



MODULE 3

Empathy Roadmap to the WE Space

Step-by-Step Empathy Skills Training Program

Module 3 – Empathy Roadmap to the WE Space

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Introduction – Empathy Roadmap to the WE Space

Modules 1 & 2 – Quick Review: Deconstructing Empathy & Relational Dynamics

QUICK REVIEW – Module 1 – Deconstructing Empathy

- **Empathy Defined** – Empathy is defined by comparison to other pro-social behaviors, Pity & Sympathy and the different impact they each have on the recipient.
- **The Hard-Wired Aspect of Empathy** – We are all hard-wired to be empathic, but (like language) this potential **must be practiced if it is to develop** beyond rudimentary levels.
- **“Perspective-Taking”** – A complex cognitive aspect of empathic attunement describes the **ability to put yourself in the other person’s shoes**. It involves changing your “self/other” focus and the conscious or unconscious consideration of psycho-social factors. Empathy embraces the full spectrum of emotional attunement (both positive & negative) where the observer attempts to accurately tune in to the “what” & “why” of the recipient’s inner experience and accurately reflect it back to them, including their natural strengths and sense of agency.

QUICK REVIEW – Module 2 – Relational Dynamics & the WE Space

- **Co-created Relational Dynamics** – Relationships are co-created as a result of the “mutual impact dynamic” unique to each relationship.
- **Mutual Impact Dynamic** – How two people react/respond to each other, which can be either positive or negative.
- **WE Space** – A positive, productive and trusting connection between individuals, where there is little or no fear of being used, negatively judged or unfairly criticized. Despite mirror neurons, cognitively tuning in to another’s inner experience (e.g., their needs/wants/feelings) doesn’t happen automatically. Naturally, our own needs/wants/feelings (conscious and unconscious) can make it difficult to tune in to others. Empathic attunement requires to **first check in with your own feelings** and then ask yourself **if you really want to try to understand the other person’s inner experience**. Thus, cognitive empathy is very much a choice you make, it is something that you attempt to do.

Empathy Roadmap to the WE Space – Introduction

REVIEW – Empathy Roadmap to the WE Space

Step 1: ME – Self-Attunement

1. Self-State Awareness
2. Brain Direction
3. Perspective Taking

Step 2: YOU – Attunement to Other

1. Empathic Listening
2. Empathy Inquiry

Step 3: WE – Empathic Flow

1. Mirroring
2. Feedback
3. Two-way Empathy & the WE Space

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Coaching Note – Reflect on what you are thinking and feeling in the moment. Is there anything distracting you, any physical sensation, emotional upset, anxieties? This is self-attunement. Try to be as accurate as possible.

1. What is your current feeling in the moment?

- Yuck
- Yum
- Hmm

2. What informs this current self-state?

NOTES:

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



TOPIC 1/Lesson 1 – Self-Attunement: Self-State Awareness

Levels of Self-State – Micro/Middle/Macro

REVIEW

Self-State Definition – Your thoughts and feelings in the moment that can operate (consciously or unconsciously) on three levels of your inner experience, and may affect your ability to be empathic;

1. **Level 1: “Micro”** – Your thoughts and feelings in the moment as they relate to what just happened, or what you anticipate will happen in the immediate future.
2. **Level 2: “Middle”** – Your day-to-day thoughts and feelings that can linger in the back of your mind to do with family, friends, work, to do list, etc.
3. **Level 3: “Macro”** – Your hopes, aspirations and fears that relate to your long-term happiness and wellbeing.

Your thoughts and feelings on any of these levels can preoccupy your mind making it difficult, if not impossible, to be empathic.

EXPERIENTIAL – Micro to Macro

1. Try to remember this personal inner experience as we progress through the Empathy Roadmap.
2. Did you discover anything new about how many thoughts & feelings you carry with you all the time?
3. Be aware of your process for getting in touch with those feelings. Do you welcome them, diminish their importance, or try to push them away?
4. Everyone has their unique fluctuating self-state that affects everything they say and do, especially the willingness and ability to put themselves in the other person’s shoes.
5. Practicing self-attunement can help you get more in touch with your fluctuating self-state and the thoughts & feelings that can unconsciously drive us.
6. Most importantly, remember that being aware of your inner experience can help you tune in to and understand the inner experience of others.

THOUGHTFUL Q&A – Micro to Macro

Coaching Note: Your thoughts and feelings in the moment can operate (consciously or unconsciously) on three levels of your inner experience. These self-state levels are described as your thoughts & feelings on the following levels;

- Micro (immediate)
- Middle (daily/weekly/monthly)
- Macro (long-term)

1. Your self-state is almost always conscious.

- True
- False

HINT

We all have a tendency to create an unconscious comfort zone for how we see, interpret and operate in our world. It is important to become aware of your conscious and unconscious thoughts/feelings that can make it difficult to tune into the other person.

2. Your self-state is comprised of your thoughts and feelings in the moment, that consciously or unconsciously operate on 3 different levels Micro/Middle/Macro.

- True
- False

3. Your feelings and inner experience can hinder both your desire and ability to tune into another person's self state.

- True
- False

HINT

Your thoughts and feelings on any of these levels (Micro/Middle/Macro) can preoccupy your mind making it difficult, if not impossible to be empathic.

4. Getting in touch with your self-state can help you understand the “what” and “why” of another person's feelings.

- True
- False

5. Match the Self-State Level with its most accurate definition... (drag & drop)

Sort elements

- a. Middle
- b. Micro
- c. Macro

| | |
|--|--|
| Your thoughts and feelings in the moment as they relate to what just happened, or what you anticipate will happen in the immediate future. | |
| Your daily experience and interactions with family, friends, work etc. | |
| Your long-term hopes, dreams and aspirations | |

COACHING NOTE – Self-State

Feelings ebb and flow..., the focus and strength of our feelings is always changing, affected by circumstance and outcomes. It's important to be aware of how **our feelings affect our behavior**, and how **our behavior is impacting others**. Practice observing how others respond to you, and to what degree their "Yum/Yuck" feelings may shift during your interaction.

