive thought processes. Rather, it is experienced kinesthetically, in our bodies. We are fundamentally capable of **unconsciously “mirroring” each other’s feelings & inner experience without having to think about it.** Thus, this hard-wired process is primary to the more complex cognitive process of understanding of the other’s experience.

“**Mirroring**” **your understanding of the other’s inner experience** – Here the term describes a complex process of cognitive empathy i.e. trying to understand the others inner experience. While this cognitive process of understanding is fundamentally informed by the mirror neuron systems and embodied simulation, it involves thought processes. (Remember, the hard-wired embodied simulation process can be overridden by higher cognitive thought processes.) Consciously or unconsciously, we choose how to respond to the other. For example, do we choose to merge with the other’s feelings while simultaneously projecting our own on to them, do we choose to say nothing in the moment and withhold any form of understanding? Or do we choose to respond empathically and provide “**positive mirroring**”? Positive mirroring is an important aspect of working with others at all levels. The therapeutic effect of accurately tuning in to and reflecting (**mirroring**) the other’s inner experience back to them provides feelings of being understood and strengthens their sense-of-self. However, mirroring can also be negative, as when a parent negatively mirrors a child by scolding, shaming or showing constant disappointment.

Thus, our ability to be empathic requires both embodied simulation, **non-cognitive mirroring**, made possible by our mirror neuron systems and the cognitively driven process of choosing how we respond to the other in the moment, i.e., **positive mirroring**. As you can see, both play an important role in the empathic attunement process.

NOTES:

Topic 3/Lesson 3 – Conclusion & Review: Deconstructing Empathy



CONCLUSION – Deconstructing Empathy

A working definition of empathy as a two-way communication process.

- Why are some people more empathic than others? While we are all born with **hard-wired** capacity for empathy, our empathic ability develops beginning in childhood. If the individual was the recipient of sufficient nurturing & empathic attunement experiences, the neural representations for empathy were established to allow for the cognitive developmental process to unfold.
- **Cognitive override** is also essential to establish and maintain a separate sense-of-self and may operate in such a way as to enhance or encumber phenomena like embodied simulation and emotional contagion.
- **Relational factors** can also limit your ability or willingness to be empathic and to put yourself in the other person’s shoes.
- **“Two-Way Empathy” Working Definition** – Empathy is a multi-step, bi-directional communication process between two people. Key elements include...
 1. The observer attempts to put him/herself in the other person’s shoes by attempting to tune in and accurately understand the **“What”** and **“why”** of the other’s inner experience, while maintaining their own perspective.
 2. This assessment is then communicated to the recipient to seek confirmation about the accuracy of the observer’s supposition, and to discover more about the context of the other’s feelings.
 3. To complete the two-way process, the recipient then provides verbal or non-verbal feedback about the accuracy of the observer’s supposition

QUICK REVIEW – Deconstructing Empathy

1. Empathy is a two-way communication process.
2. Compared to the other pro-social responses (sympathy, pity) empathy is potentially growth inducing, where pity and sympathy run the risk of having a negative impact on the recipient.
3. Humans are born with the hard-wired components of a basic form of empathy, a natural and automatic capacity to feel the other person's feelings. But this potential must be developed if it is to grow beyond a rudimentary level.
4. The cognitive aspects of empathy and the importance of the perspective taking process can (consciously or unconsciously) impede or augment the hard-wired ability to tune into the feelings of others. As such, cognitive aspects of empathy are essential in helping to maintain self autonomy.

NOTES:

Links TBD (Reading material, Bibliography)

FINAL EXAM – MODULE 1 – Deconstructing Empathy (27 questions)

User Instruction: This exam is scored and tabulated as part of the Course Final exam. Each question has a value of 1 point. Questions can have more than one correct answer which will be identified in the question HINT (27 questions).

1. **Question** - Are Pity, Sympathy and Empathy interchangeable?
 - YES
 - NO
2. **Question** - Do all pro-social behaviors have the same impact on the recipient?
 - Yes
 - No

HINT

The key difference between pro-social behaviors is in the giver's **perspective** and the **impact** that perspective has on the recipient.

3. **Question** - Can pity have a detrimental impact on the recipient?
 - Yes
 - No
4. **Question** - Is pity an emotionally “near” (connected) or “far” (emotionally distant & judgmental) experience for the observer?
 - Near
 - Far
5. **Question** - What is the potential impact of Pity on the recipient?
 - Empowering
 - Disempowering
6. **Question** - What kind of response is this? (Sympathy/Pity/Empathy) MATCH the pro-social behavior to the response

Sort elements

- Pity
- Empathy
- Sympathy

...How awful, you poor thing! I'd be devastated	
...I'm really upset hearing about this! I think I'm going to have to have a talk with that guy!!	
...Wow, I understand if you're upset. Can you tell me more about why?	

HINT

All three choices must be correct to score 1 point.

7. Question - Which of the following accurately describes the "As if" Stance?

- I experience your feelings as if they are mine. I feel very connected and merged with you.
- I understand both the "what" and "why" of your feelings.
- I understand the full spectrum of your feelings, both positive and negative, while retaining self/other objectivity.

HINT

This question has 2 correct answers to score 1 point.

