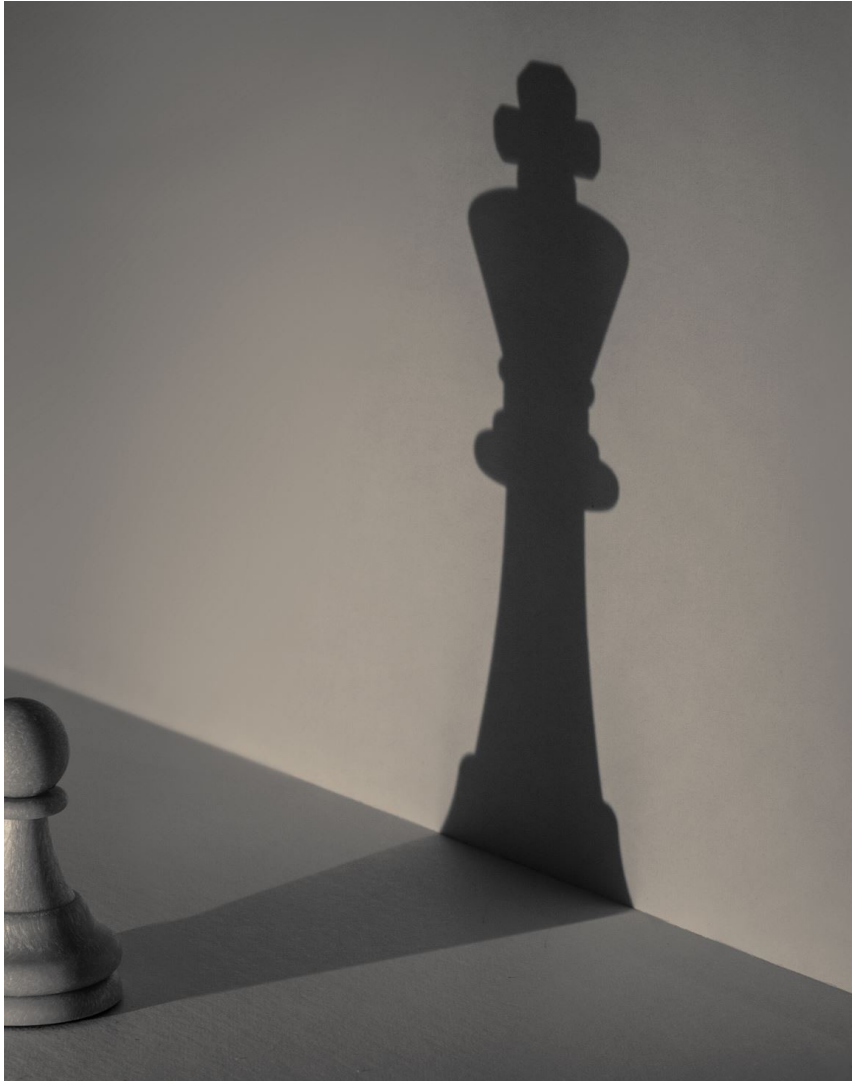


Part 2: Empathetic Communication



A Few Thoughts on Empathy...

- Common Sense, Human Nature or....Something Else?
- Your jobs are super hard and come with many frustrations.
- You do not have to agree with someone to be empathetic.
- May Come More or Less Naturally...
- Techniques, Skills and Activities to Sharpen Anyone's Empathy!



“Remember that everyone you meet is afraid of something, loves something, and has lost something.”

–H. Jackson Brown, Jr.”

Empathy Defined

- Empathy is **the ability to emotionally understand what other people feel, see things from their point of view, and imagine yourself in their place.** Essentially, it is putting yourself in someone else's position and feeling what they are feeling.

Empathy vs Sympathy

- Sympathy is a feeling of sincere concern for someone who is experiencing something difficult or painful. **Empathy involves actively sharing in the person's emotional experience.**



Sympathy vs Empathy

Sympathetic vs Empathetic Responses

Sympathetic	Empathetic
"I'm sorry you're not feeling well."	"Having the flu is really the worst"
"I'm sorry that you're frustrated. Hope you figure it out"	"That is so frustrating!"
"I'm really sorry you're dealing with these health problems."	"That's really scary and must be exhausting. How are you holding up?"
"I know about your financial troubles. At least you still have your health."	"Financial stress is overwhelming and scary. I don't know how people are managing."
"I'm glad that you're excited about your new project"	"That is so exciting, I can't wait to see the results!"

“Empathetic responses rarely begin with ‘at least...’”
-Brene Brown

The Empathy Deficit

- **Social Media:** While social media connects people, it can also create superficial interactions. The lack of face-to-face communication and the prevalence of brief, impersonal exchanges may diminish empathetic connections.
- **Individualism:** In cultures that prioritize individual achievement and success, there may be less emphasis on understanding and supporting others.
- **Economic Pressures:** Economic stress and competition can lead to a focus on self-preservation rather than on helping others.
- **Desensitization:** Frequent exposure to violence in media can desensitize people, making them less responsive to others' suffering.
- **Lack of Emotional Education:** Traditional education systems often focus more on academic skills than on emotional and social skills, leaving gaps in empathy development.