It's important to be aware of your own feelings, especially any judgments or biases you may have that could make it difficult to see the other person's point of view.

Lesson 2 – Self-Attunement: Brain Direction

REVIEW - Are you Right-Brain or Left-Brain Dominant?

Your brain has two hemispheres which we refer to as the Right-Brain and Left-Brain. While the brain generally functions as an integrated whole, each hemisphere has different functional specialties.

Left-Brain Focus

1. Cognitive processing, logical and abstract reasoning
2. Recognizing serial events/behaviors, seeks to put order in chaos
3. Processing positive emotions
4. Filters & inhibits Right-Brain processing

Right-Brain Focus

1. Social, emotional & bodily processing
2. Parallel processing & seeing all parts of a whole at once
3. Synthesizing emotional expressions, interprets facial expression, tone of voice, body language
4. Processing information reflexively and unconsciously
5. Processing negative emotion

Everyone develops a natural preference as to which brain hemisphere processes their thoughts and feelings. It is an unconscious tendency in how we experience & interpret our world.

Left-Brain (cognitive/reasoning) dominance may block Right-Brain (emotional/feeling) awareness and vice versa. Either hemisphere can become dominant unconsciously informing how that person listens and processes information. This can limit their full empathic ability by missing the nuanced information processed by their less dominant hemisphere.

PERSONAL REFLECTION – “Left Brain/Right Brain”

Exploring Your Left-Brain/Right-Brain Preference

Coaching Note – Let’s explore your personal response to these images further...



1. Would you assess your initial response as primarily LB or RB?
 - LB
 - RB

2. Why did you choose that hemisphere?
3. Were you surprised by your LB/RB preference?
 - Yes
 - No



1. Would you assess your initial response as primarily LB or RB?
 - LB
 - RB
2. Why did you choose that hemisphere?
3. Were you surprised by your LB/RB preference?
 - Yes
 - No
4. Were you pleased or not and why?

NOTES:

What is Your First Reaction/First Feeling?

Coaching Note – When observing this photo, what kind of response is this, Left-Brain or Right-Brain?



1. Your Response – You feel the constraint of his wheelchair and are overwhelmed with pity for him.
 - Left-Brain
 - Right-Brain

HINT

The processing of bodily feelings and sensations and your personal negative emotions...

2. Your Response – You ask why he is in the wheelchair?
 - Left-Brain
 - Right-Brain

HINT

Unconscious distancing from your negative feelings/emotions...

3. Your Response – You assume he is well taken care of because he has access to a wheelchair.
 - Left-Brain
 - Right-Brain

HINT

Processing unconscious distancing from the emotional impact...

4. Your Response – You feel pity for him and worry about his future.
- Left-Brain
 - Right-Brain
 - Both Left-Brain & Right-Brain

HINT

We see this response as a combination of RB/LB informed because there is the initial projection of your own negative feeling for him (RB) that then morphs into thinking about his future prospects (LB).

5. Your Response – You are touched by his smile and the seeming paradox that he is confined to a wheelchair but is smiling.
- Left-Brain
 - Right-Brain
 - Both Left-Brain & Right-Brain

HINT

We see this as a combined RB/LB informed response, but with no projection of your personal feelings, a form of empathic inquiry...



1. What are your first thoughts, feelings evoked by the photo?
2. What do you think the person in the photo is feeling?
3. Are these guesses more RB or LB informed?
 - Left-Brain
 - Right-Brain

4. What informed your choice of brain hemisphere?

HINT

The experience of looking at this photo is primarily informed by Right-Brain processing of the woman's facial expression.

5. Now continue to focus on her face, where do your thoughts and feelings go? Can you tolerate the intensity of her feeling?

Yes

No

6. As you focus on her face, do you begin to minimize its emotional impact and begin distancing yourself with questions, logistical analysis or possible judgements?

Yes

No

HINT

If you answer Yes, it suggests that your brain/mind is moving towards analysis rather than staying with the negative emotional content of the photo. This would indicate that the LB is beginning to filter or inhibit the RB processing and that your embodied simulation experience may have become uncomfortable.

E-Roadmap Step 1 – Self-Attunement: BRAIN DIRECTION

We hope you have a better sense of your Left-Brain/Right-Brain preference.

- Unconscious LB/RB dominance can create an emotional comfort zone for habitually interacting in your relational world.
- Awareness of your LB/RB preference can help you cognitively tune in to your mirror neuron and embodied simulation processes when engaging with others. This helps clarify the origin of the feeling (yours or theirs) and minimizes emotional contagion and unconscious projection.
- Empathic attunement requires engaging both your left-brain and right-brain. If you are primarily dominant in one hemisphere you could miss the nuanced information and a deeper awareness informed by the other hemisphere.
- It is helpful to be aware of the other person's LB/RB preference in-order to more clearly understand their inner experience, especially how they react and respond and process their feelings.

THOUGHTFUL Q&A – Left-Brain/Right-Brain

1. Can you detect your Left Brain/Right Brain preference?

- Left-Brain
- Right-Brain

2. Is it helpful to determine which brain hemisphere you prefer?

- Yes
- No

HINT

An unconscious preference for how you listen to and process information can limit your full empathic ability by potentially missing nuanced information provided by your less dominant hemisphere.

3. Why is it helpful to determine your preference?

4. Is it helpful to identify the other's LB/RB preference?

- Yes
- No

5. Why is it helpful to identify the other's preference?

HINT

It is helpful to be aware of the other person's LB/RB preference in order to more clearly understand their inner experience and how they may experience the world differently from you.

