EMBRACING EMPATHY

Instructor's Guide

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

Before we introduce the themes and modules that comprise this Embracing Empathy Instructor's Guide, we share a few personal thoughts on how we developed the course, our teaching philosophy, and what we learned through teaching this course. We also provide you with student feedback highlighting the positive results of learning empathy.

Development and Goal of Embracing Empathy

As you read this guide, we hope you will gain a better understanding of empathy as a concept, as something that can be practiced, and as something that is teachable. Our development of this course, both for face-to-face and online delivery, aimed to provide students with a scientific understanding of empathy as defined and discussed in the scholarly literature, as well as provide popular media examples of empathy to exemplify it. When we started teaching the course, we quickly realized that we were less concerned that students resonate with the science of empathy—although this is critical and we do address it—and more concerned that students were able to have real-life takeaways from the course. In fact, students craved the opportunity for application and requested that we discuss empathy in greater depth on a functional level so that they would be able to practice it in their interactions with others. Thus, as initial goals in any new course development may be modified when actually delivering a course, our goal shifted to students' understanding of how we all have the capacity for empathy, how we can develop empathy skills, and how empathy can be practiced and incorporated into our everyday lives.

Throughout our teaching of Embracing Empathy, we encouraged students to share their feelings and thoughts about the course. When asked what they think the most important things individuals can do to strengthen their capacity for empathy, students had varied but similar recommendations:

- "Listening, not assuming intentions, and understanding that each person is shaped by their culture."

- "Self-awareness, practice, and taking time to see another's perspective outside of your own."

- "I think that empathy begins with assessing oneself and learning how to develop empathy and compassion for oneself before they can develop empathy for others. By recognizing our emotional situations, we are better able to navigate for going them were channeling them into other situations to help foster empathy."
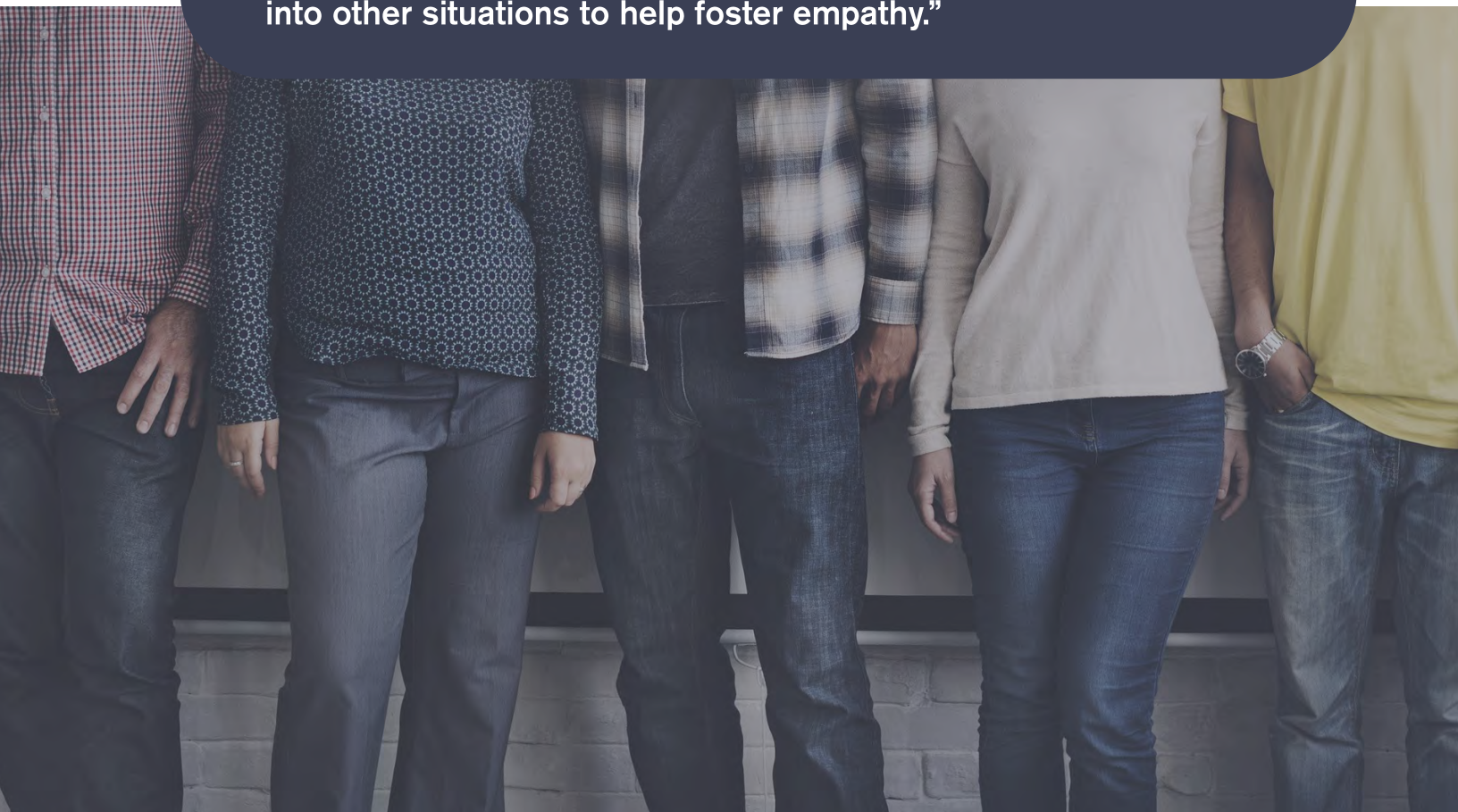
Teaching Philosophy

We believe empathy is an important skill that can be taught in an authentic, meaningful, and applicable way whether the mode of delivery is within a classroom or via an online course. Teaching a course on empathy requires the instructor to practice empathy and to impart the knowledge of empathy and related concepts to students. Having students practice empathy toward others and themselves are crucial components of the Embracing Empathy course.

This course is grounded in the notion that learning takes place experientially and that students are more likely to internalize what they learn when given the opportunity to apply it to their own lives. As such, you will notice that although we include pertinent information to provide students with background knowledge of empathy, we emphasize the importance of discussions and activities. We believe that the discussion and activities allow students the opportunity to apply their knowledge, thus enhancing their capacity for empathy. Furthermore, we believe that learners in this course benefit from applying their knowledge outside of the classroom, with the hope that the learner will continue to implement this knowledge long after completing the course.

With this approach, our goal is that anyone who completes this course will have the opportunity to practice their empathy interpersonally via everyday interactions and relationships with family members, colleagues, friends, and even strangers. Through this repeated exposure, we hope that practicing empathy becomes a sustainable, life-long skill.

"I truly enjoyed this class. Although I always believed people were born with empathy, this class truly changed my point of view. Empathy is something we could all learn to have and use with others, if we are given the right tools. This class did just that. It allowed me to learn the material, while putting it to practice."

- Student in online Embracing Empathy Spring 2019

What We Have Learned

About Ourselves

Empathy is hard. It requires intellectual exercise and ongoing implementation to be effective, especially if we want to see its larger impacts. Empathy is also contextual. For example, we can be amazingly empathetic to a colleague whose newborn baby is impacting her sleep and mood, yet be dismissive of empathy to our own child who is causing us to lose sleep. Or, we may find it easy to be empathetic to the barista who is having a hard day at work, but may lack empathy for a spouse who had a hard day at work because he forgot to pick up groceries on the way home. Thus, we can be a bit fickle with our empathetic responses, but if we really take the time to engage in the practice of empathy, we may find that our relationships with others may benefit. Further, engaging in self-empathy may help us see that the stressors of our everyday lives may not be as onerous as they seem.

By Teaching the Course

Teaching a class on empathy to undergraduates was a unique instructional experience. Firstly, the course required researching and familiarizing ourselves with the literature on empathy, a subject that was new to us. Secondly, teaching the course required pedagogical investigation of how students would best learn the content. As instructors, we might believe all content is worth teaching, but teaching about empathy felt high-stakes, especially since some research indicates that empathy among college students is diminishing [a]. It seemed that in this Embracing Empathy course, students should personally benefit from learning empathy and be able to apply its tenets to their behavior toward themselves and others. One way to realize the benefits of learning empathy is to encourage or require students to complete journal entries throughout the course.

[a] Konrath, S. H., O'Brien, E. H., & Hsing, C. (2011). Changes in dispositional empathy in American college students over time: A meta-analysis. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 15,* 180-198.

From the very beginning of the course, we realized that we would need to be a bit vulnerable and open to sharing our own experiences with empathy, which, quite honestly, was not one of the prosocial behaviors we practiced regularly. We could certainly "turn on" the empathy in certain contexts, but we realized that we would be learning and developing our own skills around empathy right alongside our students. Quality instructor presence means encouraging students to be active participants in discussions and hands-on activities while also allowing the students to sometimes guide the conversations and interpret assignments in a way that was most beneficial to their learning. Thus, flexibility to address questions and uncertainties and to adapt to students' needs serve the instructor well when teaching this course.

Engaging with students and hearing their real-world observations and encounters with empathy substantiates the scholarly research that empathy can be taught and learned through practice and engagement. We also grew our own empathy, noticing more conscious efforts to share the emotions of loved ones and engage in perspective taking so that we could appreciate our students' points of view. Though positive personal growth is certainly one of the benefits to teaching and taking this course, it is the expansion of empathy to our larger world that makes this course so significant. Through our regular practice of empathy, both students and instructor noticed the ripple effects that our positive actions can have on others. When students acted empathetically with their family members, roommates, friends, co-workers, customers, they so keenly observed the positive reactions and subsequent empathetic behavior of others as a result of their actions. We recognized that our efforts in acting empathetically are incredibly impactful.

By Evaluating the Course

Though we read the literature and knew that empathy could be learned and cultivated (Manassis, 2017; Rasoal, Eklund, & Hansen, 2011), we wanted to examine and confirm the truth of those findings when implementing our course. In addition, we believed that measuring students' attitudes was an important tool that would allow us to better understand whether the course content was indeed influencing students' empathy and related constructs. As such, we asked students to complete a pre- and post-test survey.

During the first semester that the course was taught, we had students in the Embracing Empathy course (n = 11) and a control class (Introduction to Parenting; n = 33) complete the same pre- and post-test survey. These surveys were administered online at the beginning and at the end of the semester. The control class did not focus on developing and embracing empathy skills, which was why it was chosen as a comparison class.

Empathetic Self-Efficacy. The empathetic self-efficacy scale (6 items; Bandura, 2006) assesses an individual's perception of their ability to recognize the emotional needs and states of others. Using a repeated measures analysis of variance (RM-ANOVA), we found a significant class by time interaction, $F(1, 34) = 4.27$, $p = .047$. This finding indicates that the average empathetic self-efficacy scores are changing differently over time for students in the Embracing Empathy course as compared to students in the control course. As you can see in the figure below, students in the Embracing Empathy course demonstrated a significant increase in their empathetic self-efficacy compared with the control group, for whom empathetic self-efficacy decreased over the course of the semester.
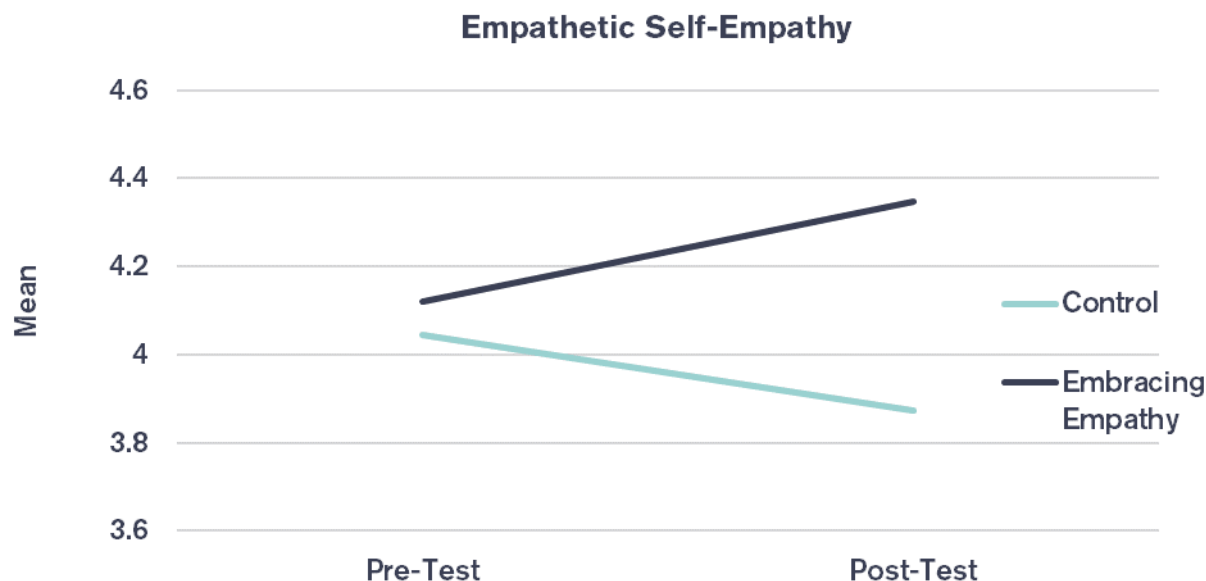
Capacity to Describe Internal State. Students were asked to complete the "Describe" subscale (5-items) of the Five Facet Mindfulness questionnaire (Smith et al., 2006). This scale assesses an individual's capacity to describe their inner states and to put into words their sensations and feelings. Using a repeated measures analysis of variance (RM-ANOVA), we found a significant class by time interaction, $F(1, 34) = 4.03$, $p = .053$. Students in the Embracing Empathy course demonstrated a significant increase in their describing mindfulness scores compared with the control group, for whom describing mindfulness decreased throughout the semester.

Capacity to Describe Internal State
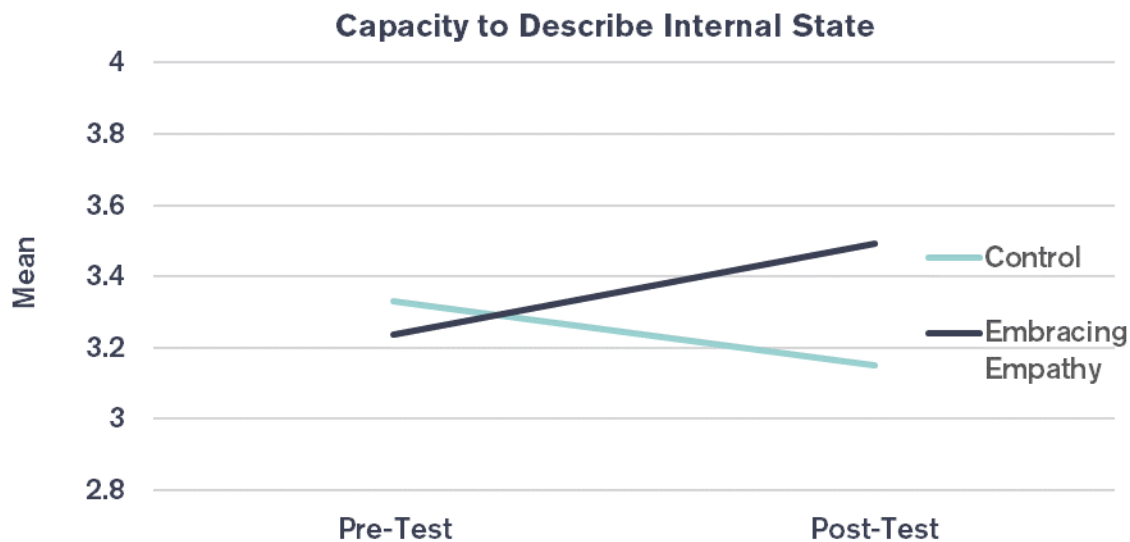
Overall, our confidence in our ability to help promote empathy and encourage students to embrace their own empathy was bolstered by our statistical findings and by the student feedback regarding their own feelings about the course and empathetic development.

- *"I use it [empathy] with coworkers to take their perspective and feel less frustrated."*

- *"Being more knowledgeable about empathy makes me not as quick to judge others."*

- *"I notice empathy more in others."*

HOW TO USE THE INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE

The study of empathy encompasses significant content from neuroscience to social science with application to a number of different fields from medicine to social work, not to mention the impact of empathy on our everyday lives. We have categorized the massive amount of material and content surrounding empathy into different themes in this Embracing Empathy Instructor's Guide. As you read through it, you will notice that we first briefly describe a theme related to empathy, and on that theme page, we list all of the associated modules within that theme. We recommend that the modules be presented in the order outlined; however, they can be taught independently of the other modules should you want to only present certain modules or feel that some modules may not fit your purpose. In addition, each module has a corresponding PowerPoint presentation located in the Embracing Empathy PowerPoint folder. We recommend that you personalize the PowerPoint presentation to help engage your specific audience.

As you read through the Instructor's Guide, you will see that each module follows the same format. We start by outlining the module's learning objective, which includes the supplemental textbook chapters[b] that align with the content in the module. We recommend that you read the supplemental textbook or review the Textbook Reading Guide. Reading the supplemental textbook may provide you with more clarity regarding important concepts or provide you with information that can be helpful when teaching the modules, regardless of whether you require the textbook for students. Then, we include some of the most pertinent information on empathy that outlines the main ideas of the module to provide you with some background knowledge regarding the specific theme. Next, we contribute a number of different types of resources within each module. Each module concludes with ways to apply the module content.

> *Resources.* Firstly, we include references for pertinent peer-reviewed journal articles under the title "peer-reviewed resources." These can be used for your own edification or to help supplement the other material in the module. We also believe that an integral way to help students better understand the concepts of empathy more broadly is through the integration of "real life" resources. As such, secondly, you will see a heading titled "popular media resources" that includes examples of the module content via television clips and news and popular press articles. We strongly encourage that anyone presenting the module review additional resources as necessary to supplement the substantive content that is provided.

