

CULTIVATING EMPATHY FOR HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS AND COLLABORATIVE CLASSROOMS

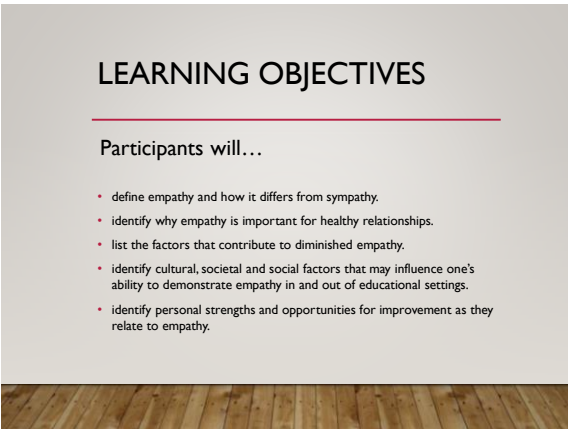
PRESENTED BY:
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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

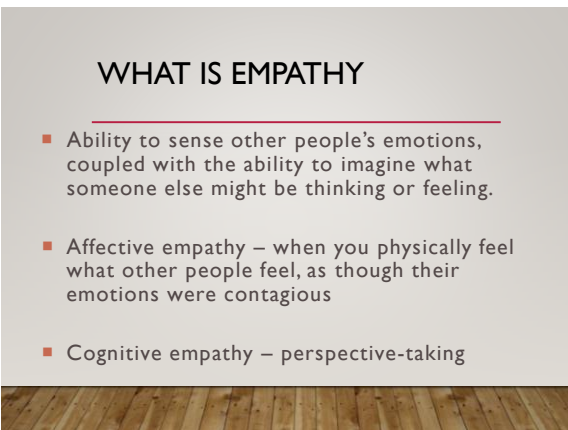
Participants will...

- define empathy and how it differs from sympathy.
- identify why empathy is important for healthy relationships.
- list the factors that contribute to diminished empathy.
- identify cultural, societal and social factors that may influence one's ability to demonstrate empathy in and out of educational settings.
- identify personal strengths and opportunities for improvement as they relate to empathy.



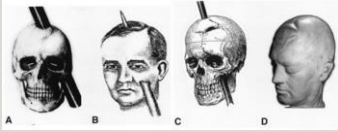
WHAT IS EMPATHY

- Ability to sense other people's emotions, coupled with the ability to imagine what someone else might be thinking or feeling.
- Affective empathy – when you physically feel what other people feel, as though their emotions were contagious
- Cognitive empathy – perspective-taking



EMPATHY AND THE BRAIN

- Empathy centers of the brain include the left ventral medial pre-frontal cortex
- Reasoning, language, social cognition
 - Phineas Gage



Cherry, K. Phineas Gage: An astonishing case of brain injury

EMPATHY QUOTIENT

- People fall somewhere on an empathy spectrum or bell curve
- Empathy is a cognitive psychological process that is partially biological
- Changes to empathy can occur due to genetic, environmental, and cultural factors

Dr. Simon Baron-Cohen, "Zero Degrees of Empathy"
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ag_4CTG2WE

EVOLUTION OF EMPATHY

- Jules Masserman studied the behavior of rhesus monkeys and discovered empathetic behavior
- Mirror neurons



(Masserman, Weiskin, & Turk, 1961)

WHAT IS EMPATHY



WHY DOES EMPATHY MATTER?

- Essential to human connection
- Being understood is a basic human need
- Foundation for pro-social behavior, teamwork and strong leadership
- Leads to trust and respect
- Allows us to be effective change-makers

DEFINING ATTRIBUTES OF EMPATHY

- See the world as others see it
 - Stay connected to youth culture
 - Practice perspective-taking
- Withhold judgment
- Understand another person's feelings
 - Become knowledgeable about the culture of poverty and trauma-informed care
- Communicate your understanding of that person's feelings
 - Active listening with appropriate responses

(Wilmot, 1996)

PERSPECTIVE-TAKING

- Ability to put oneself in the place of others and recognize that other individuals may have different points of view
- Developed in the first few years of life
- Cognitive ability combined with motivation to put it into practice
- Most of us have this ability (to varying degrees) but fail to use it

(Epstein & Conroy, 2008)

BARRIERS TO PERSPECTIVE-TAKING

- Perspective-taking is hard work
- Requires motivation and/or repeated practice
- People use themselves as the default
- People tend to rely on stored knowledge about the target under consideration
- Fundamental attribution error

(Epstein & Conroy, 2008)



PERSPECTIVE-TAKING

SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY

FACTORS THAT MAY CAUSE DIMINISHED EMPATHY

- Autistic spectrum
- Attachment disorders or concerns
- Oppositional-defiant, Conduct Disorder, Post-traumatic Stress Disorder
- Genetic predisposition

Cherry, K. What is attachment theory? The importance of early emotional bonds.

