

Empathy

Empathy is the ability to be aware of and appreciate the feelings and thoughts of those around you. Empathy is being sensitive and understanding of what, how, and why others feel and think the way they do. It is the ability to non-critically put into your own words the other person's perspective on the world, even if you do not agree.

1. **Understand empathy.** Sometimes empathy is misunderstood for being nice or sympathetic. Empathy involves understanding, validating and appreciating someone's thoughts, feelings or experiences. Seeing the world from another person's perspective, regardless of how his or her view may differ from your own.
2. **Think before you respond.** Before you respond to someone in anger or frustration ask what was behind this person's response or action. You may be surprised to find that the person wasn't purposely causing conflict.
3. **Ask questions.** Questions can help you dig for the truth of the matter. They can uncover someone's emotional response to an event or experience. Ask questions that cannot be answered with a yes or no; these open questions are personal and open ended.
4. **Pay attention.** There are two types of information you want to be listening for when asking questions: (1) the words another person uses to describe thoughts and feelings and (2) words used to describe desires and expectations.
5. **Avoid projecting.** It is very easy to project your own autobiography when hearing someone's story, assuming your own thoughts/feelings, motives and interpretations. Empathy is about listening for the meaning and interpretation someone else has for the situation or event.
6. **Visit a success coach.** If you would like more information on this topic visit a success coach. To book an appointment, visit the student success office (2nd floor of south campus hall) or call 519-888-4567 ext. 84410.



Adapted from - Stein, S. J. & Book, H.E. (2006). *The EQ Edge: Emotional Intelligence and Your Success*.
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