> [b] Manassis, K. (2017). Developing empathy: A biopsychosocial approach to understanding compassion for therapists and parents. New York, NY: Routledge.

Module Application. We believe that students should have an opportunity to process the content and practice empathy; as such, the last section of each module focuses on the application of the material. Under the "applying the content" heading, we include discussion questions, knowledge checks, and activities. The "discussion questions" align with the module and allow students an opportunity to critically apply what they have learned from the module. In our experience, these questions are effectively used to further conversations within the classroom or to prompt individual responses via journals or assignments. In addition to asking students to respond to the questions, we encourage you, the instructor, to answer these questions to promote your own understanding of empathy.

As an instructor, you may or may not want to utilize quizzes in this course. We believe that the content of this course may not always lend itself to assessments containing multiple choice or true/false questions, as these types of assessments focus more on rote learning and less on application. Therefore, in each module, we have included "knowledge checks," which are short essay questions that require students to think critically and to apply their knowledge of the material while integrating real-life examples of the concepts.

Concluding the application of module content is the "activities" section. The activities that are included provide students an opportunity to apply their knowledge of the content experientially through both individual and group assignments. A short description and objective of each activity is described under this heading in the guide. Some of the activities are more involved, include supplemental materials, or may need to be adjusted depending on the delivery method of the course (i.e., in person or online). Thus, we have created a separate Embracing Empathy Activities folder that contains more detailed instructions and handouts that can be distributed or posted in class.

Our goal is for you to utilize the information and many resources outlined in this guide to foster a safe learning environment that encourages students to embrace and enhance their own capacity for empathy. Furthermore, we hope that teaching this course and interacting with your students through the suggested discussions and activities improve your own empathy skills the same way that these interactions helped us enhance our empathy skills. We leave you with some advice that our students shared for future students.

Marcella Gemelli, Ph.D.

Crystal Bryce, Ph.D.

Diana Gal-Szabo, M.S.

Advice to Future Students

- "The more you dive into this class, the more you get. Allow yourself to be vulnerable because that's how you'll get the most out of the class and you'll see the changes it makes in your life."

- "Empathy is an intimate topic so the more people open up, the deeper the conversations can be. Make sure to put effort into the assignments as they are a key part to doing well in the class. Reflect on how empathy had an influence on your life in the beginning of the semester and the end."

- "Participate! The more you share, the more you'll get out of the course! Really take your time on your assignments because all of them have such great intentions and meaning. Go into every class with an open mind and really pay attention."

- "I would say you definitely have to try for this class. You're going to get as much out of it as you put in, so if you're doing the assignments and activities it will become a natural part of your day. I would also encourage introspection throughout the semester. Check in with yourself on how your view of empathy has changed and what you're doing on a daily basis to be empathetic and it will surprise you at how easy you can incorporate it into your life."

- "Be willing to open up. Don't be afraid to share your story. Ask questions. Don't be judgmental of others and their stories. Be mindful of the comments you make about other stories and opinions."

THEME 1.0

Introduction to Empathy

This theme provides students an introduction to the concept of empathy through various definitions, including different types of empathetic behaviors and responses. In addition, students will be able to distinguish between different types of empathy and learn how to identify their own empathetic behaviors.

Module 1.1

Defining and Distinguishing Empathetic Concepts

Module 1.2

Differentiating Empathy from Other Constructs

Module 1.3

The Importance of and Measuring Empathy

MODULE 1.1
Defining and Distinguishing Empathetic Concepts

Learning Objective

This module provides the learner with information regarding the different definitions of empathy and distinctions within empathy.

Supplement: Preface, Chapter 1

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTENT OF THIS MODULE

Defining Empathy

Empathy can be defined in many ways. Some definitions focus on the perception and experience of another's feelings: "the act of perceiving, understanding, experiencing, and responding to the emotional state and ideas of another person" (Albiero, Matricardi, Speltri, & Toso, 2009, p. 393) or "experiencing emotions that match another person's emotions and discerning what another person is thinking or feeling" (Agarwal, Pirani, & Mirza, 2017, p. 6). Other definitions highlight the importance of the distinction between self and other: "a complex imaginative process through which an observer simulates another person's situated psychological states while maintaining clear self-other differentiation" (Coplan, 2011, p. 40). Yet still other definitions focus on perspective taking: "the tendency to apprehend another person's condition or state of mind" (Johnson, Cheek, & Smither, 1983, p. 1299) or, simply, "putting yourself in the other person's shoes" (Manassis, 2017, p. 9). For these and other definitions of empathy, see the review paper by Cuff and colleagues (2014). Although definitions focus on varying aspects of empathy, one consistency across these many definitions is that empathy is an *other-focused* experience that enables individuals to relate to others in a prosocial manner.

Distinctions Within Empathy

Empathy encompasses various associated biological, social, and developmental factors. Biological bases of empathy take place in our brains, hormones, and even genes (see Modules 2.2 and 2.3). Social influences of empathy often come from our relationships and interactions with small groups (see Modules 2.4 and 2.5), and our development of empathy can include both biological and social factors. At its most foundational level, empathy is cultivated in the brain. Researchers note that our brains are hard-wired to simulate the feelings or emotional states of another; a system of brain cells called mirror neurons "allow us to imagine another person's experience, including his or her feelings, and respond to that person accordingly" (Manassis, 2017, p.22). However, different brain activities allow us to feel others' emotions and understand those emotions.

Affective empathy is the emotional reaction we feel in response to another person's situation. Being emotionally moved by another person's distress or joy can further motivate the empathizer to help the other person or to participate in that person's joy, although taking action is not a requirement for practicing affective empathy. Cognitive empathy, on the other hand, is the intellectual capacity to understand another person's internal state. Think of this as imagining what it is like to experience another person's situation or to put yourself in his or her shoes.

Interestingly, an individual might not always experience both cognitive and affective empathy. For example, a person may see a homeless individual under a blanket in the street and try to imagine for a moment what it would be like in her situation. How would I function? Where would I go for shelter or for a meal? Who could I trust? Yet this perspective taking, or cognitive empathy, may not necessarily elicit an emotional response, especially if the homeless individual is not indicating distress. If a person sees the homeless individual shivering and looking uncomfortable, she may feel emotionally sad or upset, experiencing affective empathy, which may or may not result in an empathetic act to alleviate the homeless individual's situation.

Batson (2009) acknowledges the complexity of empathy and purports that distinctions need to be made with the application of empathy by asking two different questions: "How can one know what another person is thinking and feeling?" and "What leads one person to respond with sensitivity and care to the suffering of another?" (p. 3). Siegel (2017) also differentiates among types of empathy, including cognitive empathy (to understand intellectually another person's emotional state), perspective taking (seeing the world similarly to another person), empathetic resonance (to feel the same emotions as another person), empathetic concern (synonymous with compassion), and empathetic joy (which is related to emotional resonance, but is defined as the pleasure that comes from delighting in another's well-being and happiness). To read more on empathetic joy, please see the article on positive empathy by Morelli, Lieberman, & Zaki (2015).

Clearly, empathy is a complex, multidimensional construct. Batson (2009), Siegel (2017), and others emphasize different realizations of empathy because context matters. Distinctions amongst empathy allow researchers and practitioners to explain issues such as the brain's reaction to situational circumstances, or to highlight behaviors that can be categorized as positive and prosocial. Further, establishing empathy within the context of therapy or therapeutic goals may be contingent upon a patient's symptoms. For example, some research suggests that people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) may lack empathetic responses due to physical differences in the brain (Baron-Cohen, et al. 2004), and so the ability to read others' emotions and respond to those emotions do not come naturally. However, certain therapeutic exercises can help those with ASD recognize others' thoughts and feelings, and stories can help with practicing appropriate responses to various social situations (Manassis, 2017).

Peer Reviewed Resources

Albiero, P., Matricardi, G., Speltri, D., & Toso, D. (2009). The assessment of empathy in adolescence: A contribution to the Italian validation of the "Basic Empathy Scale." *Journal of Adolescence,* 32(2), 393–408. doi: 10.1016/j.adolescence.2008.01.001
- *Defines the construct of empathy and examines the validity of the Basic Empathy Scale.*

Baron-Cohen, S., & Wheelwright, S. (2004). The Empathy quotient: An investigation of adults with Asperger Syndrome or high functioning autism, and normal sex differences. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders,* 34(2). doi: 0162-3257/04/0400-0163/0.
- *Explains the link between empathy and developmental disorders.*

Batson, C. D. (2009). These things called empathy: Eight related but distinct phenomena. In J. Decety & W. Ickes (Eds.), Social neuroscience. *The social neuroscience of empathy (pp. 3-15).* Cambridge, MA, US: MIT Press. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.7551/*mitpress/9780262012973.003.0002*
- *Describes and differentiates among eight concepts that are considered part of empathy.*

Byom, L., & Mutlu, B. (2013). Theory of mind: Mechanisms, methods, and new directions. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* 7, 1-12. doi: 10.3389/fnhum.2013.00413.
- *Defines Theory of Mind and how it applies to various facets of social interactions.*

Coplan, A. (2011). Will the real empathy please stand up? A case for a narrow conceptualization. *The Southern Journal of Philosophy,* 49(s1), 40–65. doi:10.1111/j.2041-6962.2011.00056.x
- *Defines empathy and argues for the need for a narrower definition. Distinguishes between emotional contagion, self-oriented perspective taking, and empathy.*

Cuff, B.M.P., Brown, S.J., Taylor, L., & Howat, D.J. (2014). Empathy: A review of the concept. *Emotion Review*, 8(2), 144–153. https://doi.org/10.1177/1754073914558466
- *Reviews 43 varying definitions of empathy that identifies eight themes across the many definitions.*

Eisenberg, N., & Fabes, R. A. (1990). Empathy: Conceptualization, measurement, and relation to prosocial behavior. *Motivation and Emotion,* 14(2), 131–149. doi: 10.1007/BF00991640
- *Defines empathy, sympathy, and vicarious emotional responses; distinguishes between the constructs; explores differences in how each are measured; and describes their relations to prosocial behavior.*

Johnson, J. A., Cheek, J. M., & Smither, R. (1983). The structure of empathy. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 45(6), 1299–1312. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.45.6.1299
- *Defines empathy and describes a factor analysis of an empathy measure that has four distinct factors: social self-confidence, even temperedness, sensitivity, and nonconformity.*

Morelli, S. A., Lieberman, M. D., & Zaki, J. (2015). The emerging study of positive empathy: Positive empathy. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 9(2), 57–68. doi:10.1111/spc3.12157
- *Defines positive empathy; distinguishes the construct from empathy for others' distress; and describes the potential benefits of positive empathy for mental health, prosocial behavior, and positive relationships.*

Pittinsky, T. L., & Montoya, R. M. (2016). Empathetic joy in positive intergroup relations. *Journal of Social Issues*, 72(3), 511–523. doi: 10.1111/josi.12179
- *Defines the process of empathetic joy and describes a study in which a teacher's experience of empathy joy improved their inter-group relationship with children of different races.*

Siegel, D. (2017). An interpersonal neurobiology approach to resilience and the development of empathy. *In Proceedings of Roots of Empathy Research Symposium*. Toronto, Canada. Retrieved from https://youtu.be/qdhMY_DNb1M.
- *Defines, describes, and provides examples of five types of empathy.*

Popular Media Resources

We've All Been There:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QpkjGqYJxos
- *A 7-minute video clip adaptation of the "chain of love" story, which demonstrates the impact of empathy and compassion on multiple people.*

Roots of Empathy:
https://youtu.be/sN1-dpGMXgY
- *A 2-minute video clip that introduces a program designed to promote young children's empathy.*

Dr. Dan Siegel: Five Types of Empathy:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qdhMY_DNb1M
- *A short explanation of five types of empathy presented at the Roots of Empathy Research Symposium*

Cultivating Empathetic Joy: Ancient Buddhist Wisdom for Creating Lasting Happiness:
https://www.consciouslifestylemag.com/empathetic-joy-cultivating/
- *A description of empathetic joy as one of the four immeasurables of Buddhism.*

What is Empathy?:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q5jrUg_kXjY
- *A 3-minute video that describes sympathy, empathy, and compassion in an accessible, introductory way.*

There Are Actually 3 Types of Empathy. Here's How They Differ - And How You Can Develop Them All:
https://www.inc.com/justin-bariso/there-are-actually-3-types-of-empathy-heres-how-they-differ-and-how-you-can-develop-them-all.html
- *An accessible popular press article that defines cognitive, emotional, and compassionate empathy and provides tips for increasing them in everyday life.*

What's the Matter with Empathy?:
https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/whats_the_matter_with_empathy
- *Researcher Sarah H. Konrath defines empathy and describes the nuances of when it is helpful and positive as well as when it may be detrimental.*

APPLYING THE CONTENT OF THIS MODULE

Discussion Questions

- What are some of the different definitions of empathy? Does one of these definitions resonate with you more than the others? Why?

- Think of the different roles you have (in life, work, school, etc.). What is your experience with empathy in these roles? Is it easier to be empathetic in some roles versus others?

- Try thinking of everyone you meet this week as someone's son or someone's daughter. What do you observe? Does this identification help with empathy for that person? (adapted from Manassis, 2017, p. 18).

Knowledge Checks

- Define empathy in your own words. Using your definition of empathy, give a real-life example.

- Define, describe, and provide an example for affective empathy and cognitive empathy. What differences do you notice?

Activities

Values and Empathy

Values and Empathy emphasizes the connection between values and our motivation to behave empathetically toward others. In this exercise (influenced by a similar activity in the Positive Psychology field), students identify their character strengths in the categories of wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence, and relate them to the compelling reason(s) to behave empathetically. This exercise can be assigned as an individual reflection, but it is best executed with partners. In the partner-based version, students take turns telling stories about a time when they felt they were their best selves and the partner identifies the character strengths that helped the sharing student be their best. This exercise focuses on positive character attributes, which helps boost self-esteem, engages the student to start thinking in an other-oriented way, and addresses motivation for empathy.

We've All Been There

We've All Been There is a short film that explores how empathetic behavior can be contagious. Students view the film as a class and discuss the plot, characters, connections among the characters, and empathetic actions of the characters. The film is based on a short story titled Goes Around, Comes Around, which can also be assigned. This exercise provides a visual representation of empathy and kindness among strangers and identifies other-oriented behavior required for empathy.

- We've All Been There: **https://vimeo.com/56464411**
- Goes Around, Comes Around: **https://www.moralstories.org/goes-around-comes-around/**

Five Types of Empathy

Five Types of Empathy explores the five different types of empathy presented by Dr. Siegel at the Roots of Empathy Research Symposium. Students listen to a variety of stories from StoryCorps as a class and engage in trying to understand the emotions of the storytellers. Students are individually prompted to identify, write down, and explain the type of empathy they experienced in each story: cognitive empathy, perspective taking, empathetic resonance, empathetic concern, and empathetic joy. Students discuss their identifications with the class. This exercise focuses on the distinctions among different types of empathy while also encouraging active listening to understand others.

- Dr. Dan Siegel: Five Types of Empathy: **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qdhMY_DNb1M**
- StoryCorps: **https://storycorps.org**

MODULE 1.2
Differentiating Empathy from Other Constructs

Learning Objective

This module helps the learner identify how empathy is different from related constructs such as sympathy and compassion, while acknowledging the shared qualities among these constructs.

Supplement: *Chapter 1*

Empathy as a construct is defined in Module 1.1. One simple way to think about empathy is that it is our ability to feel with, or feel as, another individual. Before comparing and contrasting empathy with related constructs, it is important to define the other constructs of interest, mainly sympathy and compassion.

Defining Sympathy

Wispé (1986) writes that "*sympathy* refers to the heightened awareness of the suffering of another person as something to be alleviated" (p. 318). Often when demonstrating sympathy, an individual's verbal or physical response is an attempt to make the other person feel better without truly understanding that person's affective response and/or perspective. Feelings of sympathy can often lead us to feel sorry or bad for someone.

Defining Compassion

Goetz and colleagues define compassion as "the feeling that arises in witnessing another's suffering and that motivates a subsequent desire to help" (Goetz, Keltner, & Simon-Thomas, 2010, p. 351). Defined another way, "compassion does not mean sharing the suffering of the other: rather, it is characterized by feelings of warmth, concern and care for the other, as well as a strong motivation to improve the other's wellbeing" (Singer & Klimecki, 2014, p.R875).

Sympathy vs. Empathy

If we think about empathy as feeling with another individual, we can think of sympathy as feeling for another individual (Gibbons, 2011). When interacting with a friend who is experiencing some sort of hardship, we may feel sorry for her, which is an example of sympathy. Engaging in empathy would require us to imagine what her situation is like and share her perspective of or emotional response to the situation. Although both sympathy and empathy can be elicited by hearing and/or witnessing an incident or story, it is the intentional act of perspective taking and shared affective connection that differentiates the two constructs. When we are being sympathetic, we often focus on the other's well-being; when we are being empathetic, we focus on truly understanding the other (Wispé, 1986).

For example, imagine that a friend tells you that his partner asked for a divorce. He expresses feeling devastated and shocked by the unexpected ending of the relationship. He also shares that he thinks life will never be the same or good again. You respond to his distress. In sympathy, you say, "I am so sorry you are having to go through this. I can't imagine what you're going through." In empathy, you connect emotionally by experiencing shock and devastation, with your response perhaps initially based on your own experiences (although having the same experience is not a requirement for empathy) or formed by imagining what the experience is like to better understand your friend's experience. You then conceptualize your friend's perspective and understand that this situation is indeed devastating, worrisome, and a possible indicator that life may never be happy again. In empathy, you say, "I am hearing how saddened and upset you are about this. Please know I am here to listen."