6. Which of the following functional specialty and nuanced information is provided by the Left-Brain hemisphere?

- Cognitive processing, logical and abstract reasoning
- Recognizing serial events/behaviors, seeks to put order in chaos
- Processing positive emotions
- Filters & inhibits Right-Brain processing
- Social, emotional & bodily processing
- Parallel processing & seeing all parts of a whole at once
- Interprets facial expression, tone of voice, body language

- Processing information reflexively and unconsciously
- Processing negative emotion

HINT

Left-Brain Focus

1. Cognitive processing, logical and abstract reasoning
2. Recognizing serial events/behaviors, seeks to put order in chaos
3. Processing positive emotions
4. Filters & inhibits Right-Brain processing

Lesson 3 – Self-Attunement: Perspective Taking

REVIEW – Perspective Taking

- “Perspective Taking” is a complex cognitive aspect of the empathic attunement process and the ability to put yourself in the other person’s shoes. It involves changing the “self-other” focus in your brain.
- Perspective Taking is accomplished in separate brain areas; one brain area allows you to focus on yourself while the other allows you to focus on the other person. For our purpose, we will call these the “Self” & “Other” brain areas.
- However, these brain areas are not entirely separate since they share certain brain cortices. **When you are thinking about yourself the “Self” brain area is primarily activated and when you are thinking about the other, the “Other” brain area is primarily activated**, but not at the total exclusion of the other. Thus, perspective taking involves your brain switching its focus back & forth by activating either the “Self” or “Other” brain area. This switching is largely an unconscious process.
- Not to be confused with the Left/Right brain hemispheres, the Self/Other brain areas are located in both hemispheres.
- We use the classic “Figure/Ground” image of the Challis/Faces to illustrate how your brain switches back & forth when organizing visual data. This visual exercise is analogous to how your brain unconsciously switches back & forth when you are taking your perspective or attempting to take the other person’s perspective.
- **Empathy requires that you hold both your perspective and the other person’s perspective simultaneously.** That is, being aware of your perspective and self-state and the other person’s perspective and self-state at the same time. This is called the “As If Stance.”

REVIEW – As If Stance

- The complex process of maintaining the “As If Stance” is essential to the perspective taking process. It requires both the hard-wired & cognitive aspects of empathic attunement. It is achieved by employing both your left-brain & right-brain functions in order to be fully aware of your personal self-state, while simultaneously connecting with the other’s self-state to assess the “what” and “why” of their inner experience. **With empathy you don’t give up your perspective in order to take the other person’s, you try to hold both!**
- The Figure/Ground analogy illustrates the switching process but oversimplifies the complexity of the Perspective Taking process. The process is very complex because as your mind switches back & forth, you consciously or unconsciously take into consideration these five psycho-social factors when deciding the extent to which you are willing to take the other’s perspective.
- Psycho-Social Elements of Perspective Taking
 1. The social, ethical and moral context of the moment
 2. The presence and affect of any emotional distress (yours or theirs)
 3. The nature of your personal history/experience in relationships in general
 4. Your personal history with the other individual(s) involved
 5. Your generally perceived similarities between yourself and the other in terms of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender

Hopefully, this discussion has helped you understand the very complex cognitive process of Perspective Taking. Given the complexities, you can now see why we are not always able to tune in to the other’s feelings and inner experience. You can now practice some empathy for yourself knowing how difficult it is to practice empathic attunement with others.

NOTES:

EMPATHY GAME: “Duck Talk – Whose Feeling is This?”



Coaching Note – As you look at this photo, try to imagine what is going on and what the ducks might be thinking or saying to each other. This is a game to help you become more aware of how we have a tendency to project our own thoughts & feelings onto any given social relational situation.

1. What do you think is going on in this scenario?
2. What do you think Duck A is saying?
3. What do you think Duck B is saying?
4. What do you think Duck C is saying?
5. Reflecting on your choice of each duck’s dialogue, can you see how you may have projected your personal perspective?
 - Yes
 - No



Coaching Note: Can you imagine how the perspective and dialogue of each duck changes when the scenario changes? Check in with yourself as you answer these questions to see if their thoughts might actually be a projection of your own.

1. Now what do you think Duck A is saying?
2. Now what do you think Duck B is saying?
3. Now what do you think Duck C is saying?
4. What do you think the CAT is thinking/feeling?
5. Reflecting on how you feel about black & white cats, can you see how your personal perspective may have shaped the responses?
 - Yes
 - No

NOTES:

PRACTICE EXERCISE: “Change Shoes”



Coaching Note: Lets continue to explore your personal response as you look at these images. Focus further on how hard or easy it is for you to change your perspective and put yourself in the other person’s shoes.

1. Did you have an embodied simulation experience?

- Yes
- No

HINT - Remember, embodied simulation is feeling what the other person is feeling, not what you would feel walking a tight rope.

2. If Yes, how would you describe it?

3. What was your Yum/Yuck/Hmm response?

- Yum
- Yuck
- Hmm

4. Were you aware of any conscious or unconscious judgements or biases?

- Yes
- No

5. If Yes, please describe them.

6. Were you surprised by your response?

- Yes
- No



1. What is your Yum/Yuck/Hmm Response?

- Yum
- Yuck
- Hmm

2. Are you aware of any conscious or unconscious judgements or biases?

- Yes
- No

3. If Yes, please describe them.

4. Are you surprised by your reaction/response?

- Yes
- No

5. Would you be able to change your perspective given different contextual scenarios?

- Yes
- No

6. If "yes" how easy would it be?

7. If "no" why would it be difficult?



1. How easy or difficult is it for you to understand and empathize with a person of a different political or religious persuasion?
2. Is it hard for you because you may automatically judge the person?
 - Yes
 - No
3. How does this affect your empathic process with that person? Take time to reflect and think about this...

REVIEW: "Perspective Taking"

When engaging with others in any relational context, check to see if you become more identified with some than others. If so, does this change how you approach them or respond to their needs, wants and inner experience? This is a natural form of perspective taking that can operate unconsciously and affect your relational dynamic.