8. Question - Why is the "As if" stance important in empathic attunement?

HINT

Mirror neurons are so numerous in the human brain they are considered to comprise hard-wired systems in the brain that operate to produce a non-cognitively mediated "embodied simulation experience." This phenomenon allows us to sense/feel the other's experience on an unconscious, kinesthetic level. The embodied simulation phenomenon helps make **the cognitive processes associated with empathy, including the ability to take the "as if" stance more effective**, thus supporting our ability to tune in to another's inner experience without merging or projecting personal feelings.

9. Question - Can “sympathy” mirror someone’s happiness and strengths?

- Yes
- No

10. Question - Can “sympathy” undermine ones’ sense of agency?

- Yes
- No

HINT

Sympathy can reinforce a sense-of-self that may be organized around feelings of victimhood, powerlessness and low-self-esteem.

11. Question - As we described in this course, is empathy a One-way or Two-way communication process?

- 1-Way
- 2-Way

12. Question - Who is the final judge about whether an attempt to understand the other’s feelings is empathic?

- Giver
- Recipient

13. Question - If you are very concerned for the other person, but the recipient of your empathy doesn’t feel understood, have you achieved empathic attunement?

- Yes
- No

14. Question - Is forming a supposition about what the other person is feeling always a conscious effort?

- Yes
- No

HINT

Your attempt to put yourself in the other person’s shoes and tune in to their inner experience is either a conscious or unconscious process.

15. Question - How might the recipient of your attempted empathic attunement provide feedback about your empathic accuracy?

- Body Language
- Words spoken
- Philosophical diatribe
- Energetic shift (move closer or farther away)
- Stop sharing their vulnerable feelings with you

HINT

This question has 4 correct answers to score 1 point.

16. Question - Mirroring systems in your brain make it possible for you to automatically & unconsciously experience the other's feelings and physical experiences kinesthetically. This phenomenon is called...?

- Embodied Simulation...
- Neurotic Contagion...
- Cognitive Response...

HINT

This question has 1 correct answer to score 1 point.

17. Question - Are “mirror neuron systems” a hard-wired or cognitive aspect of the empathic attunement process?

- Cognitive
- Hard-wired

HINT

“Mirror Neuron Systems” – Mirror neurons are so numerous in the human brain they are considered to comprise hard-wired systems in the brain that operate to produce a non-cognitively mediated “embodied simulation experience.” This provides an automatic, hard-wired connection between individual minds that helps us feel each other’s feelings and emotions without cognitive thought processes.

18. Question - Are “mirror neuron systems” the same thing as “mirroring” someone’s inner feelings?

- YES
- NO

HINT

Our ability to be empathic requires both embodied simulation (non-cognitive mirroring) made possible by our mirror neuron systems, as well as the cognitively driven process of choosing how we respond to the other in the moment, i.e., putting yourself in the other person's shoes.

19. Question - Mirror Neuron Systems in humans help us to...?

- Feel each other's feelings and emotions kinesthetically in our body automatically.
- Better understand the other's experience on a cognitive level.
- Better analyze and understand the intentional acts of others more effectively
- Replace the cognitive elements of empathic attunement.

HINT

This question has 3 correct answers to score 1 point.

"Mirror Neuron Systems" provide a hard-wired basis for empathy and a connection between individual minds that helps us feel each other's feelings and emotions kinesthetically, in our bodies...

20. Question - Can empathic ability be developed in adults?

- Yes
- No

21. Question - Is the **potential** for empathic ability hard-wired?

- Yes
- No

22. Question - Is the hard-wired aspect of empathy all that is required to understand human behavior and intentions?

- Yes
- No

23. Question - What childhood experience models the behavior and facilitates the developmental process of empathy to unfold naturally?

- Embodied simulation
- Emotional contagion
- Empathic nurturing
- Mirror neurons

HINT

This question has 1 correct answer to score 1 point.

Childhood (and adult) **relational experiences** create neural representations and synaptic firing patterns in the brain that strengthen overtime with repetition. They will continue to strengthen unless they are “perturbed” and replaced with new neural representations.

24. Question - Is “Perspective Taking” a cognitively driven or hard-wired function?

- Cognitively driven
- Hard-wired

25. Question - What is the simplest way to define “perspective taking”?

- Consciously or unconsciously putting yourself in the other person's shoes.
- Reconciling the social, moral and ethical differences between yourself and the other person.
- Understanding that others see the world the same way we do.

HINT

This question has 1 correct answer to score 1 point.

26. Question - Which of these phenomena are aspects of Empathy’s Cognitive Processes?

- When attempting to put yourself in the other person's shoes, both the “Self” and “Other” brain areas are engaged simultaneously, but to varying degrees.
- Without cognitive override, the hard-wired aspect of empathy could cause confusion about whose feeling you are experiencing, yours or the other’s.
- Psycho Social factors may affect how inclined you are to take the other's perspective.
- Theory of Mind suggests that part of cognitive development results in the assumption that others think and feel the same as we do.

HINT

This question has 4 correct answers to score 1 point.

Theory of Mind... we incorrectly assume others have a mind that operates like our own and we project our internal mental and emotional states onto them.

27. Question - Why is “cognitive override” of the hard-wired aspects of emotional empathy important?

- It permits us to mute embodied simulation/emotional contagion and help maintain an autonomous sense-of-self.

- It permits us to maintain the “as if” stance between Self & Other when tuning into another person’s inner experience and feelings.
- It helps us to recognize the difference between whose feeling you are experiencing, yours or the other’s.
- It enables the “Other” brain area to engage exclusively when we want to understand another person's experience.

HINT

This question has 3 correct answers to score 1 point.