Singh (2005) notes that in some settings, such as within the medical profession, empathy and sympathy are often mistakenly used interchangeably. Yet the difference is that sympathy is "feeling into" while empathy is "feeling with." "Empathy is the process of developing rapport through the ability to intuit another person's feelings and read nonverbal cues" (Singh, 2005). So, for example, a physician practicing empathy may be able to conceive of a certain reaction from a patient and her husband when they learn that she needs a liver transplant. Rather than feeling pity for the patient and objectively discussing the procedure for the transplant process, the physician may take a moment to listen to the concerns of the patient and repeat back what emotions are being experienced, allowing for an empathetic connection.

Compassion vs. Empathy

Empathy is sometimes viewed as a precursor to compassion, meaning that our feelings of empathy can lead us to want to help improve another's situation. A type of empathy, empathetic concern, or action-oriented empathy is synonymous with compassion (Siegel, 2017). The empathetic concern process is such that the individual 1) receives suffering from the other; 2) feels bad about it; 3) engages in empathetic imaginations on what can be done to alleviate the pain of the situation; and 4) engages in an act to alleviate the suffering of the individual (Siegel, 2017). Thus, compassion, or empathetic concern, is the intentional act to improve a suffering person's situation. However, as we have learned previously, empathy and its various distinctions are not always synonymous with compassion.

For example, imagine that you are at the mall at around lunch time on a Saturday. You see a mother with three-year-old twins and an infant, and all the children are crying. The mother looks as though she is going to cry, as passersby shake their heads at the scene. You walk over and talk to her. You listen to her and start to think about what it would be like to be her in this situation. This is an empathetic response that may end here. After hearing and internalizing her plight and the situation, though, you feel compelled to do something to help her; this continuance of your initial empathetic response is compassion. You help the mother wrangle the children to the nearest food court table, where you entertain her older children so that she can feed her youngest.

Other Related Prosocial Constructs

Although this instructor's guide does not provide in-depth information on the following prosocial constructs, you may wish to include information about them when differentiating empathy from other constructs. *Self-transcendence* is the ability to go beyond the focus on one's self and interests where the focus is on the other person or on another object or experience. Empathy does require self-transcendence with a focus on the well-being of the other person; however, with just self-transcendence, you may not truly experience perspective taking or share in the feelings of the other person. *Altruism* is selfless behavior that intends to enhance the well-being of others. Importantly, altruism is often thought of as an action that does not benefit the actor. Sometimes you may act in a way that appears altruistic, but the motivation behind your action is actually to relieve your own feelings of distress. Altruism often occurs in response to feelings of compassion, or the desire to alleviate another's suffering, whereas empathy more closely resembles understanding the emotional state of the other. *Kindness* involves the demonstration of positive actions and/or positive feelings towards someone else, which can be driven by one's feelings of empathy (see Binfet & Gaertner, 2015 for more definitions of kindness).

RESOURCES

Peer Reviewed Resources

Binfet, J. T., & Gaertner, A. (2015). Children's conceptualizations of kindness at school. *Canadian Children, 40,* 27-39.doi:10.18357/jcs.v40i3.15167
- *Outlines different definitions/approaches to kindness and links empathy and kindness, specifically in the context of primary school.*

Eisenberg, N., & Fabes, R. A. (1990). Empathy: Conceptualization, measurement, and relation to prosocial behavior. *Motivation and Emotion*, *14*(2), 131–149. doi:10.1007/BF00991640
- *Defines empathy, sympathy, and vicarious emotional responses and distinguishes between the constructs as well as differences in how each are measured and their relations to prosocial behavior.*

Gibbons, S. B. (2011). Understanding empathy as a complex construct: A review of the literature. *Clinical Social Work Journal*, *39*(3), 243–252. doi:10.1007/s10615-010-0305-2
- *Describes empathy in the context of psychotherapy and provides strategies for practitioners to balance their own self-regulation in the interest of empathetic responsiveness with self-care.*

Goetz, J. L., Keltner, D., & Simon-Thomas, E. (2010). Compassion: An evolutionary analysis and empirical review. *Psychological Bulletin*, *136*(3), 351–374. doi:10.1037/a0018807
- *Provides several evolutionary perspectives for the development of compassion and describes behavioral responses of compassion that are distinct from other constructs such as sadness, love, and distress.*

Neff, K. D., & Pommier, E. (2013). The relationship between self-compassion and other-focused concern among college undergraduates, community adults, and practicing meditators. *Self and Identity*, *12*(2), 160-176.
- *Describes and differentiates between self-compassion and other-focused concern (including empathetic concern and altruism) in different populations, finding an association between self-compassion and higher levels of other-focused concern.*

Siegel, D. (2017). An interpersonal neurobiology approach to resilience and the development of empathy. In *Proceedings of Roots of Empathy Research Symposium*. Toronto, Canada. Retrieved from https://youtu.be/qdhMY_DNb1M.
- *Defines, describes, and provides examples of five types of empathy.*

Singer, T., & Klimecki, O. M. (2014). Empathy and compassion. *Current Biology*, *24*(18), R875–R878. doi:10.1016/j.cub.2014.06.054
- *Defines and differentiates between empathy and compassion using both psychological and neuroscientific perspectives.*

Singh, S. (2005). Empathy: Lost or found in medical education. *Medscape*. Retrieved from https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/510502_4
- *Defines empathy and sympathy in medicine and expounds the benefit of narrative medicine for physician empathy.*

Sze, J. A., Gyurak, A., Goodkind, M. S., & Levenson, R. W. (2012). Greater emotional empathy and prosocial behavior in late life. *Emotion*, *12*(5), 1129–1140. doi:10.1037/a0025011
- *Differentiates between empathy and prosocial behavior and describes a study that examines how these concepts change in adults as they age.*

Wispé, L. (1986). The distinction between sympathy and empathy: To call forth a concept, a word is needed. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *50*(2), 314–321. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.50.2.314
- *Describes the historical, measurement/research, and theoretical differences between sympathy and empathy.*

Popular Media Resources

Brené Brown on Empathy:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Evwgu369Jw
- *In this short clip, Brené Brown describes the difference between empathy and sympathy and provides an example of how both may be demonstrated in the same situation.*

Ed Stockham, Empathy Explorer: Sympathy:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Azb1kubGEs
- *In this one-minute clip, Ed Stockham describes the difference between empathy and sympathy using a blanket as a metaphor.*

Empathy and Sympathy: Which Word To Use and When:
https://www.dictionary.com/e/empathy-vs-sympathy/
- *A description of differences between empathy and sympathy as they relate to language origin and usage.*

Empathy and Altruism: Are They Selfish?:
https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/hide-and-seek/201410/empathy-and-altruism-are-they-selfish
- *This is a short, accessible article written by Dr. Neel Burton examining differences between empathy, sympathy, and altruism. He also examines their benefits, pitfalls, and the potential for altruism to be selfish.*

APPLYING THE CONTENT OF THIS MODULE

Discussion Questions

- In what ways do people confuse empathy and sympathy? How could you help someone understand that these are two distinct concepts?

- In what ways do people confuse empathy and compassion? How could you help someone understand that these are two distinct concepts?

- Take a moment to think about how we've defined empathy, compassion, and sympathy. Do you think that one of these concepts is more important than the others? Explain your rationale.

- Think about a time when you shared a problem with a friend. How would you categorize his/her response (empathetic, compassionate, sympathetic)? What would it look like if they were to respond empathetically? Compassionately? Sympathetically?

Knowledge Checks

- Distinguish between empathy and sympathy in your own words. Using that distinction, provide a real-life example that shows sympathy and a second real-life example that shows empathy.

- Distinguish between compassion and empathy in your own words. Using that distinction, provide a real-life example that shows compassion and a second real-life example that shows empathy.

- Describe how empathy, sympathy, and compassion are/are not related.

Empathy Bingo

Empathy Bingo emphasizes empathetic communication skills. In this game, students listen to an example problem statement followed by an example reply statement that exemplifies a certain communication response (i.e. sympathizing, consoling, advising, empathetic). The activity can be played with several participants, as with bingo, or it can be played with partners who role play the different scenarios. We may not always be aware of how our responses to other people's problems lack empathy. This exercise helps students identify helpful, empathetic responses that can be used in a variety of relationships.

Observing and Doing Kindness

Observing and Doing Kindness is an activity that encourages students to notice kindness around them while also performing acts of kindness. Students may choose their own acts of kindness or choose acts of kindness listed by The Random Acts of Kindness Foundation. Kindness can flow from empathy: when we can imagine how someone else is feeling or put ourselves in someone else's shoes, empathy helps us understand the other and respond with kindness. Before starting this activity, we recommend that you spend time discussing kindness as a construct and include additional information about kindness beyond what is covered in this module.

MODULE 1.3
The Importance of and Measuring Empathy

Learning Objective

This module provides the learner with information regarding the importance of empathy and approaches to the measurement of empathy.

Supplement: *Chapters 1, 12*

The Importance of Empathy

It can sometimes be difficult to identify tangible reasons for why we should care about empathy. De Vignemont & Singer (2006) share two key ideas regarding the importance of empathy. First, they suggest that being empathetic allows us to better predict how others may act in the future because of shared emotional networks. Shared emotional networks include a common understanding of the emotional significance and motivation within a situation among the empathizer and receiver of empathy. For example, a father who practices empathy with—and regularly engages in the emotional states of—his toddler may be better able to pick up on the emotional cues of his child, which in turn helps the father with his empathetic responses and behaviors. The second key idea is that one's ability to empathize with another may increase the emotional bond between the two individuals, resulting in elevated social interactions (de Vignemont & Singer, 2006). Both reasons emphasize the importance of the empathizer being able to fully understand and immerse themselves in the other's emotional state, with the result being positive outcomes for both parties.

Demonstrating empathy is important across contexts. For example, when an empathizer takes the role of helping another, whether in a personal or professional relationship, being able to truly empathize with the other is often seen as a critical precursor to providing thoughtful, helpful, ethically appropriate responses (Fairbarn, 2002). This helping dynamic also holds true in situations where the other person may be in a vulnerable position and not able to make his or her own decisions, thus relying on someone to make those decisions. If the decision-maker is unable to empathize with the vulnerable individual, the choices of the decision-maker may not parallel the types of choices the vulnerable individual would have made if given the ability (Fairbarn, 2002).

Although we often think of practicing empathy in the context of a negative event, experience, or shared emotion (i.e., illness, injury, sadness, frustration), it is important to remember that empathy can be evident in the presence of a positive experience as well (i.e. fun party, smiling, happiness). For example, a sibling may feel positive empathy when his sister has a baby. Positive empathy is most often seen in close relationships and is related to life satisfaction, positive affect, subjective well-being, and prosocial behaviors including improved helping behavior (see Morelli, Liberman, & Zaki, 2015 for more information). In terms of intergroup relations, individuals who have empathetic joy tend to demonstrate more positive attitudes and behaviors towards out-group individuals (those who do not share the same group as the empathizer) and can create bonds between groups (see Pittinsky & Montoya, 2016).

Although much of the emphasis regarding the importance of empathy is in relation to humans, empathetic thinking and behaviors are applicable across multiple domains. In addition to treating our fellow humans with empathy, we can also treat animals and the natural environment with empathy. Just as we can form close bonds with our pets and realize the mutual benefits of that empathetic bond, we can also understand the interdependent roles of humans, animals, and plants in the greater ecosystem of the world (see DeWaal, 2008, for empathetic attitudes of animals and Taylor & Signal, 2005, for human attitudes toward animals).

Measurement of Empathy

Many people are interested in quantifying empathy, whether for purposes of research, personal development, or as a metric to target skill-building within an organization. Thus, in addition to learning about the importance of empathy in concept and for positive outcomes, it is critical that one also understands how we can measure empathy. As outlined in Module 1.1, empathy can be defined in a multitude of ways; thus, it is important that the choice of measurement aligns with an operational definition, especially for research on empathy. Although beyond the scope of this module, identifying the operational definition of empathy can assist with the implementation of an appropriate measure. Gerdes, Segal, and Lietz (2010) clearly outline multiple approaches to the measurement of empathy, including self-report, observational, and physiological approaches.

Self-report measures

Questions from these measures are typically answered using Likert-type scales in surveys and are often chosen because surveys are easy to administer. The questions used are psychometrically reliable and valid. As with any self-report measure, self-reported empathy measures require that the individual is able to both identify and accurately report his/her feelings and differentiate empathy from other emotions; this awareness can be difficult depending on the respondent's age, especially among younger children (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1990). Some examples of self-report measures include The Toronto Empathy Questionnaire (Spreng, McKinnon, Mar, & Levine, 2009), Interpersonal Reactivity Index (Davis, 1980), and Empathy Construct Rating Scale (La Monica, 1981).

Researchers and clinicians have used self-reported empathy in numerous ways, including to contribute to the peer-reviewed research literature on empathy. Clinicians may use information from self-report measures in field-specific ways. For example, social workers may measure empathy in their clients through self-report measures to identify areas for improvement in their clients and may use that information to implement interventions as appropriate (Gerdes et al., 2010).

Observational Measures

Observational approaches to measuring empathy focus on the subjects' actions and verbalizations. Observational measures are often favored by researchers because they may be more objective. The likelihood that an empathy rating is biased from respondents providing socially desirable responses decreases because the subject is not being asked to report on themselves. Utilizing observational measures can be time-consuming. In addition, this method requires the observer to decipher and interpret the subjects' verbalizations and actions and determine the level of empathy within the subjects' responses. Some examples of observational measures include the Empathetic Communication Coding System (Bylund & Makoul, 2005) used in medical settings and Experimenter Hurt (Liew et al., 2011) used with young children. Researchers have also conducted observational coding of facial reactions in response to sympathy-inducing films, used with both adults and children (Eisenberg, et al., 1992).

Physiological measures

Using physiological measures of empathy is most common in the field of neuroscience. Common approaches to physiological measurement of empathy are functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), electroencephalography (EEG), and measures of respiratory sinus arrhythmia (RSA). Both fMRI and EEG techniques provide insight into the neural processes of empathy by localizing empathetic responses in the brain (fMRI) and by characterizing the neural timing of empathetic responses in reaction to a stimulus (EEG). For example, several studies indicate that the same neural pathways are activated when subjects feel their own emotions and when they empathize with the emotions of others (de Vignemont & Singer, 2006). Similarly, measures of RSA are considered to be evidence of a sympathetic nervous system reaction to a stimulus and can be indicative of "feeling" another's emotional or physical pain (Liew et al., 2011). Utilizing a physiological approach to measuring any construct is often time-intensive, requires extensive training, and can be cost-prohibitive.

Peer Reviewed Resources

Albiero, P., Matricardi, G., Speltri, D., & Toso, D. (2009). The assessment of empathy in adolescence: A contribution to the Italian validation of the "Basic Empathy Scale." *Journal of Adolescence*, *32*(2), 393–408. doi:10.1016/j.adolescence.2008.01.001
- *Defines the construct of empathy and examines the validity of the Basic Empathy Scale.*

Bernhardt, B. C., & Singer, T. (2012). The neural basis of empathy. *Annual review of neuroscience*, *35*, 1-23.
- *Reviews literature characterizing neural regions that may be involved in empathy, as well as contextual modulators of the neural empathetic response.*

Bylund, C. L., & Makoul, G. (2005). Examining empathy in medical encounters: an observational study using the empathetic communication coding system. *Health communication, 18(2),* 123-140.
- *Describes an observational measure used to identify patient-initiated opportunities for empathy and physicians' empathy responses to the opportunity.*

Coll, M.-P., Viding, E., Rütgen, M., Silani, G., Lamm, C., Catmur, C., & Bird, G. (2017). Are we really measuring empathy? Proposal for a new measurement framework. *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews*, *83*, 132–139. doi:10.1016/j.neubiorev.2017.10.009
- *Defines empathy and proposes a model of measurement that considers two separate empathy processes: emotion identification and affect sharing.*

de Vignemont, F., & Singer, T. (2006). The empathetic brain: How, when and why? *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, *10*(10), 435–441. doi:10.1016/j.tics.2006.08.008
- *Describes empathetic processes in the brain, proposes some important contextual factors that may modulate these responses, and highlights two potential functions of empathy*

De Wall, F. (2008). Do animals feel empathy? *Scientific American Mind*, *18*(6), 28-35. https://doi-org.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/10.1038/scientificamericanmind1207-28
- *Explores how certain animals display emotional resonance and mimic emotional responses.*

Davis, M. H. (1980). A multidimensional approach to individual differences in empathy. *JSAS Catalog of Selected Documents in Psychology, 10*, 85.
- *Describes the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) self-report questionnaire and how it relates to measures of social functioning, self-esteem, emotionality, and sensitivity to others.*

Eisenberg, N., & Fabes, R. A. (1990). Empathy: Conceptualization, measurement, and relation to prosocial behavior. *Motivation and Emotion*, *14*(2), 131–149. doi:10.1007/BF00991640
- *Defines empathy, sympathy, and vicarious emotional responses; distinguishes between the constructs and differences in how each are measured, along with their relations to prosocial behavior.*

Eisenberg, N., Fabes, R. A., Carlo, G., Troyer, D., Speer, A. L., Karbon, M., & Switzer, G. (1992). The relations of maternal practices and characteristics to children's vicarious emotional responsiveness. *Child Development*, *63*(3), 583–602. doi:10.2307/1131348
- *Describes several physiological and observational measures of empathy for children and parents as well as interrelations among maternal sympathy and parenting practices and child empathy.*

Elliott, R. and Bohart, Arthur C. and Watson, Jeanne C. and Greenberg, Leslie S. (2011) Empathy. In: *Psychotherapy relationships that work*. Oxford University Press, New York, pp. 132-152. ISBN 0199737207. doi:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199737208.001.0001
- *Defines empathy, describes different approaches to measurement, and discusses aspects of empathy as they relate in client-therapist relationships.*

Fairbairn, G. J. (2002). Ethics, empathy and storytelling in professional development. *Learning in Health and Social Care*, *1*(1), 22-32.
- *Describes the importance of empathy within caring professions and how empathy should play a role in caretaker's decision-making.*

Gerdes, K. E., Segal, E. A., & Lietz, C. A. (2010). Conceptualising and measuring empathy. *British Journal of Social Work*, *40*(7), 2326–2343. doi:10.1093/bjsw/bcq048
- *Reviews the history of measurement of empathy as well as the current state of measurement, including descriptions of self-report measures, observational measures, and neurobiological measures.*

Johnson, J. A., Cheek, J. M., & Smither, R. (1983). The structure of empathy. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *45*(6), 1299–1312. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.45.6.1299
- *Defines empathy and describes a factor analysis of an empathy measure that has four distinct factors: social self-confidence, even-temperedness, sensitivity, and nonconformity.*

LaMonica, E. (1981). Construct validity of an empathy instrument. *Research in Nursing & Health, 4*(4), 389-400. https://doi.org/10.1002/nur.4770040406.
- *Provides justification for the construct validity of the Empathy Construct Rating Scale (ECRS) for measuring empathy.*

Liew, J., Eisenberg, N., Spinrad, T. L., Eggum, N. D., Haugen, R. G., Kupfer, A., … Baham, M. E. (2011). Physiological regulation and fearfulness as predictors of young children's empathy-related reactions. *Social Development*, *20*(1), 111–134. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9507.2010.00575.x

- *Describes how physiological measures (RSA) may be an indicator of empathy in young children.*

Morelli, S. A., Lieberman, M. D., & Zaki, J. (2015). The emerging study of Positive empathy: Positive empathy. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, *9*(2), 57–68. doi:10.1111/spc3.12157

- *Defines positive empathy, distinguishes the construct from empathy for others' distress, and describes the potential benefits of positive empathy for mental health, prosocial behavior, and positive relationships.*

Pittinsky, T. L., & Montoya, R. M. (2016). Empathetic joy in positive intergroup relations. *Journal of Social Issues*, *72*(3), 511–523. doi:10.1111/josi.12179

- *Defines the process of empathetic joy and describes a study in which a teacher's experience of empathy joy improved their inter-group relationship with children of different races.*

Spreng, R. N., McKinnon, M. C., Mar, R. A., & Levine, B. (2009). The Toronto Empathy Questionnaire: Scale development and initial validation of a factor-analytic solution to multiple empathy measures. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, *91*(1), 62–71. doi:10.1080/00223890802484381

- *Describes a self-report measure of empathy and its associations to related constructs.*

Taylor, N., & Signal, T.D. (2005). Empathy and attitudes to animals. *Anthrozoos, 18*(1), 18-27.