Empathy and Emotions in the Zeitgeist

The Power of Empathy and “Outrospection”

- Calm (and sometimes even eliminate) the concerns, fears or uncertainties of others.
- Add a boost to others’ excitement and happiness.
- Provide support and encouragement to others, even when you can’t solve the problem.
- Help others feel safe and comfortable confiding in you.
- Avoid or more easily/quickly resolve arguments.
- Give advice that people will listen to!
- Build TRUST and SAFETY!

The Six Habits of Highly Empathic People

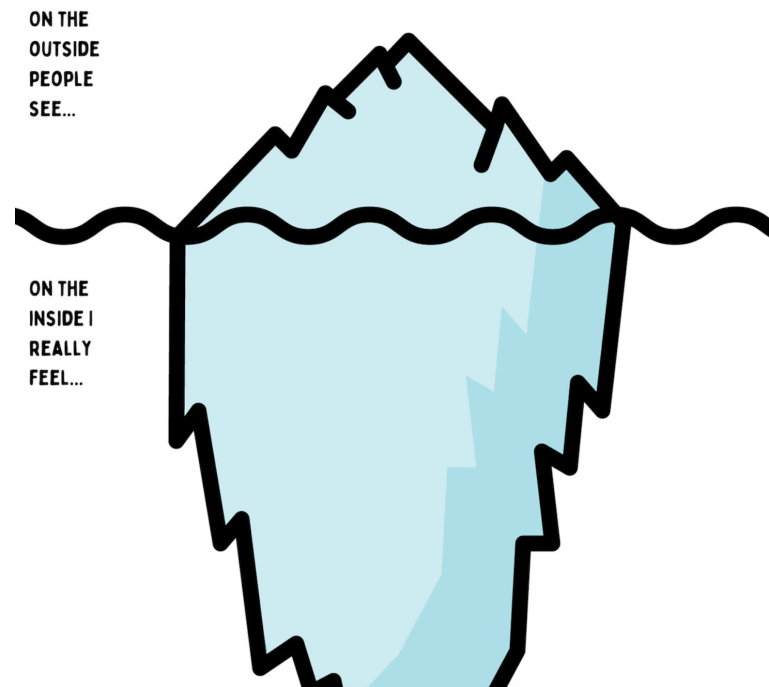
- 1) Develop curiosity about strangers. ...
- 2) Move beyond limiting assumptions. ...
- 3) Play 'extreme sports' i.e. take time to experience the lives of others. ...
- 4) Cultivate the art of conversation. ...
- 5) Inspire Mass Action and Social Change. ...
- 6) Be Ambitiously Imaginative.

-Roman Krznaric

What's Presenting vs The Emotional Iceberg

- Past/Trauma
- Relationships
- Anxiety/Future Needs
- Situational Concerns
- Pressure/Expectations

FEELINGS ICEBERG EXPLORING EMOTIONS BELOW THE SURFACE



The Emotional Iceberg

What's said in conflict is often just the *tip* — what's underneath is emotion, history, fear, unmet needs.

- **Above the surface:** “You never listen to me.”
- **Below the surface:** “I feel invisible, like my perspective doesn't matter.”

Empathic move: Respond to the *below the surface* emotion before addressing the content of the argument.

The ‘Pause for Empathy’

When conflict escalates, people move into fight/flight. Taking an intentional **pause** to ask an empathy-based question can shift the entire conversation.

Try:

- “What’s feeling most difficult for you right now?”
- “Help me understand what matters most to you in this situation.”
- “What’s something you wish I understood better?”
- This slows reactivity and reopens connection.





Empathy in Action: Validation

- “More often than not, people who vent or complain already know how to handle their current situation—they’re just looking for someone to see and appreciate their struggle.”
- Instead of trying to solving for problem right away, understand and validate emotions beneath communication first.

Empathy in Action: Validation

Effective Validation has 2 components;

1. It identifies a **specific emotion**
2. It offers **justification for feeling that emotion**

“It’s so frustrating they cited us for that, you worked so hard preparing for that compliance review.”

Comfort Vs. Connection

- “I know you’ll do just great.”
- “It could be a lot worse!”
- “Don’t worry, it will all work out”
- “You’re not so...(insert whatever the person thinks they are!)”
- “That can’t be true”
- “Better luck next time”

The Validation Method

1. Listen Empathically
2. Validate the Emotion
3. Offer advice, solutions or encouragement (if appropriate)
4. Validate the Emotion Again

Listen Empathically

- Give your **Full Attention**
- Invite to **Open Up**
- Be intentionally **Observant**
- Match the **Energy**
- **Micro-Validations**
- Don't try to fix it (at least not right away)

The I-Phone Effect

“Using Hierarchical Linear Modeling, it was found that conversations in the absence of mobile communication technologies were rated as significantly superior compared with those in the presence of a mobile device, above and beyond the effects of age, gender, ethnicity, and mood. People who had conversations in the absence of mobile devices reported higher levels of empathetic concern. Participants conversing in the presence of a mobile device who also had a close relationship with each other reported lower levels of empathy compared with dyads who were less friendly with each other.”