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

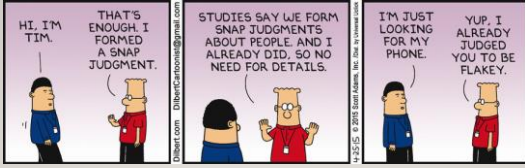
- Early experience
- Neglect / Abuse
- Other trauma

Dr. Simon Baron-Cohen, "Zero Degrees of Empathy"
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Aq_nCTGSIWE

CULTURAL FACTORS

- Empathy towards others similar to oneself; Diminished empathy for those in the "out-group" (in-group vs. out-group)
- Propaganda
- Societal influence
 - Culture can shift our placement on empathy scale
- Social norms

(Van Der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2000)



WITHHOLDING JUDGMENT

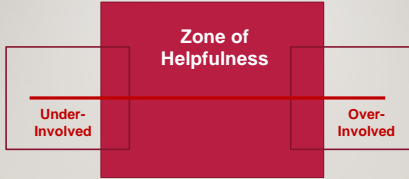


SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY

UNDERSTANDING EMOTION

- When you physically feel what other people feel, as though their emotions were contagious
- Feeling with (not for) the other person
- Important for balance in helping professions
 - Too much can cause compassion fatigue
 - Too little can create a sense of detachment or indifference

CONTINUUM OF PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR



Professional boundaries: A nurse's guide to the importance of appropriate professional boundaries



BOUNDARIES

SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY

HONORING BOUNDARIES

- Empathy vs emotional attachment
- Clearly establish limits to your role
- Allow others to do for themselves – avoid the rescuer role
- Be friendly but not friends
- Don't put yourself in any situation that creates even the impression of impropriety
- Limit personal information you share
- Trust in team members and their abilities

SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS

- Risk is inherent in the work we do
- Repeated exposure to distress can lead to:
 - Physical/emotional exhaustion
 - Decreased sense of accomplishment
 - Increased cynicism
 - Inability to feel empathy
 - Loss of enjoyment for work

(Cole, Craigien, & Cowan, 2014)
(Whitfield & Kanter, 2014)

RISK FACTORS

- Female
- Young
- High caseloads
- Low levels of professional support
- Lack of training
- Coping style
- Rural work setting (social isolation)
- Personal trauma history
- Pre-existing anxiety/mood disorders

(Newell & MacNeil, 2010)
(Spring, 2011)

SELF-CARE

- Recognize signs of stress or depletion
- Select a point when you will stop thinking about work
- Fill free time with fulfilling activities; find ways to refill your emotional tank and honor downtime
- Take care of yourself physically
- Infuse playfulness into your life
- Avoid disturbing media
- Establish a support network
- Maintain a folder of success stories and thank you notes
- Spirituality
- Therapy

Whitfield & Kanter, 2014) (Cole, Craigien, & Cowan, 2014)
(Spring, 2011)

MINDFUL MOMENT

- Describe a case or situation that took a strong emotional toll on you?
- What did you do to try and care for yourself? What would you do differently now?
- What advice would you give to a colleague new to the field regarding depletion and self-care?

ACTIVE LISTENING



ACTIVE LISTENING



BECOMING A BETTER LISTENER

- Remove all distractions
- Be present
- Do not mentally prepare your response while the other person is still speaking
- S.O.L.E.R.
 - Sit squarely
 - Open posture
 - Lean in slightly
 - Eye contact
 - Relax

BECOMING A BETTER LISTENER / COMMUNICATING EMPATHY

- Use minimal encouragers
- Reflect
 - Paraphrase
 - Mirror
- Ask for clarification
- Label emotions
- Ask open-ended questions
- Defer judgment

COMMON PITFALLS

- Don't attempt to solve the problem
- Don't minimize
 - At least....
 - I'm sure everything will turn out just fine
- Don't turn the story around to be about you or someone else you know
 - You think that's bad. Listen to this....
 - The same thing happened to my friend...
- Don't tell someone how they should feel or why they should not feel a certain way
- Don't rush to fill the silence

(Carstophen & Houck, 2010)

WRAP-UP DISCUSSION

- What are some insights you gained from this training?
- What are some action steps you will take as a result of this training?

CONTACT INFORMATION

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