NOTES:

TOPIC 2: Empathy Roadmap Step 2 – YOU: Attunement to Other



TOPIC 2/Lesson 1 – Attunement to Other: Empathic Listening

REVIEW - “Empathic Listening”

Step 2 of the Empathy Roadmap “Attunement to Other” involves two essential elements -

- Empathic Listening
- Empathic Inquiry

But first – Empathy begins with the desire to understand the other’s experience. It is important to ask yourself if you really want to make the effort to tune in and be empathic with the other person.

PERSONAL REFLECTION – Empathic Listening

Coaching Note: Before we continue with the review of Empathic Listening, let’s take a moment to reflect on the following;

1. What is your current self-state at this point in the course?
 - Yum
 - Yuck
 - Hmm
2. Does your self-state effect the way you are focused on the teaching points?
 - Yes
 - No
3. Do you think you could be empathic with another person in your current self-state?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Maybe
4. Do you desire to be empathic with others in the moment?
 - Yes
 - No

REVIEW – Empathic Listening

- When tuning in to someone’s **inner experience**, listen for context more than content, listen for feelings and try not to focus just on facts. While facts can be helpful, try to assess what’s going on emotionally for them.
- Then ask yourself why might they be feeling this way? Often feelings experienced in-the-moment are not clearly expressed and can be related to some past event or interaction. (See discussion of Psycho-Social elements in Lesson 3 Perspective Taking)

GOAL – The goal of empathic listening is to help you get an accurate sense of the other person’s inner-feelings or self-state. We also describe it as “**Decentered Listening**” and “**Feeling-Focused Listening**”

Decentered Listening

- Try to decenter your focus from your own self-state and actively **tune in to the other person’s inner experience**. (Remember, when you are speaking, you are not listening.)
- Simply listen to the other person and focus on what they are telling you about their experience **as if** it were your own. Do so without focusing on or relating your own similar experience, or what you want to say. (*This would be considered self-centered listening, not other-centered...*)
- Always be sure to listen with both your **eyes** and **ears** to help you tune in to the other person’s feeling experience.
- What is the **intonation** telling you, what are the **eyes, facial expression** and **body language** telling you, and what are the **words** saying about the others inner experience? Are they congruent?

It’s not always easy to be aware of the **strength of feelings**, or to when feelings are intensifying or diminishing. But this is valuable information about the other’s inner experience, because often we react more to the strength of a feeling than to the feeling itself. Learn to listen for the strength of feelings. This affects our ability to respond appropriately, and not just react/respond unconsciously.

Feeling-Focused Listening

- Focus **first on feelings**... then on **facts**.
- Facts & timelines are important but are secondary to feelings in this process. Too much focus on facts and logistics can obscure feelings. Remember, the LB loves organizing factual-information and may obscure what your RB is telling you about the other's self-state and inner feeling-experience.
- Engage both your **"Right-Brain" and "Left-Brain"**
- But, Empathic Listening **emphasizes** Right Brain activity as you listen for feelings and **permit a hard-wired embodied simulation process to unfold simultaneously**.

With empathic listening you will form a sense of the other's inner experience. We call this your **"Hypothesis of Understanding,"** your intuitive guess about the other's inner experience. You may or may not be aware of your intuitive guess/inference as it can be conscious or unconscious via your mirror neurons and embodied simulation process. In this case you will just sense what the other person is feeling.

REVIEW – Attunement to Other: Hypothesis of Understanding

Your hypothesis requires verification of its accuracy before you can assume that you are empathically attuned to the other.

Ask yourself: Is my inference about the other's self-state a projection of my own feelings/inner experience?

- Ideally, you will naturally understand both the "what" and "why" of the other's feelings/inner experience. But, if not it may be a projection of your own. It is important to remember that your guess/inference is only a "hypothesis" and requires verification of accuracy.
- As we discussed, if the other person doesn't feel your attunement & understanding, two-way empathy was not achieved.
- Be patient. Remember, when you are talking you are not listening.
- Let the process unfold naturally. Let your holistic sense of the other's inner experience emerge organically, in which case you will recognize a sense of connection indicating the accuracy of your **"hypothesis of understanding."** As the feeling of connection emerges you may recognize how your hypothesis was informed by both your "right" and "left" brain processes.

COACHING NOTE – Hypothesis of Understanding

Feelings are dynamic, flowing like a river and are **always changing**. The flow is affected both by circumstances and outcomes. It is helpful to practice observing this natural movement and what might be causing the shifts and fluctuations.

For example, it is important to **check for a shift in yours and the other's self-state**, as well as a shift in the **strength** of those feelings. This is especially valuable when listening for feelings of shame or vulnerability that typically go unspoken.

PRACTICE EXERCISE – Empathic Listening “Tom & Jane Go to a Party”

Coaching Note – Take some time to answer the following questions. Then upon reflection, try to clarify your hypothesis of understanding.

1. What do you think Jane is feeling?

- Yum
- Yuck
- Hmm

2. What most informs your interpretation?

3. What do you think Tom is feeling?

- Yum
- Yuck
- Hmm

4. What most informs your interpretation?

5. How is Jane impacting Tom?

- Positively
- Negatively

6. What did you hear?

7. What did you see?

8. How is Tom impacting Jane?

- Positively
- Negatively

9. What did you hear?

10. What did you see?

HINT

- Feelings are communicated by words, intonation, facial expression & body language. Do you tend to be more affected by visual or verbal communication? Try to become more aware of your natural tendency and preference.
- Listen with both your eyes and ears. Watch for body language, sometimes it will tell you something more (or different) than the words being spoken.

PRACTICE EXERCISE – Empathic Listening “Tom & Jane Go to a Party”

Coaching Note – Take some time to answer the following questions. Then upon reflection, try to clarify your hypothesis of understanding. (Change for Positive Response...)

REVIEW – Empathic Listening

- It can be difficult to get in touch with the emotional needs of others, and as a result **those needs often go unexpressed and unmet**. Emotional needs (met or unmet) are very important because they unconsciously influence feelings and behavior. Can you tune in to the emotional need that may be behind another person’s behavior? Ask yourself... “**What does that behavior need/want?**” Practice asking yourself, what does this person’s feeling need/want?
- Always try to listen with both your eyes and ears to help you tune in to the other person’s feeling experience. Often feelings are unconsciously revealed in the eyes. What is the **facial expression** and **body language** telling you, what is the **intonation** telling you, and what are the **words** saying? Are they the same thing? Often they are not.