Validate the Emotion

- Even if you disagree
- Ask/clarify if you're not sure
- Relate with similar experience and emotion, but don't hijack the discussion.
- Let them know if you can't relate
- Tell the truth

Offer advice, solutions or encouragement (if appropriate)

- Avoid unsolicited feedback.
- If you do give feedback, lead with validation.
- Avoid 'buts' following validation.
- Use 'I' statements if appropriate.
- Avoid absolutes.

Validate Again...

- Revalidate the Emotion
- Validate the Vulnerability

TALK

- Topics
- Asking
- Levity
- Kindness

Does someone want to be...



HELPED



HUGGED



OR HEARD

Hugged...

They want to feel emotionally safe, supported and validated.

- “I don’t need a fix, I just need someone to tell me I’m not crazy for feeling this way.”
- “I’m so disappointed right now. I just need a moment.”
- “I thought this would go differently, and it hurts more than I expected.”
- “I feel like such a failure right now.”
- “Can I just vent for a second? I don’t need advice, I just need to get this out.”

Helped...

They're problem-solving and want your brain more than your heart.

- “I’ve got this meeting coming up and I’m not sure how to handle it. What would you do?”
- “Can you help me figure out the best way to word this email?”
- “I keep missing deadlines, and I need to get organized. Got any tips?”
- “Do you know someone who’s been through something like this that I could talk to?”
- “What’s the next step I should take if I want to fix this?”

Heard...

They want to explain information, experience, or perspective.

- “There’s something I need to tell you.”
- “I need you to understand why this is so important.”
- “The craziest thing happened to me yesterday.”
- ”I know you heard from them, but there may be another angle”

The FORGE Method for Conversation

F – Family

“Do you have family nearby?”

“Are you from a big family?”

“Do you get to see your family often?”

O – Occupation

“What kind of work do you do?”

“How did you get started in that line of work?”

“What’s something you really enjoy about your job?”

R – Recreation

“What do you like to do for fun?”

“Have you watched or read anything good

lately?”

“Do you have any hobbies or weekend rituals?”

G – Geography

“Where did you grow up?”

“Have you always lived around here?”

“If you could live anywhere, where would it be?”

E – Events

“Did you do anything fun over the weekend?”

“Have you been to any good local events lately?”

“What are you looking forward to this week?”

Challenges to Empathy

- **Emotional Drain:** Consistently empathizing with others can be emotionally exhausting, leading to burnout or compassion fatigue.
- **Personal Biases:** Prejudices and preconceived notions can hinder genuine empathy. It can be challenging to see things from another's perspective if their situation conflicts with one's own beliefs or values.
- **Emotional Boundaries:** Balancing empathy with personal emotional boundaries is crucial. Over-identifying with someone's pain can lead to neglecting one's own well-being.
- **Fear of Vulnerability:** Empathy requires a degree of vulnerability and openness. Fear of being emotionally exposed can prevent people from fully engaging empathetically.

Challenges to Empathy

- **Time Constraints:** Genuine empathy requires time and patience to understand someone's situation fully. In fast-paced environments, this can be a significant challenge.
- **Secondary Trauma:** Exposure to others' traumatic experiences can lead to secondary trauma or vicarious traumatization, affecting the empathetic person's mental health.
- **Professional Boundaries:** In certain professions, maintaining a balance between empathy and professional detachment is essential yet challenging. Over-empathizing can affect objectivity and decision-making.

Quote From My Childhood Hero

“I believe empathy is the
most essential quality of
civilization.” – Roger Ebert



Empathy in Words...

- “Empathy is seeing with the eyes of another, listening with the ears of another and feeling with the heart of another.” – Alfred Adler
- “You can only understand people if you feel them in yourself.” – John Steinbeck
- “If you judge people, you have no time to love them.” – Mother Teresa
- “The opposite of anger is not calmness. It’s empathy.” – Mehmet Oz

Empathy in Words...

- “I believe empathy is the most essential quality of civilization.” – Roger Ebert
- “Never look down on anybody unless you’re helping him up.” – Jesse Jackson
- “You cannot do a kindness too soon, for you never know when it will be too late.” – Ralph Waldo Emerson
- “Resolve to be tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving and tolerant with the weak and wrong. Sometime in your life, you will have been all of these.” – Gautama Buddha

Forbes Again...

“At its core, empathetic leadership is about being an others-focused leader. It’s about leaders being in tune with the needs of their people and responding in tangible ways that demonstrate their care and concern. And how do people respond when their leaders act this way? They pledge their loyalty, trust, and commitment to that leader, which results in greater productivity, innovation, and creativity. **Who wouldn’t want that?**”