Beyond Smile Training: Harnessing the Magic of Empathy

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- Casebolt Consulting (Keith and Patty Casebolt)
- Care Credit OSC member (Patty Casebolt)

Smile training - the positive side
- When genuine = engaging, welcoming
- Teaches awareness of emotional engagement
- Inspires positive attitude
- Increases employee customer service
Smile training - the cautionary side

- Can appear plastic/fake (i.e., pretending)
- Muscle memory - smile doesn't match situation
- Fake smile "stuffs" emotion

Empathy vs. Sympathy...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Empathy</th>
<th>Sympathy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feeling the same emotions as the other person.</td>
<td>Feeling sorrow or concern for the other person.</td>
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</table>

Empathy is walking a mile in someone else's moccasins. Sympathy is being sorry their feet hurt.

Empathy vs. Sympathy example...

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<td>&quot;I know it's not easy to lose weight because I have faced the same problem myself.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Trying to lose weight can often feel like an uphill battle.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Empathy vs Sympathy continued...

- A person expresses sympathy, but shares empathy.
- Empathy can forge a deeper and more meaningful connection, thus serving as a bridge for greater communication between individuals.
- Empathy can be employed as a communication skill. Empathy can allow great communicators to access the emotions of another and to the mutual understanding and inspiration communicated to that person.

Caution: empathy as a tool...
Empathy Skill Building

How do you strengthen your empathy skills?

Empathy Skill Building - Six Essential Aspects

1. Emotion Contagion - Before empathy can take place, you need to sense that an emotion is occurring in another or that an emotion is expected from you... the process of empathy depends on our capacity to feel and share emotions. Empathy is first and foremost an emotional skill.*

* From "The Art of Empathy: A complete guide to life's most essential skill" by Karla McLaren

Empathy Skill Building - Six Essential Aspects

2. Empathic Accuracy - This is your ability to accurately identify and understand emotional states, thoughts and intentions in yourself and others.*

* From "The Art of Empathy: A complete guide to life's most essential skill" by Karla McLaren
Emotional Intelligence Quiz...

http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/ei_quiz/

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Empathy skill building - Six Essential Aspects

#3 Emotion Regulation
To be an effective empath, you have to develop the ability to understand, regulate, and work with your own emotions; you have to be self-aware. When you can clearly identify and regulate your own emotions, you’ll tend to be able to function skillfully in the presence of strong emotions (your own and others), rather than being overtaken or knocked out of commission by them.²

From “The Art of Empathy – a complete guide to life’s essential skill” by Karla McLaren

Self Awareness Skill Building…
Empathy Skill Building - Six Essential Aspects

#4 Perspective Taking
This skill helps you imaginatively put yourself in the place of others, see situations through their eyes, and accurately sense what they might be feeling and thinking so that you can understand what they might want or need.\(^*\)

* From “The Art of Empathy: A complete guide to life's most essential skill” by Karla McLaren

#5 Concern for Others
Empathy helps you connect with others, but the quality of your response depends on your ability to care about others as well. When you feel emotions with others, accurately identify those emotions, regulate them in yourself, and take the perspective of others, your sensitive concern will help you engage with them in a way that displays your care and compassion.\(^*\)

* From “The Art of Empathy: A complete guide to life's most essential skill” by Karla McLaren

#6 Perceptive Engagement
Considered the pinnacle of empathic skill: This skill allows you to make perceptive decisions based on your empathy and to respond- or to act (if necessary), in a way that works for others. Notably, in perceptive engagement, you’ll often do something for another that would not work for you at all and that might not even be in your best interest. Perceptive engagement is about meeting the needs of the other.\(^*\)

* From “The Art of Empathy: A complete guide to life's most essential skill” by Karla McLaren
Empathy Skill Building - Six Essential Aspects

- These six aspects of empathy build upon one another. Although Emotion Contagion tends to occur instinctively, the rest are more intentional.