Lesson 2 – Attunement to Other: Empathic Inquiry

REVIEW – Empathic Inquiry

In real life scenarios we employ **Empathic Inquiry** to get more information about the other's self-state and to confirm our hypothesis of understanding about the "what" and "why" of their feelings. Try to imagine being in the other person's shoes as you seek more information about their experience.

- With **Empathic Inquiry** you ask open-ended questions that lead to more information in an attempt to confirm your hypothesis, or to help you form a more accurate understanding about the other's inner experience.
- Empathic Inquiry is a reframing of your initial guess/inference about the other's feelings into a question in order to confirm the accuracy of the guess/inference.

Reminder – It is important not to try to "fix" the problem or change the way the other person is feeling. (The extent to which you may be able to "fix" the problem may come later...) Empathic attunement requires helping the other feel understood, acknowledged and emotionally supported.

REVIEW – Empathic Inquiry

If you are not able to form a hypothesis based on the information shared with you, you may need to delve more deeply into the **context** of what is being shared, that is to explore the meaning of the event or incident, i.e. ask, "**What did that mean to you? Can you tell me more about that it meant to you?**"

As you seek more information about the others feelings, also try to **tune in to your mirror neuron/embodied simulation experience**. This may provide an unspoken felt understanding that may help the other feel more accurately seen and understood. See if this can help you to **cognitively "put yourself in the other persons shoes."**

When you feel confident about your guess/inference about the other's inner experience, you may decide to share it with them and to practice two-way empathy.

EXAMPLES – Empathic Inquiry Statements

- That would have made me angry, is that what you felt?
- I certainly can understand if that made you angry, did it?
- Gee, you sound very upset but I'm not sure exactly what you are feeling, can you clarify for me?
- What did that mean to you?

COACHING NOTE – Empathic Inquiry

- Try to put yourself in the other person's shoes and consider what they may have been feeling. They may tell you that they are feeling a certain way, but **what else might they be feeling and not openly expressing?** (i.e., hurt, shame & vulnerability)
- Ask yourself, are you identifying with the other person or with the person they are relating to you? **Are you making any judgements?**
- Though we often will say we are "annoyed," or feel "angry," consider that **under the anger** we may really be feeling **hurt, shame and humiliation**. See if you can determine if the other is downplaying their real upset because it is too uncomfortable sharing those vulnerable feelings.
- **Ask for more information about their upset and what it means to them.** Seek to discover more **contextual understanding** through empathic inquiry. This will help you **tune in to their unspoken vulnerable feelings**.

Practice Exercise – Empathic Inquiry "What Would You Say"

1. Do you think Jane may be feeling more than she is openly expressing?

- Yes
- No

2. If you answered Yes (we agree...), what do you think those feelings might be?

HINT - Try to tune into her unspoken vulnerable feelings.

3. Do you think Tom is feeling more than he is openly expressing?

- Yes
- No

4. If you answered Yes (we agree...), what do you think those feelings might be?

HINT - Ask yourself who you are identifying with, are you making any judgements about Tom?

5. To confirm what you think Jane is feeling, what would you say?

HINT - To find out more about what this means to her, how could you reframe your guess about what she is feeling into a question?

6. Now, putting yourself in Jane's shoes, what would you say?

HINT - What do you think she needs from Tom?

7. Now, putting yourself in Tom's shoes, what would you say?

8. Which of the following responses to Jane are examples of Empathic Inquiry?

- I'm sure it's nothing. I wouldn't worry about it.
- Just take her to the vet and he'll fix it, whatever it is.
- OMG, what do you think it could be?!
- As long as she's not in pain, I'm sure she's OK.
- Oh, let me take a look. How concerned are you?
- You sound a little anxious... maybe the vet could take a quick look to see if it's anything serious.

9. Please tell us specifically why you considered the responses you selected to be empathic?

10. Also, please tell us specifically why you considered the responses you didn't select to be non-empathic?

TOPIC 3: Empathy Roadmap Step 3 – WE: Empathic Flow



TOPIC 3/Lesson 1 – Creating a WE Space

Empathic Flow: MIRRORING & FEEDBACK

REVIEW

“**Mirroring**” and “**Feedback**” are the important final steps in the Empathy Roadmap.

- During **Empathic Listening** and **Empathic Inquiry**, once you are confident that you have formed an accurate “**hypothesis of understanding**”, you will decide whether-or-not to share it with the other person. Don’t be too anxious to share your insights, let the process unfold naturally.
- The other person will then respond to you by either **confirming** or **rejecting the accuracy of your hypothesis**.
- When your hypothesis is confirmed, you have completed two-way empathy and are now mirroring the other’s feelings/inner experience.
- Thus, **Mirroring occurs when you have communicated an accurate assessment of the other’s feelings and inner experience** and established “two-way” empathy (empathic flow) which can then lead to creating a “WE Space”.

“**WE Space**” – A special connection between two people that creates a more harmonious and productive relationship when both individuals experience the following;

- Mutual Respect – Emotional Safety – Understanding
- Deeper Connection – Trust – Harmony
- Feeling Seen – Understood – Valued

It is two-way empathy only if the other person experiences your attunement.

EXAMPLES - Mirroring Statements

- When I suggested that you were feeling _____, I wasn't sure but now I really understand what you were feeling and why you were feeling _____.
- I wasn't totally sure if I was on target with what you were feeling but based on what you just said, I seem to be understanding you better.
- I'm relieved to hear you say that I was accurately tuning into your feelings, it is awful when some just assumes that they know another person's feelings and inner experiences, it can lead to misunderstandings and discord, right?