- *Uses the Interpersonal Reactivity Index and Animal Attitude Scale to study the relationship of human empathy toward animals.*

Popular Media Resources

Empathy in Digital Age:
https://youtu.be/gzhkn9BnRmU
- *A 15-minute video in which Katri Saarikivi, a neuroscientist, discusses the importance of empathy, particularly in our digital world.*

Empathy Quiz:
https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/quizzes/take_quiz/empathy
- *A 28-item multiple-choice quiz that helps assess an individual's empathy*

The Value of Empathy:
https://www.counseling.org/news/aca-blogs/aca-member-blogs/aca-member-blogs/2017/04/19/the value-of-empathy
- *A short blog written by an American Counseling Association (ACA) counselor on the value of empathy in counseling.*

The Importance of Empathy:
https://youtu.be/UzPMMSKfKZQ
- *A short, animated video highlighting the importance of empathy.*

Empathy Questionnaire List:
http://cultureofempathy.com/References/Test.htm
- *This website outlines various empathy measures and corresponding peer-reviewed journal articles for some of the measures.*

APPLYING THE CONTENT OF THIS MODULE

Discussion Questions

- Think of a scenario in a professional field (yours or someone else's) where it would be important that someone demonstrates empathy. Share the scenario and discuss why empathy is important in this situation.

- Discuss the types of empathy measurement that would be easiest or most appropriate for your field. What are some field-specific advantages and disadvantages to those types of measurement?

Knowledge Checks

- What are the three approaches that we can use to measure empathy? What are the pros and cons of each approach?

- Why is empathy important? Describe two reasons.

- Describe two emotions that might prompt someone to demonstrate empathy. Give an example scenario for each emotion.

- How might empathy look different in positive and negative emotional scenarios?

 Activities

Empathy Recap

Empathy Recap emphasizes the idea that we all have the capacity for empathy. We may choose whether we use this skill depending on the complexities of our day or the people with whom we come in contact. In this reflection, students recount the activities of their day and determine whether or not they acted with empathy. This exercise helps students identify challenges and opportunities for empathy and how empathy has important implications for everyone.

Microexpressions

Microexpressions focuses on the universality of emotions. This activity focuses on increasing students' understanding of emotional awareness as an important factor in promoting empathy. Being attentive to nonverbal cues can help us better understand people's emotions; when we develop our ability to read emotions, we are better equipped to act empathetically. In this activity, students try to correctly identify microexpressions via an online test. After taking the test, students then practice reading these emotional states in others. The activity may also be used as a type of experiment where all students in class view pictures of microexpressions, record results individually, then compile and discuss the results as a class.

- Review of Facial Expressions: **https://www.scienceofpeople.com/microexpressions/**
- Microexpressions Test: **https://www.microexpressionstest.com/micro-expressions-test/**

Empathy Quiz

Empathy Quiz is a questionnaire published by the Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley. Based on several scientifically validated scales that measure empathy, students take this quiz to measure their own empathy. Students may take this quiz individually and then reflect upon or utilize the provided tips for strengthening empathy skills. Students may also want to discuss the results within a larger group. Relatedly, you may want to review the original validated empathy measures in their full form and have students reflect on the questions and how they are related to empathy.

- Empathy Quiz: **https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/quizzes/take_quiz/empathy**

THEME 2.0

Nurturing Empathy

This theme provides students with specific ways in which we encounter the concept of empathy. We discuss how we can begin to develop our empathy as children and then continue to nurture our own empathy toward others and ourselves. Physiological and psychological reactions to stressful situations may inhibit empathetic responses. Students will become conscious of the impact of a fight or flight response on their physical body and mental state, and they will explore behavioral coping techniques to assist with building the capacity for empathy and concern. A strong awareness of self assists with our practice of empathy in our relationships, workplaces, communities, and larger world.

Module 2.1

The Development of Empathy in Children

Module 2.2

Empathy and Physiology

Module 2.3

Psychological Aspects of Empathy

Module 2.4

Empathy in Relationships

Module 2.5

Empathy and Culture

MODULE 2.1
The Development of Empathy in Children

Learning Objective

This module provides the learner with information regarding the emergence and development of empathy throughout childhood, constitutional impacts on empathy, and ways that adults can promote the development of empathy in youth.

Supplement: Chapters 2, 3, 10

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTENT OF THIS MODULE

The Development of Empathy

The capacity for empathy emerges and develops in the first few years of life, and we can continue to cultivate empathy throughout our lifespans. Neurobiological and genetic research suggests that the human brain is "primed" for empathetic responses, as evidenced by the existence of distinct neural regions (e.g., the ventromedial cortex) and cells (e.g., mirror neurons) that specifically facilitate empathy (Decety, 2010; Manassis, 2017). Precursors of empathy begin to emerge in the form of self-focused emotional arousal; other-focused emotion recognition and empathy occur as neural systems mature and as social cognition and theory of mind (the ability to take the perspective of someone else) develop (Decety, 2010).

At as early as four months of age, infants begin to notice differences in adults' facial emotional expressions (Young-Browne, Rosenfeld, & Horowitz, 1977). Infants begin to social reference between 10 and 14 months, and by 18 months infants attune to others' emotions and have a basic understanding of the functions of emotions (Chiarella & Poulin-Dubois, 2013; Denham, 1998; Hepach & Westermann, 2013). In conjunction with their emergent emotion knowledge, children begin to comfort others in distress at around 12 months of age—an early indication of empathy—and increase their helping behaviors in response to others' needs between 12–24 months (Decety, 2010; Knafo et al., 2008; Zhan-Wexler et al. 1990). The basic ability to identify emotions and empathize with others becomes increasingly complex during the preschool years as children develop theory of mind/perspective-taking and refined language and cognitive abilities (Denham, 1998). One useful framework for understanding this increasing complexity in empathy is presented by Hoffman (2000) and described in Manassis (2017, p. 25). As empathy develops in childhood and into adulthood, there are clear individual differences in empathy that are attributable both to innate constitutional factors and to external socialization forces.

Constitutional Differences in Empathy

Examples of constitutional differences in empathy include differences in emotional reactivity/temperament, oxytocin levels, and hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) reactivity. Genes influence constitutional reactivity of the HPA axis (involved in the fight or flight response), as well as levels of oxytocin and other brain chemicals related to the experience of empathy (Manassis, 2017, p. 23). For example, there is evidence that a certain level of emotional reactivity is useful for empathy, but that children who are either highly overly controlled or overly reactive have relatively lower levels of empathy than children who are not overly reactive (Spinrad & Stifter, 1994; Young et al., 1999). Although some aspects related to empathy appear to be biologically influenced, environmental factors such as supportive adult caregiving play a critical role and interact with children's constitutional predispositions to affect children's capacity for empathy (Manassis, 2017, p. 24).

How Adults Can Foster Empathy

Adults play a critical role in promoting children's development of empathy (see Spinrad & Gal, 2018 for a review). If parents/caregivers practice empathetic responding toward the child and others, the child will understand how this type of responding functions in a variety of relationships, allowing the child the ability to practice empathetic responses themselves. Therefore, first and foremost, adults can create supportive and warm environments that foster secure attachments for their children. Researchers have found positive associations of supportive, warm, and responsive parenting to children's empathy and prosocial behavior (Carlo et al., 2011; Knafo et al., 2008; Taylor, Eisenberg, & Spinrad, 2015). The positive effects of responsive and sensitive caregiving are long-lasting: a responsive mother-infant relationship is related to empathy in adolescents (Feldman, 2007).

Similarly, attachment security has been associated with relatively high levels of empathy (Futh et al., 2008; Yoo et al., 2013). Children who have secure attachments learn how to regulate their own distressing emotions through interactions with their caregivers. Children with secure attachments are more likely to care for others because of the care they have experienced in life. Children's desire to care for others, ability to attune to others' emotions, and curiosity about others' mental states contribute to a cognitive empathy. In contrast, children who have insecure attachments tend to be less confident in their environments and to experience more fight or flight activation. The activation of a child's fight or flight responses negatively impacts the child's ability to demonstrate empathy because they are more likely to become self-focused in their regulation of the situation and are less likely to relate to others. Therefore, children with insecure attachments tend to experience less empathy from other people because they do not reciprocate that empathy. This likelihood further perpetuates the individual's insecurity and negative view of relationships, which can have negative long-lasting implications for their capacity for empathy.

Adults can also foster children's empathy through emotion socialization, specifically by increasing children's knowledge about emotions and emotion regulation capacity. Children have higher empathy for others when they have more emotion knowledge and emotion regulation skills because, in order to empathize and pay sufficient attention to other, people must recognize and understand emotions and be able to regulate their own emotional state. Effective emotion socialization encompasses several behaviors. First, adults should encourage the expression of children's emotions and validate children's feelings (Taylor et al., 2013). Adults can label emotions and encourage children to notice the causes and consequences of emotions. It is important to not stop at labeling basic emotions but to point out nuances in emotions and emotion expressions ("Teaching Your Child to Identify and Express Emotions", n.d.). The more parents talk about emotions, the more children demonstrate empathy, helping, and sharing behaviors, even in early childhood (Drummond et al., 2014). Adults can also model appropriate emotion regulation strategies by practicing these strategies themselves and by helping children engage in emotion regulation strategies when children are distressed. Reading books and watching television shows with children is another ideal opportunity for adults to practice emotion coaching. Adults can point out voices, facial expressions, and body language associated with certain emotions; talk about causes and consequences of emotions; and discuss how characters do or do not emotionally regulate. Through these interactions, the adult is actively engaging the child and helping promote the child's empathy, and the adult may be inadvertently improving their own capacity for empathy as they are teaching the child.

RESOURCES

Peer Reviewed Resources

Chiarella, S. S., & Poulin-Dubois, D. (2013). Cry babies and pollyannas: Infants can detect unjustified emotional reactions. *Infancy*, *18*, E81–E96. doi:10.1111/infa.12028
- *Examines emotion recognition in young infants.*

Decety, J. (2010). The neurodevelopment of empathy in humans. *Developmental Neuroscience*, 32(4), 257–267. doi:10.1159/000317771
- *Describes the various aspects of the development of empathy from a neural perspective.*

Denham, S. A. (1998). *Emotional development in young children*. New York, NY, US: Guilford Press.
- *Describes the development of children's emotion knowledge in early childhood.*

Drummond, J., Paul, E. F., Waugh, W. E., Hammond, S. I., & Brownell, C. A. (2014). Here, there and everywhere: Emotion and mental state talk in different social contexts predicts empathetic helping in toddlers. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *5*. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00361
- *Describes a study that found that parent emotion talk is related to children's empathetic helping.*

Feldman, R. (2007). Parent–infant synchrony biological foundations and developmental outcomes. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, *16*(6), 340–345.
- *Defines parent-child synchrony and describes a set of longitudinal studies that examine the impact of parent-child synchrony of long-term empathetic functioning.*

Feldman, R. (2007). Parent–infant synchrony biological foundations and developmental outcomes. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, *16*(6), 340–345.
- *Defines parent-child synchrony and describes a set of longitudinal studies that examine the impact of parent-child synchrony of long-term empathetic functioning.*

Futh, A., O'connor, T. G., Matias, C., Green, J., & Scott, S. (2008). Attachment narratives and behavioral and emotional symptoms in an ethnically diverse, at-risk sample. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, *47*(6), 709–718. doi:10.1097/CHI.0b013e31816bff65
- *Discusses a study that demonstrates connections between secure attachment and higher levels of prosocial behavior.*

Garner, P. W. (2012). Children's emotional responsiveness and sociomoral understanding and associations with mothers' and fathers' socialization practices. *Infant Mental Health Journal*, *33*(1), 95–106. doi:10.1002/imhj.20339
- *Describes parental socialization practices that are associated with children's empathy.*

Hepach, R., & Westermann, G. (2013). Infants' sensitivity to the congruence of others' emotions and actions. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, *115*(1), 16–29. doi:10.1016/j.jecp.2012.12.013
- *Describes young infant's emerging emotion recognition abilities.*

Knafo, A., Zahn-Waxler, C., Van Hulle, C., Robinson, J. L., & Rhee, S. H. (2008). The developmental origins of a disposition toward empathy: Genetic and environmental contributions. *Emotion*, *8*(6), 737–752. doi:10.1037/a0014179
- *Describes the development of empathy, the genetic and environmental influences on the development of empathy, and the links between empathy and prosocial behavior.*

Soenens, B., Duriez, B., Vansteenkiste, M., & Goossens, L. (2007). The intergenerational transmission of empathy-related responding in adolescence: The role of maternal support. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *33*(3), 299–311. doi:10.1177/0146167206296300
- *Describes the role of maternal support in fostering empathy in adolescence as well as the links between empathy and adolescents' friendship quality.*

Spinrad, T. L., & Gal, D. E. (2018). Fostering prosocial behavior and empathy in young children. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, *20*, 40–44. doi:10.1016/j.copsyc.2017.08.004
- *Reviews research on the role of parents in socializing young children's empathy and prosocial development, the role of interventions, and existing gaps in the research.*

Spinrad, T. L., & Stifter, C. A. (2002). Maternal sensitivity and infant emotional reactivity. *Marriage & Family Review*, *34*(3–4), 243–263. doi:10.1300/J002v34n03_03
- *Describes the relations between child temperamental reactivity and their empathetic responses.*

Taylor, Z. E., Eisenberg, N., Spinrad, T. L., Eggum, N. D., & Sulik, M. J. (2013). The relations of ego-resiliency and emotion socialization to the development of empathy and prosocial behavior across early childhood. *Emotion*, *13*(5), 822–831. doi:10.1037/a0032894
- *Describes how aspects of children's constitution predict their empathy as well as the role of parental emotion socialization in promoting the development of child empathy.*

Young, S. K., Fox, N. A., & Zahn-Waxler, C. (1999). The relations between temperament and empathy in 2-year-olds. *Developmental Psychology*, *35*(5), 1189–1197. doi:10.1037/0012-1649.35.5.1189
- *Discusses a study that finds that young children who are under-reactive in temperament have lower levels of empathy.*

Young-Browne, G., Rosenfeld, H. M., & Horowitz, F. D. (1977). Infant discrimination of facial expressions. *Child Development*, *48*(2), 555–562. doi:10.2307/1128653

- *Describes a study that suggests that 3-month-old infants can discriminate between happy, sad, and surprised facial expressions.*

Yoo, H., Feng, X., & Day, R. D. (2013). Adolescents' empathy and prosocial behavior in the family context: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *42*(12), 1858–1872. doi:10.1007/s10964-012-9900-6

- *Examines the impact of "balanced" parent-child relationships on child's empathy in adolescence.*

Zahn-Waxler, C., & Radke-Yarrow, M. (1990). The origins of empathetic concern. *Motivation and Emotion*, *14*(2), 107–130. doi:10.1007/BF00991639

- *Reviews the development of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects of empathy in young children.*

Popular Media Resources

Cultivating Empathy in My Children, from a Neuroscience Perspective:
https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2019/01/04/cultivating-empathy-my-children-neuroscience-perspective/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.6ab1edb9d630
- *A short newspaper perspective piece that describes the neural basis of empathy in children in a very simple and practical way.*

Examples of Empathy Development from 0-3:
https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/5-how-to-help-your-child-develop-empathy
- *Practical, research-based strategies for cultivating empathy with infants and toddlers.*

Cultivating Empathy in Children:
https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/resources-for-families/5-tips-cultivating-empathy
- *Practical, research-based strategies for cultivating empathy with older children (elementary age and beyond).*

Games and Strategies to Build Emotion Knowledge in Children:
http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/familytools/teaching_emotions.pdf
- *Many specific strategies and games for teaching emotions to young children.*

Strategies for Building Empathy in the Classroom:
https://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/2018/jun/01/build-empathy-classroom-lab-refugees-lonelines
- *An account of one school's experience focusing on building empathy school-wide.*

APPLYING THE CONTENT OF THIS MODULE

Discussion Questions

- Describe a situation where a non-familial relationship could be critical to promoting a child's empathy development.