  * From “The Art of Empathy – a complete guide to life’s most essential skill” by Karla McLaren

What is Your Intention?

Compassion (“suffering with”) is more engaged than simple empathy, and is associated with an active desire to alleviate the suffering of another.

Infographic Source - Robert Shelton

* Dr. Neel Burton, MD  https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/hide-and-seek/201505/empathy-vs-sympathy

Emotional Intelligence and Non Verbal Communication
Empathy vs Sympathy continued…

Empathize with the patient
Empathy helps you truly begin to see the problem from the patient’s perspective. And this perspective will keep you from losing your cool when your patient gets hot.

Empathy Verbiage...

Example - long wait
“I’m sorry you are upset. Nothing is more irritating than to have a long wait time and I would be upset as well. Let me see what I can do to help.”

Words That Work: Statements That Facilitate Empathy

Queries
- “Would you (or could you) tell me a little more about that?”
- “What has this been like for you?”
- “Is there anything else?”
- “Are you OK with that?”
- “Hmmm?”
Words That Work: Statements That Facilitate Empathy
continued…

**Clarifications**

- “Let me see if I have this right.”
- “I want to make sure I really understand what you’re telling me. I am hearing that…”
- “I don’t want us to go further until I’m sure I’ve gotten it right.”
- “When I’m done, if I’ve gone astray, I’d appreciate it if you would correct me. OK?”

**Responses**

- “That sounds very difficult.”
- “Sounds like…”
- “That’s great! I bet you’re feeling pretty good about that.”
- “I can imagine that might feel…”
- “Anyone in your situation would feel that way…”
- “I can see that you are…”

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http://www.unf.edu/uploadedFiles/aa/brooks/global_health/Words%20that%20help%20build%20empathy.pdf

Barriers to Empathy…

- Feeling rushed: “there’s not enough time - clinic is behind”
- Giving empathy can feel emotionally exhausting
- Fear of opening “Pandora’s box” (i.e. don’t go there)
- Concern for competency (i.e., “I don’t have the training.”)
- Defensiveness: taking the situation or feedback personally
Lack of Empathy Looks Like...

Cool - "by the book" or "just get the job done"

Lack of Empathy Looks Like...

Disgruntled staff, "snarky"

"The doctor will see you now — I can't promise that he'll talk to you, but he'll see you."

Lack of Empathy Looks Like...

"Too happy, doesn't match situation"
Steps to Increased Empathy

- Self Awareness - "check in" for one's own emotion/state
- Breathe, grounded, slow down
- Recognize the presence of a strong feeling/emotion in the other person
- Visualization - imagine how the other is feeling
- Communication - state your perception of the other's feelings and identify with that feeling or legitimize that feeling
- Make eye contact, lean in, practice active listening
- Offer support and partnership to address the issue(s)
- Redate the issue and check for understanding
- Make and keep agreements for follow through

If Empathy is Hard - Why Bother?

- Understanding emotion uncovers the root cause for concern
- Empathy for others leads to:
  - A purpose and connection
  - Support between physician/patient relationship (i.e. staff liaison)
  - Instills patient loyalty
  - Protective against claims
  - Customer service - creates "raving fans"
Sustainable Empathy...

- Build your self esteem - if your self concept is up for grabs, you can become defensive very easily.
- Practice mindfulness/meditation/breathing exercises.
- Create a back up team - share the load, take a break.
- Ask for feedback - what worked, what didn’t work? Make adjustments.
- Celebrate the successes, connections, learning.

Questions?

Resources

- Empathy Quiz - Greater Good Science Center University of California, Berkeley - http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/quizzes/quiz.php
- Emotional Intelligence Quiz - Greater Good Science Center University of California, Berkeley - http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/quizzes/quiz.php
- Book - The Art of Empathy - a complete guide to life’s most essential skill by Karla McLaren
- Book - Emotional Intelligence - a practical guide by Dr. David Walton
- Book - Non-violent Communication - A language of compassion by Marshall B. Rosenberg PhD
Thank you!

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