REVIEW

Recognizing & Repairing Breaks in Empathy – BUT... what if your intuitive guess about the other's feelings was off target – What do you do?

- Question your Hypothesis of Understanding.
- Recommit, to the process and return to the Empathy Roadmap, focusing on your **personal self-state**. Ask yourself if something is blocking your ability to tune in to the other's feelings. Re-employ **empathic listening** and **empathic inquiry**.

COACHING NOTE – Mirroring

- Often the other person will not tell you that you were off target. Think of this as their “Yuck” reaction to something you just said. You may recognize this phenomenon by the subtle shift in the moment in the relational dynamic between you. **It is important to first recognize and confirm this momentary shift as your lack of attunement**, otherwise it may cause a major shift in the empathic flow between you. If not addressed, this subtle shift can become a major break totally changing the relational dynamic with this person.
- Remember to check for a **shift** in the other's self-state, a **shift in their feelings** and the **strength** of those feelings.
- When someone shares their vulnerable feelings, imagine the **hope/desire** they might have for an empathic response. This strongly suggests that they are beginning to trust and possibly allow themselves to experience a deeper emotional connection with you.

Lesson 2 – How to Repair Breaks in Empathy

REVIEW - Breaks in Empathy

A “**Break in Empathy**” is when the harmony in a functioning WE Space and positive relational dynamic is disrupted. Breaks in empathy signify the others “Yuck” reaction to something that has just transpired.

You will feel a shift in the relational dynamic, which can be spoken or unspoken. What you are experiencing is a shift out of the WE Space.

Repairing a Break in Empathy (What to do...)

1. Recognize that a break has happened.
2. Tune into your own self-state & recommit to trying to establish a WE Space.
3. Try not to get defensive.
4. Inquire if the other experienced the shift.
5. If they have, inquire about the impact you may have had on the other.
6. Return to the E-Roadmap – Attunement to Other: Empathic Listening, Empathic Inquiry, Mirroring.
7. Try to understand what you may have said/done that may have caused the shift.
8. If appropriate, acknowledge the negative impact you had on the other.

HINT

Feelings are communicated by **words, intonation, facial expression & body language**. Do you tend to be more affected by visual or verbal communication? Try to become more aware of your natural tendency and try to listen with both your eyes and ears.

EXAMPLES - Mirroring Statements

1. I think I may have missed it..., can you tell me how I got it wrong?
2. I'm not sure I understood you correctly... did something upset you here, now?
3. *(After a strong Yuck reaction by the other.)* Wow – Was I off base just now – can you share with me what you are feeling and how my comment impacted you?

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

We have now concluded the **Empathy Roadmap to the WE Space** and hope you have enjoyed the journey! We believe that creating a WE Space with others helps create a positive and productive opportunity in which we can realize happier, healthier more productive relationships, personally and professionally.

Empathy Roadmap Step 1 – ME: Self-Attunement

- **Personal Self-State** – Awareness of your personal inner-experience, the thoughts and feelings that are ever present and can affect everything you say and do.
- **Left Brain/Right Brain Dominance** – Recognition of your personal preference for how you unconsciously interpret and engage in the relational world.
- **Personal Perspective** – Self-awareness of personal biases and how to cognitively shift perspective to hold your inner experience at the same time you take in the inner experience of the other.

Empathy Roadmap Step 2 – YOU: Attunement to Other

- **Empathic Listening** – Listening for feelings first, then facts to better understand the inner experience of the other.
- **Empathic Inquiry** – Seeking more information about the context of the “what” & “why” of the other’s feeling-experience.

Empathy Roadmap Step 3 – WE: Empathic Flow

- **Mirroring & Feedback** – Communication of your hypothesis of understanding about the other’s inner thoughts and feelings, by reflecting your understanding back to them and seeking confirmation of its accuracy, in an attempt to complete two-way empathy.
- **Recognizing & Repairing Breaks in Empathy** – Recognition of the others “Yuck” reaction and a disruption in a WE Space dynamic and then its repair, by recommitting to the E-Roadmap (*Self-Attunement – Checking your personal Self-State/Attunement to Other – Empathic Listening, Inquiry/Empathic Flow – Mirroring, Feedback & Repair*).

Course Final Review

Empathy Roadmap to the WE Space – Course Modules 1, 2, 3

Module 1: DECONSTRUCTING EMPATHY

- **Empathy Defined** – We began by defining empathy by comparison to other pro-social behaviors Pity & Sympathy, and to the different impact they have on the recipient.
- **Two-Way Empathy** – Empathy is a form of pro-social behavior that embraces the full spectrum of emotion (both positive & negative) where the observer attempts to accurately tune in to the “what” & “why” of the recipient’s inner experience and accurately reflect it back to them, including their natural strengths and sense of agency.
- **Hard-Wired Aspect of Empathy** – We are all hard-wired to be empathic, but (like language) this potential must be nurtured in order to develop beyond a rudimentary level.
- **Cognitive Perspective Taking** – A complex cognitive aspect of the empathic attunement process and the ability to put yourself in the other person’s shoes. It involves changing your “self/other” focus and the conscious or unconscious consideration of psycho-social factors.

Module 2: RELATIONAL DYNAMICS AND THE WE SPACE

- **Relational Dynamics** – Relationships are co-created and are informed by the “mutual impact dynamic” unique to each relationship.
- **Co-Created Mutual Impact Dynamic** – A co-created relational dynamic describing the unique way two people react & respond to each other, both positively and negatively.
- **WE Space** – A positive, productive and trusting connection between individuals where there is little or no fear of being judged, used or unfairly criticized. Where each tries to understand the other’s feelings and recognize their mutual impact dynamic.

Module 3: EMPATHY ROADMAP TO THE WE SPACE

- **Step 1: ME – Self-Attunement**
Self-attunement is awareness of your self-state (thoughts and feelings) in the moment that operate consciously or unconsciously affecting everything you say and do. This includes recognizing your personal preference in how you engage in the world (LB/RB preference)

and your willingness to be empathic with the other person based on self/other perspective-taking and applicable psycho-social factors.