- Reflect on the many different relationships that can influence empathy. Think back to your own experiences as a child. How did these relationships influence your empathy development? You may want to think about relationships with parents, siblings, family members, teachers, etc.

- In your present and future opportunities to interact with children, how can you foster empathetic behavior and good self-care practices that promote an empathetic life?

Knowledge Checks

- Give an example of one biological and one environmental factor that contribute to the development of a child's empathy.

- Is empathy something with which children are born, or is empathy developed over time? Support your answer with the information learned in this module.

Activities

Learning Tool for Empathy

Learning Tool for Empathy is an activity that helps with understanding the development of empathy in children. In this exercise, students choose a children's book, television show, movie, or any other resource they feel may convey empathy to a child. Students specifically identify how the resource can be used as a learning tool to cultivate emotion knowledge and empathy. Students can do this independently, in pairs, or in groups outside of class (and come back to class ready to discuss). A compilation of resources can be made and distributed to local classrooms. This activity complements the research indicating that when children identify with characters who show empathy, they may be more likely to emulate that behavior.

Empathy in Children

Empathy in Children is an activity where students create a flyer, video, fact sheet, or children's activity related to empathy development in children that they could hypothetically present to a school or after-school program. Students can do this independently, in pairs, or in groups outside of class (and come back to class ready to discuss). Main ideas can be compiled from the various materials, or possibly impactful materials can be distributed to local schools and after-school programs in the community.

MODULE 2.2
Empathy and Physiology

> **Learning Objective**
>
> This module provides the learner with information about how our brains are hardwired for empathy and how our physiological responses to situations may promote or hinder our capacity for empathy.
>
> *Supplement:* Chapters 2, 4, 6

Our Brains and Empathy

When we think about the construct of empathy, our first thoughts are probably not about the implications of our physiological functioning, both within our brain and body. However, because our physiological functioning underlies our everyday abilities, it is important that we understand how physiological functioning is implicated in empathetic responding. Our ability to perceive others' emotions, regulate our own emotions and behaviors, and observe our environment and social cues to ensure appropriate responses, all underlie our ability for empathetic responding (Carter, Harris, & Porges, 2009). In addition to mirror neurons and oxytocin (outlined below), extensive research has investigated individuals' brain activity as it relates to empathy. To do this, researchers have utilized fMRI studies to investigate brain activity in response to others' pain, disgust, and touch. This research has led to an understanding of how humans can "feel" something that they are not experiencing themselves, how brain activity relates to self-reported empathy, and more (see Singer, Snozzi, Bird, Petrovic, Silani, Heinrichs, & Dola, 2008 for more information).

Mirror Neurons and Empathy

Humans biologically produce the capacity for empathy through hormones and mirror neurons—brain cells that promote mimicry of others. Essentially, when you observe an individual, your brain's mirror neurons process those observations into subsequent actions, thoughts, and emotions based on the information gathered (see Pfeifer & Dapretto, 2009 for a more detailed explanation of mirror neurons). We use mirror neurons to imagine how others feel and how we can respond to their feelings appropriately. Our responses include our facial expressions, posture, and speech patterns, all of which begin to mimic those of the other person. Our mirror neurons are one tool for experiencing empathy; when we combine our neurons with cognitive skills, such as perspective taking, we can achieve true empathy. In this way, research finds that mirror neurons provide a foundation for potential empathy.

Oxytocin and Empathy

Oxytocin is a hormone that plays a critical role in the coordination of social bonds and emotions and in the reduction of behavioral reactivity in response to stress. Researchers propose that oxytocin is implicated in modulating one's behavior and is likely related to one's capacity for empathy (see Carter et al., 2009). Although research in humans is limited, studies have shown that oxytocin enhances the ability to identify another's affective state (Domes, Heinrichs, Michel, Berger, & Herpertz, 2007), a critical precursor of being able to provide an empathetic response. Further, in research experiments, individuals who received intranasal oxytocin and were then placed in social situations showed decreased self-focused emotional arousal. Decreasing emotional arousal allows individuals to focus less on their own emotional response and more on the social situation. Individuals who are less preoccupied with their own emotional arousal likely feel more comfortable in social situations, allowing them to better recognize others' emotions (Heinrichs & Domes, 2008).

Researchers have also examined the relationship between oxytocin and empathy. Studies have shown that viewing an emotional video increased participants' serum oxytocin and that after viewing the video oxytocin levels were positively associated with self-reported empathy (Barraza & Zak, 2009). However, the research in this area is still developing, and there have been some studies that have been unable to replicate the findings of previous research (Singer et al., 2008). Although more research is needed, understanding that oxytocin is related to trust, emotion regulation, and emotion sharing provides a basis for identifying how oxytocin and empathy may be related, given these constructs are precursors of and provide a foundation for empathetic responding.

Acute Stress Response and Empathy

When experiencing any situation, whether it be a coffee date with a friend or a flat tire on your car, we assess and identify our level of safety. In instances where we feel safe, our bodies respond by regulating our organ functioning, such as slowing our heart rate and suppressing the systems related to our stress response; this restful state promotes and allows us to engage socially with others by focusing our resources on eye contact, listening, and affective responding (Carter et al., 2009). However, when we are faced with a stressful situation, our sympathetic nervous system quickly releases epinephrine and norepinephrine as a response to the stress. Once these hormones are released, our body prepares for "fight or flight": Immediately following the stressor and the release of hormones, our body will shut down digestion and increase blood flow, arousal, alertness, and heart rate in preparation for whatever happens next (Kemeny, 2003; Romero & Butler, 2007). The fight or flight response is our body's response to perceived threats. When faced with a perceived threat, we will either confront the situation (fight) or avoid/flee the situation (flight). When we enter this fight or flight response, our body releases adrenaline to prepare for our response, which changes our physiological functioning. Although we often think of the fight or flight response as being triggered by a dangerous situation (e.g., avoiding a car accident), the response can be triggered by situations and instances that occur in everyday life (e.g., persistent feelings of worry, stress over showing up late to a meeting).

As related to empathy, the fight or flight response results in our cognitions becoming more goal-oriented and decreases our ability to participate in social interactions or to communicate effectively. This response thereby reduces our capacity for perspective taking and compromises our ability to be empathetic (Carter et al., 2009; Manassis, 2017). When we focus on our own personal situations, we are more likely to have our fight or flight responses triggered if we do not perceive the situation as safe; as a result, our empathetic responses decrease. Only when we overcome our fight or flight responses by establishing a feeling of safety in the situation can we shift our focus from ourselves to someone else. Focusing on others, rather than ourselves or our own environments, is a key component of empathy.

After an initial physiological arousal, the panic within our bodies and minds will typically decrease, allowing us to plan for and complete the necessary actions following the arousal (Manassis, 2017). Furthermore, if we are sometimes faced with an acute stressor (sudden, surprising, and/or traumatic event), we may even show increased prosociality, including a greater inclination to confide in or trust trust/trustworthiness and increased sharing, immediately following the stressful situation (Von Dawans, Fischbacher, Kirschbaum, Fehr, & Heinrichs, 2012). Often, during the stressful situation, the activation of the autonomic nervous system results in enough personal distress about the situation to prompt us to demonstrate prosocial behaviors. Implications for our responses to an acute stressor go beyond that of just physiological functioning and can also include psychological functioning (discussed in Module 2.3).

Sometimes the acute stress response is triggered by strong emotions, such as anger or fear. In these cases, the response can be channeled into responses that vary in their empathetic quality. For instance, if anger elicited the arousal, we may be more likely to speak or act in ways that are for the greater good (Manassis, 2017). The management and direction of anger may demonstrate an appropriate empathetic response that addresses our source of anger. To illustrate this point, imagine that you describe yourself as reserved and timid. You are at the grocery store when you witness a few patrons harassing an employee who has a developmental disability. The patrons' behavior angers you. You approach the patrons and defend the employee, even though this is not something that you would normally do. Your emotional response prompted you to act in a way that is for the greater good. Conversely, emotions may not always be channeled into appropriate empathetic responses. Sometimes panic or anger may

increase after the initial arousal, resulting in negative responses with intense emotions. In addition, if faced with both anger and fear, feelings of extreme panic or rage may ultimately affect your ability to think clearly in the situation. Identifying our own emotional trends in response to stressful situations and practicing ways to deal with those responses to decrease their intensity can assist with empathetic responding.

Centering practices, mindfulness activities, and deep breathing can lessen the likelihood that our sympathetic nervous system will compel us to engage in fight or flight reactions. Such activities can also strengthen the effects of the parasympathetic nervous system, which supports an empathetic state of mind. When our parasympathetic nervous system is activated, we are more likely to feel safe within our environment, allowing ourselves to "let our guard down" and engage in more other-oriented thinking and attention towards others, thus increasing our capacity for empathy (Miller, Kahle, & Hastings, 2015). Importantly, mindfulness alone is insufficient for developing empathy and will not prevent the fight or flight response, but it can help us focus less on ourselves and focus more on others in the moment.

RESOURCES

Peer Reviewed Resources

Bernhardt, B. C., & Singer, T. (2012). The neural basis of empathy. *Annual review of neuroscience*, *35*, 1-23.
- *Reviews literature characterizing neural regions that may be involved in empathy as well as contextual modulators of the neural empathetic response.*

Barraza, J. A., & Zak, P. J. (2009). Empathy toward strangers triggers oxytocin release and subsequent generosity. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, *1167*(1), 182-189.
- *Describes an experimental study in which some participants watched empathy-inducing videos. Empathy was associated with higher oxytocin release, which was in turn associated with more prosocial giving, suggesting that oxytocin may be one mechanism by which empathy motivates prosociality.*

Carter, C. S., Harris, J., & Porges, S. W. (2009). Neural and evolutionary perspectives on empathy. In J. Decety & W. Ickes (Eds.), *Social neuroscience. The social neuroscience of empathy* (pp. 169-182). Cambridge, MA, US: MIT Press.
- *Discusses various psychophysiological aspects of empathy, including the role of the autonomic nervous system, brain functions, and the endocrine system.*

Decety, J., & Jackson, P. L. (2004). The functional architecture of human empathy. *Behavioral and cognitive neuroscience reviews*, *3*(2), 71-100.
- *Proposes a functional model of empathy comprised of several main components (e.g., shared neural processes, self-awareness, self-regulation) and describes the processes which underlie these components.*

Domes, G., Heinrichs, M., Michel, A., Berger, C., & Herpertz, S. C. (2007). Oxytocin improves "mind-reading" in humans. *Biological Psychiatry*, *61*(6), 731–733. doi:10.1016/j.biopsych.2006.07.015
- *Describes an experiment in which individuals who received oxytocin performed significantly better at an emotion recognition task compared to individuals who received a placebo.*

Heinrichs, M., & Domes, G. (2008). Neuropeptides and social behaviour: effects of oxytocin and vasopressin in humans. In *Progress in Brain Research* (Vol. 170, pp. 337–350). doi:10.1016/S0079-6123(08)00428-7
- *Reviews research on oxytocin and vasopressin as related to social functioning in humans.*

Kemeny, M. E. (2003). The psychobiology of stress. *Current directions in psychological science*, *12*(4), 124-129.
- *A review paper that describes the body's physiological stress response, highlighting unique patterns in stress reactions in response to specific stressors.*

Miller, J. G., Kahle, S., & Hastings, P. D. (2015). Roots and benefits of costly giving: Children who are more altruistic have greater autonomic flexibility and less family wealth. *Psychological Science, 26,* 1038-1045.
- *Describes how the parasympathetic and sympathetic nervous system are related to altruism.*

Pfeifer, J. H., & Dapretto, M. (2009). Neural and evolutionary perspectives on empathy. In J. Decety & W. Ickes (Eds.), *Social neuroscience. The social neuroscience of empathy* (pp. 169-182). Cambridge, MA, US: MIT Press.
- *Discusses mirror neurons and empathy.*

Romero, M. L., & Butler, L. K. (2007). Endocrinology of stress. *International Journal of Comparative Psychology*, *20*(2).
- *Describes the endocrinological basis of the fight or flight response as well as the maladaptive long-term consequences of stress.*

Singer, T., Snozzi, R., Bird, G., Petrovic, P., Silani, G., Heinrichs, M., & Dolan, R. J. (2008). Effects of oxytocin and prosocial behavior on brain responses to direct and vicariously experienced pain. *Emotion, 8(6),* 781-791.http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0014195
- *Describes an experimental study that finds no relation between oxytocin and empathetic neural responses or prosocial behavior.*

Von Dawans, B., Fischbacher, U., Kirschbaum, C., Fehr, E., & Heinrichs, M. (2012). The social dimension of stress reactivity: acute stress increases prosocial behavior in humans. *Psychological science*, *23*(6), 651-660.
- *Describes an experimental design in which acute stress induced in the lab led to increases in participants' prosocial behavior toward others.*

▶ Popular Media Resources

The Power of Empathy: Helen Riess at TEDxMiddlebury:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=baHrcC8B4WM
- *Helen Riess discusses her research on the neuroscience of empathy. She shares how her empathy training was implemented with doctors and steps that help individuals demonstrate empathy using the acronym EMPATHY.*

Carl Marci: Neurobiology and Physiology of Empathy:
https://vimeo.com/61816660
- *This lecture discusses physiological responses to empathy between doctors and patients, and it outlines the neurobiology of empathy.*

Dr. Dan Siegel: On the Basis of Empathy
https://youtu.be/CnvSRvmRlgA
- *Describes mirror neurons and brain processes that drives empathy using anatomical terms.*

Empathy and Disgust do Battle in the Brain:
https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/empathy-and-disgust/
- *The article compares mirror neurons and hormones and discusses the implications for empathy in animals compared to empathy in humans.*

This is Your Brain on Empathy:
https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/hot-thought/201405/is-your-brain-empathy
- *This article discusses how brain functioning underlies the efficacy of the Roots of Empathy training for children.*

The Fight Flight Freeze Response:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jEHwB1PG_-Q&feature=youtu.be
- *This short video explains our mind and bodies' inborn response to various situations.*

APPLYING THE CONTENT OF THIS MODULE

Discussion Questions

- Share a situation that activated your fight or flight response. Thinking back, how might this reaction have interfered with your ability to behave empathetically? Knowing what you know now about physiology and empathy, how might you overcome or address that interference if you were to re-live that situation?

- Think of a situation where you might have become angry at someone. What negative thoughts did you have? Then, using the same situation, think about possible non-negative (i.e., positive or neutral) thoughts that you could have experienced instead. Does changing the types of thoughts you have change your ability to behave empathetically towards the other person?

Knowledge Checks

- Define "fight or flight" in your own words.

- Provide a situation that would elicit a fight response and another situation that would elicit a flight response. How might these situations affect your empathetic response?

Activities

Exploring Fight or Flight Responses

Exploring Fight or Flight Responses provides students an opportunity to identify their typical response when confronted with stress. In this activity, students share a situation that caused anxiety, fear, or any other stress-induced emotion in order to understand their fight or flight reaction. While it is helpful to share the situations with a partner, this activity can be completed as an individual reflection. This exercise helps students identify their fight or flight reactions so that they can possibly adjust their coping response in the future to stay attuned to empathy.

Chair Yoga

Chair Yoga provides a series of stretches that can help release stress and tension from our bodies. The 12 yoga poses can be done as a series in class, or you can feature a few of the poses in class and encourage students to complete the series outside of class. Chair yoga is suitable for most physical activity levels and can be a helpful way to strengthen the body to respond to various arousals.

- Chair Yoga: **https://www.purewow.com/wellness/chair-yoga-poses**

Centering

A Five-Minute Centering Practice is an exercise that activates our parasympathetic nervous system, which can help us be more attuned to what is going on around us rather than focusing on ourselves. In this activity, students participate in a five-minute centering practice. At the end of the practice, students are then asked to note everything about their surroundings and discuss their observations with the class. This exercise helps students practice a technique they can use in their lives to help with empathy toward others and themselves.

- Five-Minute Centering Practice: **https://kripalu.org/resources/five-minute-centering-practice**

(Can also be used as an activity in Module 2.3.)

30-Day Health Challenge

30-Day Health Challenge is an activity that relates our overall health to the ability to handle stressors in our lives. Mindful and healthy eating, as well as physical exercise, can help temper fight or flight responses. Together, these strategies can provide us with a more balanced approach to stress management, which can be helpful when developing empathy towards our family, colleagues, and others. Students can individually track their progress and check in with an assigned partner or the class for support.

- 30 Day Health Challenge: **https://shapescale.com/blog/health/30-day-health-challenge/**

*Students may need to check with their doctors before implementing a new health plan.

Positive Psychology Mindfulness Exercises

Mindfulness Exercises are outlined on a website that describe 22 strategies that can be used within the classroom. The type of exercise you choose will likely depend on aspects of your class; however, most of these exercises can be taught within the classroom and then practiced individually. Have students complete the mindfulness exercise of your choice and then talk about how they could use this exercise in the future as a way to preempt their sympathetic nervous system response to potential stressors.

- Positive Psychology Mindfulness Exercises: **https://positivepsychologyprogram.com/ mindfulness-exercises-techniques-activities/**

(Can also be used as an activity in Module 2.3.)

MODULE 2.3
Psychological Aspects of Empathy

Learning Objective

This module provides the learner with an understanding of how our own psychological state may hinder our ability to empathize with others and how we can increase our own awareness for empathy within these psychological states.

Supplement: Chapters 4, 5, 6, 8
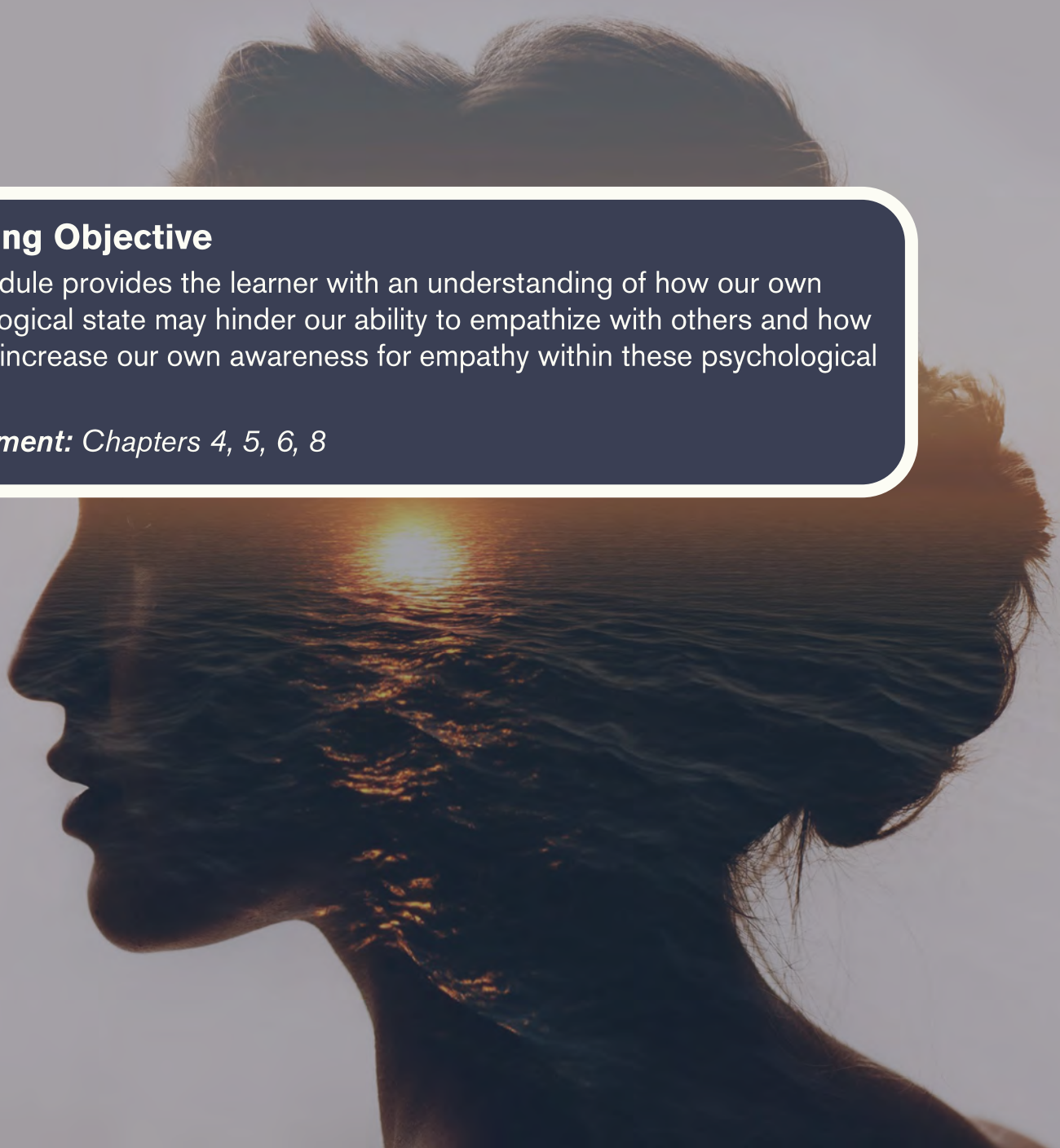
UNDERSTANDING THE CONTENT OF THIS MODULE

Empathetic Distress, Tolerance, and Fatigue

When we have empathetic concern, we are focused on the well-being of another individual. Frequently, empathetic concern will lead us to demonstrate situationally appropriate prosocial behavior as we aim to help alleviate the other's negative situation. Alternatively, if we feel overwhelmed and unable to cope with the situation, we experience empathetic distress.

In general, empathetic distress is not other-oriented; rather, when it occurs, we are concentrating our effort towards minimizing the effect of negative emotions on ourselves, which can hinder prosociality (see Klimecki & Singer, 2011). When overcome by empathetic distress, we are likely to withdraw from the situation, which results in less focus on the other and more focus on oneself. This inward-focused response may be especially detrimental for the psychological well-being of caregivers, such as physicians, social workers, or familial caregivers (Klimecki & Singer, 2011). Although some degree of empathetic distress may be adaptive, it is also possible that this type of behavior can lead to empathetic distress fatigue or empathy fatigue.

Empathy fatigue is "the emotional secondary stress and grief reactions that occur during helping interactions…[and] is perceived to emerge as an acute reaction of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion" (Stebnicki, 2000, pp. 23, 24). Interestingly, researchers suggest that the mechanisms underlying compassion fatigue actually describe empathy fatigue, as empathy may be more taxing than compassion (Stebnicki, 2007). Empathy fatigue is often present in direct care professions or when a person is regularly faced with traumatic situations.

Although empathy fatigue has negative implications for both the giver and receiver (Klimecki & Singer, 2011), empathy remains important. We can employ different techniques to care for ourselves and reduce empathy fatigue, especially in situations where caring for others encompasses a significant part of our lives. Managing empathy fatigue is particularly important for those who are regularly placed in situations where they must demonstrate high levels of empathy (e.g., physicians, therapists, caregivers). To prevent empathy fatigue, Stebnicki (2007) outlines multiple self-care strategies that can be utilized during training programs for direct-care professionals. These strategies focus on providing resources to understand empathy fatigue and prepare for it by leading well-balanced lives and utilizing peer support as appropriate.

Another important concept when discussing empathy's psychological considerations is distress tolerance. Distress tolerance is "the capacity to experience and withstand negative psychological states" (Simons & Gaher, 2005, p. 83). We can often feel distress when faced with a situation or interaction that we find unpleasant, and we will try to find ways to change the situation to either reduce or eliminate that distress. Individuals who have a low distress tolerance threshold often state that feelings of distress are intolerable, and they may demonstrate impulsive behavior and/or suppress emotions to reduce their discomfort with distress (Simon & Gaher, 2005). Therefore, having a low level of distress tolerance may diminish an individual's ability to focus on others and demonstrate empathetic concern. Becoming attuned to your own level of emotional reactivity and capacity to tolerate distress can help you identify strategies to reduce the impact of distress on your psychological well-being. Many interventions that focus on promoting one's capacity for tolerating distress are designed to be implemented with clinical setting interventions. However, some researchers have suggested that instead of responding automatically to a situation and being distress intolerant, improving one's mindfulness can allow individuals to focus more on the present and make decisions regarding how much distress they can actually tolerate (Lotan, Tanay, & Bernstein, 2013).

Psychological Boundaries and Empathy

When people say that they "know exactly how you feel," they demonstrate a common example of inappropriate or nonexistent psychological boundaries. Because each of us has our own life experiences, temperament, and emotions, no one can ever know "exactly" how we feel. Individuals high in empathy understand that although they can have an idea of how another person feels, they cannot fully know how another person feels. To demonstrate empathy, a person only needs to think of how another person might feel in a situation (Batson, Ahmad, Lishner, & Tsang, 2016).

To protect psychological boundaries, it is important that we practice appropriate closeness based on our role in the situation and the role of the other individual. We should also recognize what words, mannerisms, settings, and actions can both help and hinder others in any situation (Manassis, 2017). Someone who lacks appropriate psychological boundaries may avoid disagreements with friends because they fear having negative repercussions affect the relationship. In such situations, that person focuses more on maintaining the relationship instead of providing the honest support that is appropriate and needed for sustaining the relationship. In other cases, an individual could be too emotionally invested to demonstrate empathy towards the other person effectively.

Sometimes we may encounter situations where we do not actively or fully practice perspective taking, resulting in the use of social conventions that may not be appropriate for the situation. For example, you might try to console a friend who earned a 'C' grade on a math test because you would personally find that grade distressing; however, you learn that he is quite happy with the grade, as the math course was particularly difficult. By assuming that the other person's response would be the same as our own, we may not be able to respond empathetically or appropriately (Vreeke & van der Mark, 2003). Instead, to ensure that we demonstrate the most empathetic responses, we need to strive for perspective taking and individualize our actions/responses for a given situation. Social conventions are not uniform, and our actions should reflect that. We can support our perspective taking skills through relationships in which we had opportunities to previously demonstrate empathy, as we can use that experience to help tailor future empathetic responses so that they are individualized and situationally appropriate (Vreeke & van der Mark, 2003).

It may be difficult to respond to someone's emotional response prosocially and empathetically if we are experiencing a strong and different response to a situation of our own (Vreeke & van der Mark, 2003). For example, experiencing psychological distress can make us less able to demonstrate empathy towards others. Anxiety, in particular, can overwhelm people and prevent them from attending to tasks and other people, ultimately decreasing their ability to show empathetic responding. Using avoidance strategies when overwhelmed by anxiety may result in impressions of rude or inconsiderate behavior (Manassis, 2017). To avoid appearing inconsiderate when overcome by anxiety, we can learn coping mechanisms that allow us to "become more aware of others' feelings and therefore more capable of empathy" (Manassis, 2017, pp. 93). Manassis (2017) outlines several possible anxious responses and provides coping strategies for them.

Avoidance Response

To overcome our tendencies to avoid situations, we can consciously expose ourselves to the anxiety-provoking situation. By breaking our reliance on avoidance, we are better equipped to "relate to others empathetically in a greater variety of situations" (Manassis, 2017, pp. 93).

Fight or Flight Response

We can use relaxation techniques to help us overcome or reduce our fight or flight response. Such techniques (e.g., breathing exercises, yoga, meditation) decrease our focus on the heightened states (e.g., anger, anxiety, stress) that are counterproductive to empathy.

Unrealistic Thoughts Response

Cognitive strategies that identify unrealistic anxious thoughts can decrease overall anxiety. We should acknowledge that the anxious thinking is extreme and not appropriate. After acknowledging the thoughts' unrealistic nature, we can then focus on adaptive thinking skills that focus on problem-solving. Positive reinforcement can help us think through the situation and find a solution to the problem.

Self-Empathy

As discussed above, our psychological state can influence the degree to which we demonstrate empathetic behavior towards others. Importantly, empathy towards ourselves—called self-empathy—is also influenced by psychological processes and requires that we demonstrate empathy towards ourselves, just as we might for others. Self-awareness is crucial to being able to show ourselves empathy. Self-awareness includes recognizing our own feelings, "noticing how critical we are of ourselves, and how hard it is to accept our imperfections and mistakes with an attitude of warmth and self-acceptance, and a commitment to find a way to end that suffering in ourselves" (Weinger & Kearny, 2011 pp. 53). Self-empathy is important for our own well-being, as well as for improving our ability to demonstrate empathy towards others. One way that we can develop our self-empathy is through Mindfulness Meditations; review Weinger & Kearny, 2011 to learn more about them and to see examples of meditations that promote self-empathy.

RESOURCES

Peer Reviewed Resources

Batson, C. D., Ahmad, N., Lishner, D. A., & Tsang, J. (2016). Empathy and altruism. In C.R. Snyder & S. J. Lopez (Eds.). *Oxford handbook of hypo-egoic phenomena: Theory and research on the quiet ego* (pp. 485-498) New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- *Discusses psychological states and their impact on the ability to demonstrate empathy.*

Klimecki, O. & Singer, T. (2011). Empathetic distress fatigue rather than compassion fatigue? Integrating findings from empathy research in psychology and social neuroscience. In B. Oakley, A. Knafo, G. Madhaven, & D. S. Wilson (Eds). *Pathological Altruism*, (pp. 368-385) Oxford University Press USA
- *Discusses the role of empathy for prosociality and outlines the argument for the term empathetic distress fatigue vs. compassion fatigue.*

Lotan, G., Tanay, G., & Bernstein, A. (2013). Mindfulness and distress tolerance: Relations in a mindfulness preventive intervention. *International Journal of Cognitive Therapy, 6,* 371-385.
- *Describes a mindfulness intervention that can improve one's distress tolerance.*

Neff, K. (2003). Self-compassion: An alternative conceptualization of a healthy attitude toward oneself. *Self and Identity, 2*(2), 85-101.
- *Describes self-compassion and how it relates to other concepts, including self-empathy.*

Simons, J. S., & Gaher, R. M (2005). The Distress Tolerance Scale: Development and validation of a self-report measure. *Motivation and Emotion, 29,* 83-102. doi:10.1007/s11031-005-7955-3
- *Provides a general overview of a measure of distress tolerance and provides validation for the measure.*

Stebnicki, M. A. (2000). Stress and grief reactions among rehabilitation professionals: Dealing effectively with empathy fatigue. *Journal of Rehabilitation, 66*(1), 23–29.
- *Describes how empathy fatigue and burnout differ and offers approaches to addressing empathy fatigue.*

Stebnicki, M. A. (2007). Empathy fatigue: Healing the mind, body, and spirit of professional counselors. *American Journal of Psychiatric Rehabilitation,* 10, 317-338.
- *Reviews empathy fatigue and approaches to addressing it.*

Thoma, P., Zalewski, I., von Reventlow, H. G., Norra, C., Juckel, G., & Daum, I. (2011). Cognitive and affective empathy in depression linked to executive control. *Psychiatry research*, *189*(3), 373-378.
- *Reviews a clinical study's finding that depressed patients experience more personal distress in response to an empathy-evoking stimulus than control patients, but groups did not differ on behavioral or cognitive empathy.*

Vreeke, G. J., & van der Mark, I. L. (2003). Empathy, an integrative model. *New Ideas in Psychology, 21*, 177-207.
- *Describes an approach to conceptualizing empathy based on psychological components, self-control, personality, and relational influences.*

Weininger, R., & Kearney, M. (2011). Revisiting empathetic engagement: Countering compassion fatigue with 'exquisite empathy.' In I. Renzenbrink (Ed.), Caregiver stress and staff support in illness, dying, and bereavement (pp. 49-61). New York: Oxford University Press.
- *Discusses self-empathy, burnout, compassion fatigue, exquisite empathy, and meditations that can promote self-empathy.*

White, C. N., & Buchanan, T. W. (2016). Empathy for the stressed. *Adaptive Human Behavior and Physiology*, *2*(4), 311–324. doi: 10.1007/s40750-016-0049-5
- *Reviews psychological, emotional, and cognitive aspects of empathy as well as a description of the process by which empathy may lead to stress contagion.*

▶ Popular Media Resources

Boundaries, featuring Brené Brown:
https://www.theworkofthepeople.com/boundaries
- *In this video, Brené Brown briefly discusses the importance of boundaries in sustaining one's empathy.*

Self-Empathy Exercise:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E8DR3Y5kMY8
- *This video is a guided exercise on self-empathy. It is formatted as a training and provides places to pause the video to allow the viewer to participate in the exercise.*

Q&A: Empathy Fatigue:
https://ct.counseling.org/2013/01/qa-empathy-fatigue/
- *In this written interview, Mark Stebnicki discuss empathy fatigue and provides some examples of how empathy fatigue can play a role in the lives of counselors.*

The Lab: Decoy: A Portrait Session with a Twist:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F-TyPfYMDK8
- *In this short clip, six photographers are given different narratives about the individual they are photographing. At the end of the clip, they discuss how one's perspective of the situation can influence their behavior and how they project their own views into the situation if they are not given ample time to get to know the subject.*

APPLYING THE CONTENT OF THIS MODULE

Discussion Questions

- Think of a situation where your emotional response would be anxiety/anxiousness. Share that situation and discuss the aspects of the situation that you would want to avoid. How might these factors result in your behavior appearing uncaring to an outside observer? How could you remedy the situation?

- How could the use of coping strategies for anxiety either foster or hinder an individual's capacity for empathy? Provide examples of a coping strategy that fosters empathy and one that hinders empathy.

- How do you engage in self-empathy? How does self-empathy benefit you?

- Reflect on a situation where you did not engage in self-empathy. How did your lack of self-empathy affect your ability to show empathy to others? How could you work to improve your own self-empathy in this situation and/or in general?

Knowledge Checks

- Describe the differences between empathetic distress and empathy fatigue. In what ways may these concepts be related?

- Define empathy fatigue and provide an original example of the concept.

- Explain the importance of adhering to appropriate psychological boundaries for empathy. Describe some empathy consequences that might occur if we do not have psychological boundaries.

- What are the three types of anxiety responses covered in this module? How do these responses relate to our capacity to demonstrate empathy?

Koru Mindfulness Guided Mediations

The Center for Koru Mindfulness provides several free guided meditations that students can use to strengthen their capacities to handle stressors, focus, and be present in the moment. These psychological states can help us be more attentive and thus more empathetic to members of our family, friends, and others.
- Koru Mindfulness Guided Meditations: **https://korumindfulness.org/guided-meditations/**

The Empathy Workout

The Empathy Workout, on the website of Martha Beck, outlines a number of exercises that can help us refocus our empathy energy, especially in times or in situations where we may be experiencing empathy fatigue. Of particular relevance is exercise #4, "Metta-Tation," which promotes self-acceptance as a way to increase our capacity for empathy over time. The Center for Koru Mindfulness provides the guided Loving Kindness Meditation that students can practice outside of class
- The Empathy Workout: **https://marthabeck.com/2013/03/the-empathy-workout/**
- Koru Mindfulness Guided Meditations: **https://korumindfulness.org/guided-meditations/**

Empathetic Concern

Empathetic Concern is an exercise that provides exploration of empathetic concern for oneself and for others. Parsed out into small groups, students write down a conflict, put it in a pile, and then read someone else's conflict as if it were their own. Students in the group offer advice on how the conflict can be resolved. Students are prompted to think about their responses to others and how supportive they can be. This exercise also helps students engage in self-empathy.