- **Step 2: YOU – Attunement to Other**

“Attunement to Other” involves two essential elements; **Empathic Listening** and **Empathic Inquiry**. The goal is to help you get an accurate sense of the other person’s inner-feelings or self-state and to form an “hypothesis of understanding” of the others inner experience. This requires a true desire to tune in to the other, as well as employing both your left-brain & right-brain function and the ability to hold your own self-state simultaneously with the others self-state in an “As If” stance.

- **Step 3: WE – Empathic Flow**

Creating a WE Space includes **Mirroring, Feedback & Correction** – This is the communication step in two-way empathy where you seek verification of your intuitive guess about the other’s inner experience by reflecting it back to them. If you are on target the other will feel seen and understood. If you are off target however, you will need to recognize & repair the “Break in Empathy” or disruption in a positive WE Space dynamic by recommitting to the Empathy Roadmap

NOTES:

FINAL EXAM – MODULE 3 – “Empathy Roadmap to the WE Space”

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. (34 questions)

1. **Question** - SELF-STATE AWARENESS – Match each Self-State Level with its most accurate definition.

Sort elements

- MICRO
- MIDDLE
- MACRO

| | |
|--|--|
| “Your thoughts and feelings in the moment as they relate to what just happened, or what you anticipate will happen in the immediate future.” | |
| "Your day-to-day thoughts and feelings that can linger in the back of your mind to do with family, friends, work etc." | |
| “Your hopes, dreams and aspirations that relate to your long-term happiness and wellbeing.” | |

HINT

All 3 answers must be correct to score 1 point.

2. **Question** - Are we always conscious of our self-state?

- YES
- NO

3. **Question** - It is important to become aware of your conscious and unconscious thoughts/feelings, because when working with others our thoughts and feelings can...

- Negatively impact your ability to be empathic
- Preoccupy your mind and take focus off the other
- Unconsciously judge the other person

HINT

This question has 3 correct answers.

4. **Question** - Does everyone experience the same self-states in their day to day.
- YES
 - NO
5. **Question** - Our self-state is comprised of our thoughts and feelings in the moment. As we described, consciously or unconsciously these levels of our inner experience operate on how many different levels?
- One
 - Two
 - Three
6. **Question** - Your personal self state (i.e., feelings and inner experience) can hinder both your _____, and _____ to be empathic.
- Desire
 - Emotional inflexibility
 - Ability

HINT

This question has 2 correct answers to score 1 point.

7. **Question** - Each person's experience of their relational world is unique; this process is influenced by a variety of factors, including which of the following?
- Unconscious Left Brain/Right Brain dominance/preference.
 - Personal psycho-social factors.
 - Self-State in the moment.
 - Personal history with the other person(s).
 - None of the above.

HINT

This question has 4 correct answers to score 1 point.

8. **Question** - Practicing self-attunement and getting in touch with your self-state in the moment can generally help you tune into and understand another person's feelings and inner experience.
- YES
 - NO

9. **Question** - BRAIN DIRECTION – While the human brain generally functions as an integrated whole, it is comprised of two separate hemispheres, with each having its own focus and special brain functions

- YES
- NO

10. **Question** - Which functional specialty and nuanced information is provided by the Left-Brain hemisphere?

- Cognitive processing, logical and abstract reasoning
- Recognizing serial events/behaviors, seeks to put order in chaos
- Processing positive emotions
- Filters & inhibits Right-Brain processing
- Social, emotional & bodily processing

HINT

This question has 4 correct answers to score 1 point.

11. **Question** - Which functional specialty and nuanced information is provided by the Right-Brain hemisphere?

- Social, emotional & bodily processing
- Parallel processing & seeing all parts of a whole at once
- Synthesizing emotional expressions, interprets facial expression, tone of voice, body language
- Processing negative emotion
- Recognizing serial events/behaviors, seeks to put order in chaos

HINT

This question has 4 correct answers to score 1 point.

12. **Question** - During an interaction with a “Left-Brain” dominant individual, they may focus primarily on which of the following?

- Numerous facts and details
- What happened and when it happened
- Putting a positive spin on events
- Promoting and enhancing Right-Brain processing

HINT

This question has 3 correct answers to score 1 point.

13. **Question** - During interaction with a “Right Brain” dominant individual, they may focus primarily on which of the following?

- Processing negative emotions/feelings (sadness, hurt, loss etc.)
- Being aware of their own emotions/feelings and those of others
- Being (unconsciously) tuned into your (the listener’s) self-state and feelings by reading your body language, tone of voice, etc.
- Analyzing the facts

HINT

This question has 3 correct answers to score 1 point.

14. **Question** - As a health care professional, it is helpful to know if you are right or left brain dominant, because it informs how you approach the other and might unconsciously block your embodied simulation experience?

- YES
- NO

15. **Question** - As a health care professional, recognizing and tuning into your client’s RB/LB dominance and how they organize their experience can help inform how best to approach your interactions together.

- YES
- NO

16. **Question** - Is it helpful to identify the other’s LB/RB preference?

- YES
- NO

17. **Question** - PERSPECTIVE TAKING – Is a person generally able to be empathic with everyone in the same way?

- YES
- NO

HINT

The complexities of perspective taking include the unconscious switching back & forth between “Self/Other” brain areas and the consideration of psycho-social factors. These can make it easier or harder to be empathic with others in the moment. It is important to become aware of your personal perspective taking process and how it may be affecting your connection with others.

18. **Question** - Is the Figure/Ground analogy used to describe your left-Brain/Right-Brain preference, or how your brain switches back & forth between the Self/Other brain areas, as you attempt to take the other person’s perspective?

- Self/Other Perspective
- Left-Brain/Right-Brain

HINT

The Figure/Ground image illustrates how your brain switches back & forth as it organizes visual information differently, trying to see the faces & chairs simultaneously. This is analogous to empathic attunement that requires you to hold both your own perspective while tuning into the other’s perspective. This is called maintaining the “as if” stance.