Activities

Centering
A Five-Minute Centering Practice is an exercise that activates our parasympathetic nervous system, which can help us be more attuned to what is going on around us rather than focusing on ourselves. In this activity, students participate in a five-minute centering practice. At the end of the practice, students are then asked to note everything about their surroundings and discuss with the larger class. This exercise helps students practice a technique they can use in their lives to help with empathy toward others and themselves.
- Five-Minute Centering Practice: **https://kripalu.org/resources/five-minute-centering-practice**

Positive Psychology Mindfulness Exercises
Mindfulness Exercises are outlined on a website that describe 22 mindfulness exercises that can be used within the classroom. The type of exercise you choose will likely depend on aspects of your class; however, most of these exercises can be taught within the classroom and then practiced individually. Have students complete the mindfulness exercise of your choice and then talk about how they could utilize this exercise to preempt their sympathetic nervous system response to potential stressors.
- Positive Psychology Mindfulness Exercises: **https://positivepsychologyprogram.com/mindfulness-exercises-techniques-activities/**
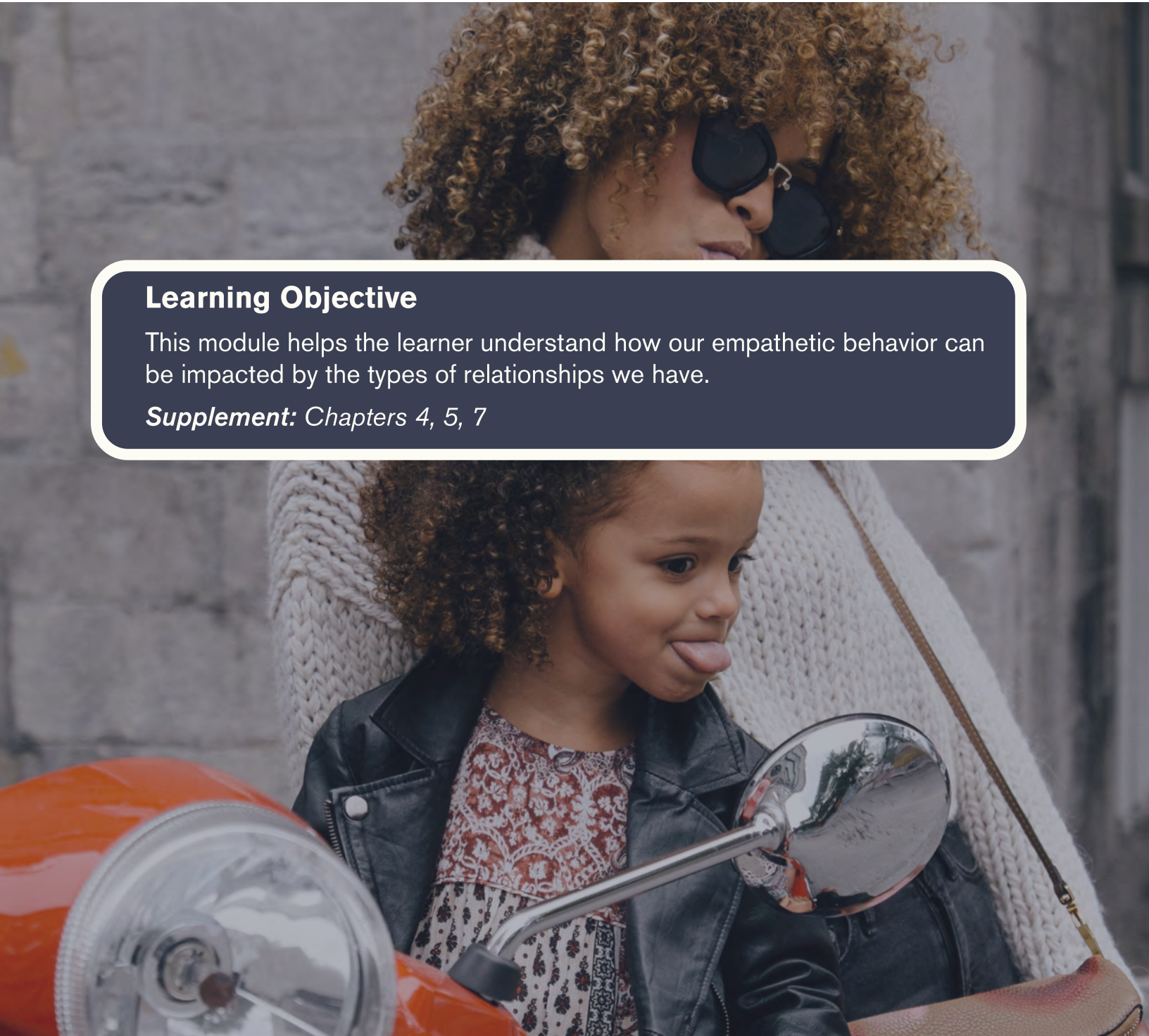
MODULE 2.4
Empathy in Relationships

Learning Objective

This module helps the learner understand how our empathetic behavior can be impacted by the types of relationships we have.

Supplement: *Chapters 4, 5, 7*

Low and High Influence Relationships

An empathetic relationship requires that each person in the relationship be interested in the other's subjective experience without judgment and without placing personally subjective experience onto the other person. Each person must value the other for their unique perspectives despite any differences. Perhaps the simplest way to think about relationships and empathy is through the dyadic relationship, especially when we think about the capacity to "put ourselves in someone else's shoes." We have personal interactions and engage in one-on-one relationships daily with different people: our children, partners and spouses, the coffee barista, doctor, roommate, and grocery store clerk. Manassis (2017) encourages us to think about these varying relationships as low- or high-influence, including how these designations impact our empathetic responses.

The degree of closeness or how much a person's life influences the other, along with positive or negative emotions triggered by the relationship, can affect capacity for empathy (Manassis, 2017). Low-influence relationships, such as low-stakes interactions with acquaintances (e.g., with grocery store clerks, baristas, people in line), can often provide opportunities for empathetic behavior. For example, when standing in line at the grocery store, we may notice that the person in front of us needs a few more dollars to complete the purchase. We think about what she must be feeling when she realizes that she does not have enough money, and so we offer her some money to pay for the remainder of her purchase. In another instance, we might feel with the grocery store clerk when sensing her tiredness, so we may offer a kind word of appreciation for her hard work. Depending on our mood, it can be easy to offer empathy in these low-influence interactions, as this type of relationship is temporary and uncomplicated. Low-influence dynamics can still challenge our empathy, though, as evidenced by potentially stressful interactions with people who act unkindly, people with different lifestyles, some friendships/acquaintances, and people in an official job capacity (e.g., police officers giving us a ticket). However, if we can avoid our fight or flight responses and engage in perspective taking, we can sometimes prevent ourselves from getting worked up about the interaction.

By contrast, high-influence relationships can have an ongoing, significant impact on our physical, psychological, and emotional well-being (Manassis, 2017). These relationships include those with immediate family (parent-child relationship), spouses, romantic partners (intimate relationships), close colleagues, and good friends. These relationships may also include interactions with people in authority, such as physicians, where the relationship is influential despite being intermittent. High-impact relationships with spouses may be characterized by feelings from past interactions with our parents; we bring certain expectations of how our behaviors should be reciprocated (Manassis, 2017). These relationships may sometimes challenge our capacity for empathy simply because they are more intricate and complicated. However, studies indicate that empathy is important in positively maintaining these relationships.

In intimate relationships, dyadic empathy—"the ability for a person to both understand and share in the experiences of his or her romantic partner" (Long, 1990 as cited in Kimmes, Edwards, Wetchler, & Bercik (2014)—is a significant indicator of relationship satisfaction. Relationship satisfaction is enhanced even if the person merely perceives that empathy levels are the same among both partners (Kimmes, et. al, 2014). Dyadic empathy is significant for both married and cohabiting couples. Ulloa and colleagues (2017) found that when partners can understand the other's feelings and point of view, they are better able to address conflict in a positive way, likely because dyadic empathy prevents a conflict from escalating.

Empathy and Bullying

The relationships we form in childhood and adolescence become a key part of our social networks. Our high-influence relationships likely include close friendships, but even negative, intermittent interactions with others in a peer group can be high-influence and impact empathy. Bullying consists of "the repetitive negative actions intended to harm or cause significant distress inflicted by a more powerful person against a less powerful one. These negative actions can take either direct (e.g., physical or verbal attacks) or indirect forms (e.g., spreading rumors or purposefully not speaking to someone)" (Jolliffe and Farrington, 2006, p. 540). Thus, while bullying can result in physical altercations, it can often be considered a psychological exercise that can be classified as antisocial behavior. Antisocial behavior may, in turn, be connected to the inability of a person to connect with the emotional reactions of others, or low empathy levels (Jolliffe and Farrington, 2006). Indeed, researchers propose that those who bully have less empathy because they are unable to comprehend the negative impact their actions have on the other.

Researchers find that children who use indirect methods of bullying (e.g., social exclusion, gossip, rumors) have low cognitive empathetic responsiveness and are less able to take the perspective of others (Ang and Goh, 2010). Cyberbullying imposes bullying through the internet as the medium for the behavior. Indirect methods of bullying can be perpetuated in an online environment, where the lack of face-to-face interaction can reduce sensitivity to the feelings of others, thereby compromising empathy (Ang and Goh, 2010).

Researchers suggest that empathy training and education for school-aged children, along with encouragement of parents and teachers to develop and maintain positive caregiver/child relationships, are important factors in decreasing acts of bullying and cyberbullying. A poor caregiver-child emotional bond (even if perceived by the child), along with poor caregiver monitoring of internet behavior, can increase the likelihood of cyberbullying (Ybarra and Mitchell, 2004). Parents can influence the prosocial behaviors of their children by fostering secure attachments with their children and by expressing and modeling well-regulated emotions (Mesurado and Richaud, 2017). In a school setting, teachers can model and train students to use empathetic responses when peer-to-peer conflict arises.

Communication and Active Listening

Empathy is an incredibly multidimensional and nuanced concept. Empathy involves cognitions such as motivation and desire as well as behavioral skills to act empathetically, all of which can be distinguished into different types (i.e., affective or cognitive). Because empathy can be taught, an ideal world would guarantee that all people learn empathy in their early high-influence relationships with parents, family members, and teachers. Unfortunately, not everyone may have had early high-influence relationships that taught empathy, and these individuals may need extra support to learn and practice new skills that promote empathy toward others.

Active listening and communicating are important skills that help us practice empathy. Active listening involves being attentive to and hearing deeply what the other person is saying without judgment and without preparing a response. If you are practicing active listening, it is critical that the other person feels heard. Research gauged empathetic understanding in empathy training programs for romantic relationships, where the programs encouraged participants to practice communicating, listening, and paraphrasing. The training resulted in an increase in empathy expressions with a partner, an increase in perceptions of the partner's empathy levels, and a broad expression of empathy toward others (Edgar et al.,1999). Empathetic listening is an important skill, as it involves listening intentionally and engaging in shared meaning. Other researchers (Egan,1994) have identified the SOLER position as a way of facilitating empathetic listening. To listen empathetically, SOLER recommends the following methods: face a person squarely, have open posture, lean slightly toward speaker, have appropriate eye contact, and practice the skills in a relaxed way.

It is also important for you to communicate that you have been actively listening by paraphrasing what the other person has shared. The speaker/listener technique developed in the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (Markman, Floyd, Stanley, & Lewis, 1986 as cited in Edgar, et al. (1999)) "involves one person adopting the role of the speaker while the partner listens and then paraphrases the content and feelings of the speaker" (p. 237). The partners take turns speaking, intending that each partner feels understood—a mindset that closely aligns with empathy. In some populations, these types of skills are important to ensure that the other person perceives empathy. For example, Rogers (1975) emphasizes that empathy "is a skill that combines the health care professional's commitment to understanding the patient's experience followed by the ability to communicate the meaning of the patient's experience by listening attentively and reflecting it back to the patient" (p.8). David and Larson (2018) found that if patients perceived empathy through advocacy, communication (verbal and nonverbal), approachability, access, and competence from their athletic trainers, then their satisfaction, compliance, and treatment outcomes were more positive.

RESOURCES

Peer Reviewed Resources

Ang, R., & Goh, D. (2010). Cyberbullying among adolescents: The role of affective and cognitive empathy, and gender. *Child Psychiatry and Human Development, 41*, 387-397. doi:10.1007/s10578-010-0176-3.
  - *Measures cognitive and affective empathy of adolescents and effects on internet bullying behaviors.*

David, S., & Larson, M. (2018). Athletes' perception of athletic trainer empathy: How important is it? *Journal of Sport Rehabilitation*, *27*(1), 8–15. https://doi-org.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/10.1123/jsr.2016-0085
  - *Studies an athletic trainer's empathetic behavior on Division I college athletes.*

Edgar C. J. Long, Angera, J., Carter, S., Nakamoto, M., & Kalso, M. (1999). Understanding the one you love: A longitudinal assessment of an empathy training program for couples in romantic relationships. *Family Relations, 48*(3), 235-242. doi:10.2307/585632
  - *Assesses a longitudinal empathy training program for couples in romantic relationships.*

Elliott, R., Bohart, A.C., Watson, J.C., & Greenberg, L.S. (2011). Empathy. In J. Norcross (ed.), *Psychotherapy relationships that work* (2nd ed.) (pp. 132-152). New York: Oxford University Press. (c) Oxford University Press. Retrieved from https://strathprints.strath.ac.uk/36468/1/Elliott_Bohart_Watson_Greenberg_2011_In_Norcross_Empathy_Outcome_post_print.pdf
  - *Describes empathy in the psychotherapist-patient relationship*

Jolliffe, D., & Farrington, D. (2006). Examining the relationship between low empathy and bullying. *Aggressive Behavior, 32*, 540-550. doi:10.1002/ab.20154.
  - *Differentiates cognitive and affective empathy and their interactions with gender and empathy.*

Kimmes, J. G., Edwards, A. B., Wetchler, J. L., & Bercik, J. (2014). Self and other ratings of dyadic empathy as predictors of relationship satisfaction. *American Journal of Family Therapy*, *42*(5), 426–437. https://doi-org.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/10.1080/01926187.2014.925374
  - *Uses the Interpersonal Reactivity Index for Couples to find perceived dyadic empathy as a predictor of relationship satisfaction.*

Mesurado, B., & Richaud, M. (2017). The relationship between parental variables, empathy and prosocial-flow with prosocial behavior toward strangers, friends, and family. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 18*, 843-860. doi:10.1007/s10902-016-9748-7.
- *Explores the parent-child relationship and its effect on prosocial behaviors.*

Pfetsch, J. S. (2017). Empathetic skills and cyberbullying: Relationship of different measures of empathy to cyberbullying in comparison to offline bullying among young adults. *Journal of Genetic Psychology*, *178*(1), 58–72. https://doi- org.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/10.1080/00221325.2016.1256155
- *Analyzes affective and emotional empathy in adolescent bullying behaviors.*

Ulloa, E. C., Hammett, J. F., Meda, N. A., & Rubalcaba, S. J. (2017). Empathy and romantic relationship quality among cohabitating couples. *Family Journal*, *25*(3), 208–214. https://doi-org.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/10.1177/1066480717710644
- *Discusses empathy in the context of cohabiting relationships.*

Ybarra, M., & Mitchell, K. (2004). Youth engaging in online harassment: associations with caregiver–child relationships, Internet use, and personal characteristics. *Journal of Adolescence, 27*, 319 -336. doi:10.1016/j.adolescence.2004.03.007.
- *Discusses factors that contribute to online bullying and harassment.*

Popular Media Resources

5 Ways to Listen Better:

https://www.ted.com/talks/julian_treasure_5_ways_to_listen_better
utm_campaign=tedspread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare

- *In this short video, Julian Treasure identifies ways we can enhance our listening skills.*

What is Empathetic Communication and 6 Ways to Enhance this Powerful Skill:

https://www.learning-mind.com/empathic-communication-skills/

- *Defines empathetic communication and ways to improve and utilize this skill with others.*

6 Ways to Nurture Empathy in Intimate Relationships:

https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-empowerment-diary/201702/6-ways-nurture-
empathy-i-intimate-relationships

- *A short article outlining how to nurture empathy in intimate relationships.*

Tips for More Meaningful Conversations:

https://www.mindful.org/the-mindful-guide-to-straight-talk/

- *Specific points on how to engage in more meaningful conversations.*

Empathy: The Heart of Difficult Conversations | Michelle Stowe | TEDxTallaght:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2UvDMQyBVLs

- *A short presentation on how to communicate empathetically in difficult conversations.*

APPLYING THE CONTENT OF THIS MODULE

Discussion Questions

- Think about the different types of relationships, past or present, you have in your life. What is your experience with empathy in these relationships (either as a receiver or a giver of empathy)?

- How have your past life experiences shaped your capacity for empathy? How are your current life situations, including any current stressors in your life, affecting your capacity for empathy?

- Do you believe that a person's empathetic response can vary based on the individual with whom they are interacting? Why might this be? Think about a time when you struggled to show empathy, or a person who challenged your capacity for empathy. Knowing what you know now, how could you ensure an empathetic response in future encounters?

- "...an empathetic person must make a consistent effort to attend to people encountered every day by day and moment by moment, whether they are 'important' with respect to future goals or not. Without this effort we tend to objectify others, seeing them as useful tools to aid our progress, or obstacles in our way. With this effort we can have meaningful, sometimes delightful encounters with other human beings when least expected." (Manassis, 2017, p. 81)

- Reflect on the quote above. Do you agree or disagree with its sentiments? Does it elicit any thoughts or emotions for you?

Knowledge Checks

- Explain the difference between low-level and high-level relationships. Using the explanation in Part 1, provide an example of why it may be difficult to practice empathy in a high-level relationship.

- In your own words, describe empathetic communication. Using that description, provide an example on how you can use empathetic communication in one of your own relationships.

Nurturing Empathy in Intimate Relationships

Nurturing Empathy in Intimate Relationships provides ideas on how we can cultivate empathy in our relationships with our loved ones. In this activity, students identify empathetic actions that prove to be more difficult and then practice these actions in a close relationship setting. We may sometimes take a person for granted in this type of relationship or focus on our own selves without paying attention to the feelings of the other. It is important to consider the worth of this type of relationship, and empathy can help show this person that he or she is valued.

Empathy for your Adversary

Empathy for your Adversary highlights the idea that we can exercise empathy with those who may elicit more negative responses in us. In this activity, students identify such a person, reflecting on how this person makes them feel, while also trying to reframe who this person is and how to react to them. While it may be difficult to behave empathetically to those who challenge us in emotional ways, we might strive to view them as human beings capable of mistakes, disappointment, and experiencer of life's ups and downs.

Attentive, Accurate, and Active Listening

Attentive, Accurate, and Active Listening is an exercise using listening skills that can help with empathy. In this activity, students engage with active listening techniques either through practice in real-life scenarios, or in an in-class activity with a partner. We may not often realize how poorly we listen to other people if we are wrapped up in the issues in our own lives. Through the practice of attentive, accurate, and active listening, we may understand the time and energy it takes to be truly present in another person's life, which can lead us to behaving more emphatically toward them.

MODULE 2.5
Empathy and Culture

Learning Objective

This module provides the learner with information on how to think about attributes of empathy within groups and in a larger cultural construct.

Supplement: *Chapters 3, 8, 11*

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTENT OF THIS MODULE

Empathy in Groups

We experience many different types of social influences that impact our capacity for empathy (see Manassis 2017 for more details). Our first exposure to empathy may come from our own parent-child relationship and other one-on-one interactions, but we do not solely function in dyads. As we grow and develop, our relationships expand and become more complex. We are part of families, of small and large working groups (e.g., sports teams, school classes, professional work groups), and of communities. We need to understand how to empathetically navigate these relationships as well. In these systems, well-functioning groups can easily lend themselves to exercising empathy among group members through universality, altruism, instillation of hope, better ways of relating to others, and cohesiveness (Yalom and Lescz, 2005 as cited in Manassis, 2017). A shared likeness, behaviors, and habits can make it easy to express empathy toward others, although group cohesion can also make it difficult to engage in empathy with outsiders. Therefore, it is important to practice empathy by surrounding ourselves with other people, ways of living, and cultures so that we can practice empathy with those who may be different from us in a variety of ways.

Defining In-Group, Out-Group

Throughout our lives, we often select into groups filled with people who resemble us—people who have similar tastes, interests, political stances, economic status, religious beliefs, and so forth. Social science research in sociology and psychology refer to these preferences as "in-group" and "out-group," and we may act differently or change their behavior toward people belonging to either group. Often, we exhibit more prosocial behaviors toward our in-group members than we do toward those we consider out-group members (Buttelmann & Böhm, 2014; Olson & Spelke, 2008; Weller & Lagattuta, 2014). Research has shown that empathetic fragility (weakness in empathetic thinking or behavior) or failures often occur toward people considered out-group members (i.e., those belonging to a different racial, political or social group). Even children randomly assigned to a team will show greater empathy to their team members (in-group) than the out-group members (Cikara, Bruneau, & Saxe, 2011).

Competitiveness, social distance, and group boundaries can also hinder empathetic responses (Cikara, et al. 2011). Other researchers have shown there is a neurobiological impact on empathetic behavior based upon in-group or out-group status (Hein, Silani, Preuschcoff, Matson, & Singer, 2010). They found that if participants believed that a person in need belonged to their own in-group, they showed neurological activation consistent with an increased likelihood of helping or demonstrating empathy. Neurological activation was triggered when the individual in need was an out-group member, so long as that out-group was viewed in a positive light by the participant. The implications of this study suggest that "increasing empathy in people by, for example, providing them with more information about outgroup members can override their callousness toward the suffering of an outgroup member and reduce in-group favoritism in helping behavior, with all its detrimental effects, in and across societies" (Hein, et al. 2010, p.156).

Perspective taking can be a particularly important skill in practicing empathy toward out-group members. When a perspective taker's emotions resemble the other person's, empathetic arousal occurs (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000). Perspective taking can manifest itself slightly in different ways: 1) imagining how another person feels (i.e., sharing those emotions) and 2) imagining how you would feel in that same situation. Both methods can elicit emotional empathetic responses, but the latter method has a more egoistic motivation, meaning the focus is on the self rather than feeling the emotional response of the other (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000). Egoistic perspective taking can help with stereotype suppression because the perspective taker forms a more personal connection to that person rather than simply perceiving them as someone differently situated in an out-group (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000). Indeed, "perspective taking is conceptualized as necessary for empathetic concern because understanding another's thoughts and emotions facilitates emotional sensitivity toward his/her plight" (Davis, Carlo, Streit, & Crockett, 2017 p.60).

Empathy and Cultural Differences

In terms of larger cultural influences on empathy, Manassis (2017) distinguishes between the effects of cultural differences (distinctions based on gender, age, socioeconomic status, religion, race, ethnicity) and of cultural norms (values and beliefs). Though cognitive empathy ensures that people can understand differences and even empathize with someone of a different race or ethnicity, cultural differences may impose difficulties on empathetic behavior. Researchers use the term ethnocultural empathy to describe empathy directed toward others who belong to a different racial or social group; this type of empathy can be measured by the Scale of Ethnocultural Empathy (see Rasoal, Jungert, Hau, & Andersson, 2011; Rasoal, Eklund & Hansen, 2011; Wang, et al., 2003). In one Australian study, Neumann, Boyle, and Chan (2013) found that Caucasians and Asians rated higher on empathy towards same-ethnicity individuals depicted in negative contexts such as being affected by illness, injury, natural disaster, or grief, but not when same-ethnicity individuals were depicted in positive contexts. Related to this finding is the research of Cuddy, Rock, and Norton (2007), which suggests that a lack of empathetic understanding and helping behavior toward victims of Hurricane Katrina was due to racial disparities.

People may struggle to find true empathy for someone who differs from them. Even people who want to practice empathy may find that their empathy does not come naturally when engaging with someone whose background differs from their own. Lack of knowledge about, lack of practical experience with, and lack of ability to see shared experiences among those of different cultures, can contribute to decreased empathy toward others (Rasoal, Eklund & Hansen, 2011). We can enhance our cultural empathy by reading about other cultures, visiting other countries, or even participating in local cultural festivals and events. Focusing on our similarities and shared experiences, rather than our differences, can have a significant impact on acting empathetically toward others (Rasoal, Eklund & Hansen, 2011).

Empathy and Cultural Norms

Cultural norms in nations, communities, or even organizations can be linked to empathy or a lack thereof. On a macro scale, a lack of empathy can potentially be explained by a large gap between rich and poor populations, emphasis on materialism and acquisition of goods, and authoritarian norms. On a smaller scale, in an organizational setting, this lack of empathy might result from an authoritarian leader, an organizational focus on competition, greed, or a disconnect between the organization and the people it ostensibly serves. Groups experience higher levels of empathy and the subsequent benefits of an empathetic group culture when their cultural norms emphasize interdependence among group members and even establish a significant shared purpose among group members.

In one study, Seddon, Hazenberg, and Denny (2015), attributed a failed institutional partnership to "violent innocence" ["leaders seek to dominate subordinates (or those colleagues with equal power status) through the creation of organizational structures to promote their authority", p.129], a lack of empathy, and shared intentionality among its leadership. The negative leadership behavior and failure to develop a culture of positivity contributed to a lack of trust and ultimately a disregard for empathetic behavior toward colleagues and other workers. To promote empathy, organizations need to develop empathetic opportunities, such as client giving (a free service or advice), employee assistance through educational opportunities and training, and family and other leave options, and specific relief to the community when impacted by natural disaster or other significant event (Natale & Sora, 2010). Researchers have outlined specific corporate models for establishing empathetic opportunities, including the creation of a corporate group that can monitor and measure the company's empathetic activities (Natale & Sora, 2010). Empathy in organizational leadership—and the establishment of it as a cultural norm—can be beneficial to the organization's employees, population served, and the organization itself in terms of overall viability and sustainable growth.

Peer Reviewed Resources

Bowdon, M., Pigg, S., & Mansfield, L. (2014). Feminine and feminist ethics and service-learning site selection: The role of empathy. *Feminist Teacher, 24*(1-2), 57-82. doi: 10.5406/femteacher.24.1-2.0057
- *Explores the complexities of empathy in student service-learning opportunities and sites.*

Briggs, S. (2015). *Are empathy and competition mutually exclusive?* Retrieved from https://www.opencolleges.edu.au/informed/features/are-empathy-and-competition-mutually-exclusive/
- *Cites various studies on empathy and how emotional and cognitive empathy relate to competition.*

Butler, J.O. (2014). Thinking like an opponent: The relation between empathy, competition, and enjoyment in gaming. *Media Psychology Review, 7*(1). Retrieved from http://mprcenter.org/ review/thinking-like-opponent-relation-empathy-competition-enjoyment-gaming/
- *Studies gaming in relation to competition, enjoyment, and empathy. No conclusive relationship between gaming and empathy was found, but the study may clarify the role of such hobbies on personal development and relationships.*

Buttelmann, D., & Böhm, R. (2014). The ontogeny of the motivation that underlies in-group bias. *Psychological Science*, *25*(4), 921–927. doi: 10.1177/0956797613516802
- *Describes a study finding that young children share more with their in-groups than out-groups when groups are arbitrarily created for the study.*

Cikara, M., Bruneau, E.G., & Saxe, R.R. (2011). Us and them: Intergroup failures of empathy. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 20*(3), 149-153. doi:10.1177/0963721411408713.
- *Explores empathy for out-group members with an analysis that empathy for out-group members may be difficult to achieve, and may even result in schadenfreude, with an ultimate reaction of diminished helping responses.*

Cuddy, A., Rock, M., & Norton, M. (2007). Aid in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina: Inferences of secondary emotions and intergroup helping. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations 10*(1), 107-118. doi:10.1177/1368430207071344
- *Describes a study of infrahumanization analyzing emotional states of in-group and out-group members in relation to Hurricane Katrina.*

Davis, A., Carlo, G., Streit, C., & Crockett, L. (2017). Considering economic stress and empathetic traits in predicting prosocial behaviors among U.S. Latino adolescents. *Social Development 27*, 58-72. doi:10.1111/sode.12249.
- *Studies economic stress in association with perspective taking and empathetic traits among U.S. Latino youth.*

Hein, G., Silani, G., Preuschcoff, S., Batson, D., Singe, T. (2010). Neural responses to ingroup and outgroup members' suffering predict individual differences in costly helping. *Neuron 68*, 149-160. doi:10.1016/j.neuron.2010.09.003.
- *Describes a controlled experiment whereby empathy-related insula activation in the brain can motivate helping behavior.*

Mencl, J., & May, D. (2009). The effects of proximity and empathy on ethical decision-making: An exploratory investigation. *Journal of Business Ethics, 85*(2), 201-226. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/stable/41315826
- *Studies the impact of cognitive and affective empathy on the ethical decision-making process in organizations.*

Natale, S., & Sora, S. (2010). Ethics in strategic thinking: Business processes and the global market collapse. *Journal of Business Ethics, 94*(3), 309-316. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/stable/40784696
- *Discusses empathetic decision-making and the incorporation of empathy in profit statements of organizations.*

Neumann, D.L., Boyle, G.J., & Chan, R. (2013). Empathy towards individuals of the same and different ethnicity when depicted in negative and positive contexts. *Personality and Individual Differences, 55*, 8-13.
- *Explores a study in which ethnicity-related biases in empathy were shown toward qvj gtu" depicted in a negative circumstance such as a natural disaster, illness, or injury, but not toward others in a positive context such as at a party or amusement park.*

Olson, K. R., & Spelke, E. S. (2008). Foundations of cooperation in young children. *Cognition, 108*(1), 222–231. doi:10.1016/j.cognition.2007.12.003
- *Discusses a study of prosocial behavior toward in-groups and out-groups, finding that children between the ages of 3 and 13 years prefer to share resources with family and friends over strangers.*

Rasoal, C., Eklund, J., & Hansen, E. (2011). Toward a conceptualization of ethnocultural empathy. *Journal of Social, Evolutionary, and Cultural Psychology, 5*(1), 1-13. Retrieved from www.jsecjournal.com.
- *Reviews the constructs of ethnocultural empathy and provides tools for practicing empathy with others whose culture differs from one's own.*

Rasoal, C., Jungert, T., Hau, S., & Andersson, G. (2011). Ethnocultural versus basic empathy: Same or different? *Psychology, 2*(9), 925-930. doi:10.4236/psych.2011.29139.
- *Compares measures of empathy with ethnocultural empathy.*

Seddon, F., Hazenberg, R., & Denny, S. (2015). The role of institutional partnerships, external funding and empathy in the development of negative leadership behaviour. *The Journal of Corporate Citizenship,* (59), 128-147. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/stable/jcorpciti.59.128
- *Discusses a single case study of organizational leadership considering factors such as empathy, trust, and communication.*

Wang, Y.-W., Bleier, J., Davidson, M., Savoy, H., Tan, J., & Yakushko, O. (2003). The scale of ethnocultural empathy. Development, validation, and reliability. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 2*, 221-234.
- *Discusses the creation and utilization of the Scale of Ethnocultural Empathy.*

Warren, C. (2015). Scale of teacher empathy for African American males (S-TEAAM): measuring teacher conceptions and the application of empathy in multicultural classroom settings. *The Journal of Negro Education*, *84*(2), 154-174. doi: 10.7709/jnegroeducation.84.2.0154
- *Discusses the role and relevance of teacher empathy in response to the intellectual and social needs of African American male students.*

Weller, D., & Lagattuta, K. H. (2014). Children's judgments about prosocial decisions and emotions: Gender of the helper and recipient matters. *Child Development*, *85*(5), 2011–2028.
- *Describes a study finding that children (aged 5–13 years) are more prosocial with peers of the same-gender group than other-gender group.*

Popular Media Resources

A Radical Experiment in Empathy:
**https://www.ted.com/talks/sam_richards_a_radical_experiment_in_empathy
utm_campaign=tedspread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare**
- *A sociological commentary on cultural empathy.*

Becoming Empathetic through Sociology:
http://sociologyinfocus.com/2014/07/becoming-empathetic-through-sociology/
- *Implementation of a sociological approach to teaching empathy.*

How Empathy can be Cultivated Between Cultures:
https://youtu.be/l5av1mFRyfU
- *Lauren White discusses specific ways we can build empathy among different cultures.*

How to Become a More Empathetic Leader:
https://www.northeastern.edu/graduate/blog/become-an-empathetic-leader/
- *The importance of empathy in business and how to be an empathetic leader.*

Richard Barrett: Changing Culture in the Workplace: Empathy and Compassion in Society 2013:
https://youtu.be/jb4gPoZ5lmk
- *A short video discussing the creation of an empathetic and compassionate workplace.*

Are Empathy and Competition Mutually Exclusive?:
Briggs _2015_ Empathy and Competition.pdf
- *A brief article discussing how empathy and competition function.*

Undercover Boss Sign Exec Learns Empathy:
https://kutv.com/news/local/utah-sign-exec-has-more-empathy-for-workers-after-undercover-boss-role
- *A manager of a company works as one of his employees to gain perspective on the other's job.*

Doing Things You're Bad At:
https://youtu.be/88kwziMvfEE
- *Discusses why doing things outside of your skill set can strengthen empathy.*

Empathy in a Hospital Setting:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cDDWvj_q-o8
- *How empathy can be applied in a medical setting.*

APPLYING THE CONTENT OF THIS MODULE

Discussion Questions

- All individuals hold different attitudes, beliefs, and feelings toward social issues. Describe how some of these attitudes, beliefs, and feelings may result in you demonstrating more, or less, empathy towards others. How, if at all, does your cultural upbringing impact your response?

- We tend to show more consistent empathy to people who are similar to us and less consistent empathy to people who are less similar to us. How do your assumptions of similarities/dissimilarities with others affect your capacity for empathy toward other individuals?

- Have you ever felt that someone assumed something about you based on your membership in a particular social category (e.g., age, race, gender, religion) or community? How did you know? How did you feel in that situation? Have you ever realized that you made an assumption about someone based on their social category or community? What strategies can you use to avoid such assumptions in the future?

Knowledge Checks

- Identify and explain the different social influences on empathy over the lifespan. Using that explanation in Part 1, describe and explain something that may complicate empathy development.

- Describe how perceptions of in-groups and out-groups can influence our capacity for empathy. Provide an example scenario of how empathy would/would not be shown for each type of group.

Activities

Understanding Perception Differences

Understanding Perception Differences emphasizes empathetic understanding of the viewpoints and perspectives of others. In this exercise, students visualize certain scenarios, answer a series of questions, and discuss their perceptions with others in a small group or larger class. It is important to understand that every individual has his/her own point of view and to understand that one's own perspective is not universal. This is significantly important in our relationships, particularly in working groups where we may have different opinions regarding ideas and strategies on how to get things done. It is also a significant activity to learn to be conscious of different perspectives when wanting to understand others who are different from us in terms of race, gender, age, sexuality, sexual preference, class status, religion, etc.

Solidarity List

Solidarity List emphasizes our commonalities despite the differences we may recognize among us. In this exercise, students pair up to brainstorm and write up a list of three things they have in common, such as number of siblings, favorite food, and so on. After making the list, students take turns telling a story about one of their commonalities. After they have done this, the partners split up and look for someone else who has at least one list item that is the same. The students tell a story and create a new list with that person. The game continues for several rounds as time allows. This game emphasizes an understanding of out-group membership and the knowledge that taking the time to know a person and see similarities may help us to act empathetically even if we are different in terms of race, gender, religion, socio-economic status, age, etc.

EMBRACING EMPATHY

Instructor's Guide