19. **Question** - When attempting to put yourself in the other person’s shoes, which of the following will help inform your perspective-taking process?

- Yum, Yuck, Hmm reaction
- Embodied simulation experience
- Conscious or unconscious biases
- Personal self-state
- Focus on your next appointment

HINT

This question has 4 correct answers to score 1 point.

20. **Question** - Being able to take in another person’s perspective in the moment is a highly complex (largely unconscious) process that takes into consideration which of the following Psycho-Social Factors?

- The presence of any emotional distress
- The nature of your personal history/experience in relationships in general
- Your personal history with the other individual(s) involved

- Your generally perceived differences similarities between yourself and the other in terms of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender
- The social, ethical, moral context of the moment

HINT

This question has 5 correct answers to score 1 point.

21. Question - EMPATHIC LISTENING – Empathic Listening can also be described as...?

- Feeling Focused Listening
- Decentered Listening
- Hard Listening

HINT

This question has 2 correct answers to score 1 point.

22. Question - “Feeling-Focused Listening” includes which of the following...?

- Listening for feelings first, then facts.
- Employing both the Left Brain & Right Brain functions simultaneously.
- “Listening” with your eyes for body language.
- Decentering your focus from your own self-state and actively tuning into the other’s inner experience.
- Identifying with their feelings and projecting them as your own.
- Permitting a hard-wired embodied simulation experience to unfold naturally.

HINT

This question has 5 correct answers to score 1 point.

23. Question - Is empathic listening primarily a function of your Left-Brain or Right-Brain function?

- Left-Brain
- Right-Brain

24. Question - What is self-centered listening?

- Thinking about your own feelings and self-state.
- Attempting to tune into the others inner experience.

- Thinking about what you are about to say.
- Interrupting the other with your interpretation of what you think they are feeling, attempting to fix their upset.

HINT

Remember, when you are speaking, you aren't listening.
(This question has 3 correct answers to score 1 point.)

25. **Question** - When listening to another person and forming a "hypothesis of understanding" (an intuitive guess about what the other person is feeling), which of the following helps to form your hypothesis?

- Your non-cognitively mediated embodied simulation experience.
- Being aware of your own self-state.
- Describing how you had a similar experience.
- Being patient and listening for feelings first.

HINT

This question has 3 correct answers to score 1 point.

26. **Question** - EMPATHIC INQUIRY – As you listen to the other and attempt to form an accurate "hypothesis of understanding" of their thoughts and feelings, which of these questions should you ask yourself...?

- Do I really want to tune in and be empathic with the other person?
- Is my assumption of what they are feeling a projection of my own feeling?
- How can I reframe my guess about what they are feeling as a question, in an effort to confirm my supposition and to seek more information about their experience?
- When is my next meeting with my supervisor?

HINT

This question has 3 correct answers to score 1 point.

27. **Question** - Which of the following statements is an example of Empathic Inquiry?

- Gee, that sucks!
- Gee, that would have made me angry, is that what you felt?
- I can see you're upset, do you want to play a video game?
- What did that mean to you?
- You still sound really upset, but I'm not sure why?

HINT

“**Empathic Inquiry**” is framed to be open-ended questions that invite the other to share more specific information about their inner thoughts and feelings, and can include your “hypothesis of understanding,” but framed as a question.

(This question has 3 correct answers to score 1 point.)

28. **Question** - MIRRORING & FEEDBACK – Just because you feel sympathetic and connected with the other person, does that mean you are empathically attuned with them?

- YES
- NO

29. **Question** - Just because you want to be empathic and think you have achieved two-way empathy, does that mean you have been successful?

- YES
- NO

30. **Question** - How will you know if you have achieved two-way empathy?

- You will receive positive feedback from the other that confirms you accurately reflected their experience back to them.
- The other will spontaneously communicate verbally or non-verbally that they feel seen and understood by you.
- You should always assume that you understand the other person’s feelings.
- You will feel a special connection that creates a more harmonious and productive relationship, the WE Space.

HINT

Two-way empathy and the WE Space are when both individuals experience the following;

- Mutual Respect – Emotional Safety – Understanding
- Deeper Connection – Trust – Harmony
- Feeling Seen – Understood – Valued

(This question has 3 correct answers to score 1 point.)

31. **Question** - Essentially, a break in empathy is the client’s/patient’s “Yuck” reaction to something that just transpired in the interaction with you. How do you recognize when a break in empathy has occurred?

- You will sense a subtle shift in your relational dynamic. Perhaps an energetic distancing.
- There may be a verbal or non-verbal distancing.
- There may be a physical move away from you, or avoidance of eye contact.
- There may be a lack of any further sharing of their experience.
- They may tell you outright that you are wrong and don't understand what they are feeling.
- There is a deeper sharing of more vulnerable feelings.

HINT - *This question has 5 correct answers to score 1 point.*

32. Question - CORRECTING A BREAK IN EMPATHY – When there is a break in empathy, what do you do to re-establish the WE Space?

- Ignore the shift completely.
- Employ empathic inquiry to see if the client/patient felt the shift.
- Try to spot what might have triggered the shift in the immediately preceding interchange.
- Appropriately acknowledge the negative impact you may have had on the other.
- Apologize profusely for upsetting the other.
- Return to the basic steps in the Empathy Roadmap to reestablish the WE Space.

HINT - *This question has 4 correct answers for 1 point.*

33. Question - Empathic Flow includes which of the following?

- You attempt to be empathic with the other, but without confirmation.
- A positive mutual impact dynamic.
- Successfully establishing a WE Space with the other person.
- Mutual Respect, Emotional Safety, Understanding, Deeper Connection, Trust, Harmony, Feeling Seen, Understood & Valued.

HINT - *This question has 3 correct answers for 1 point.*

34. Question - Achieving two-way empathy requires some level of Mirroring/Reflecting the other person's feeling and inner experience back to them.

- YES
- NO

