

EMPATHY: A POWERFUL TOOL TO NURTURE LEARNING

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Abstract

In this paper, the relation between emotion, language, and communication is highlighted by examining the role of empathy in communication effectiveness and workplace performance. The language of Empathy is essential to develop solutions, win and retain business, and avoid or diffuse conflict among the employees. Employees need to be effective communicators to be successful in business - and in life. The professional relationship does not depend upon persuasion and motivation rather through the language of empathy. In the workplace to stay competitive, employees need to acquire empathy skills, so that they can relate effectively to diverse groups of work culture, and achieve the desired results demanded by today's global market. The empathetic skill helps employees to understand better other peoples' perspectives and opinions, making the work environment more enjoyable, productive, and lead to greater effectiveness. It is always believed that an effective employee increases employee optimism, motivation, and commitment, as well as organizational vision. In this study, a comprehensive literature search was performed using specific keywords. The main focus of the study was to discuss the role of empathy in communication effectiveness and workplace performance. The literature mostly published in the past ten years was included, with exception of a few landmark literatures in the field. **Key words:** Emotion, Empathy, Language, Workplace and Communication

Introduction

As the world is changing, we should be driven by the change. According to Drayton, one cannot afford to have anyone on his/her team who isn't a change-maker, and one of the qualities one needs as a change-maker is empathy. A skill of understanding others' feelings, predicaments, and challenges in a better way is called Empathy (Marques, 2010). This is also a skill of sensing other people's emotions, allows for understanding beyond someone's apparent surface behaviour by putting oneself in another's shoes and taking the importance of other's views and opinion. (Goleman, 2000; Mencil & May 2009).

Daniel Pink, in his book *A Whole New Mind* (2006), defines empathy as "the ability to imagine yourself in someone else's position and to intuit what that person is feeling" (Pink, 2006, p. 159). Empathy involves connecting, building relationships, listening, and caring for others. It always allows leaders to understand better other peoples' perspectives and opinions, making the work environment more enjoyable and productive (Voss, 2010). The role of empathy to achieve leadership effectiveness is very indispensable since it enhances a sense of leadership by providing leaders with the awareness to listen, serve their followers, and have a greater understanding of interrelationships within the group (Marques, 2010). Empathy is regarded as one of the most desirable of personality traits due to its positive association with pro-social behaviors and its crucial role in the development and maintenance of interpersonal relationships.

Empathy: A Powerful Communication Skill

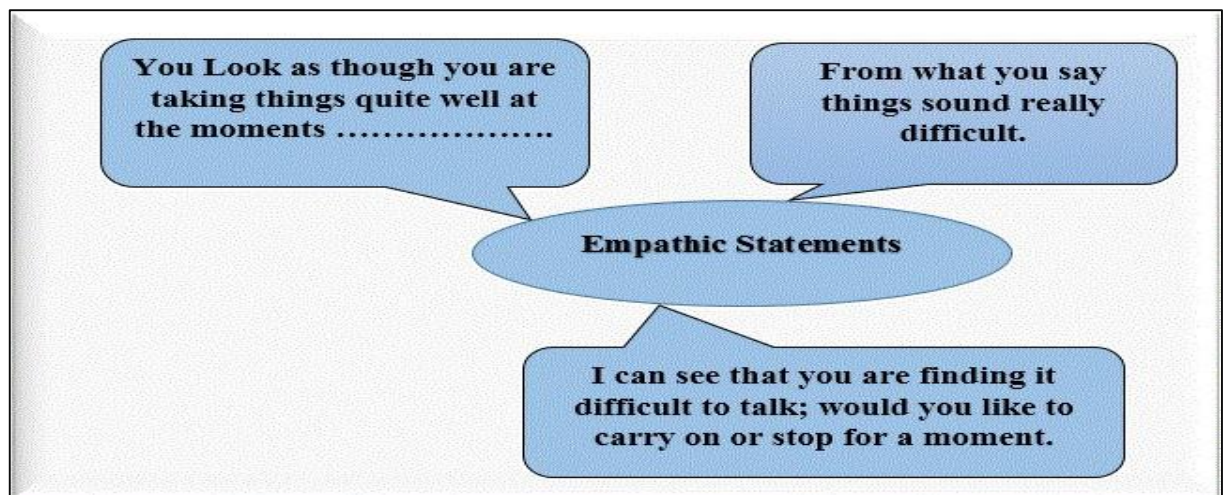
Empathetic communication is a teachable and learnable skill that has tangible benefits for the employees. Effective empathetic communication enhances the therapeutic effectiveness of employees. Appropriate use of empathy as a communication tool facilitates the effective communication exchange among the employees, increases their efficiency of gathering information, and honors the employees. The uses of empathy in communication solve pending problems. It allows employees to establish and maintain critical workplace relationships, engage employees, effectively and efficiently work through high stress/emotional deadlines and circumstances. In the workplace, empathy can show deep respect for co-workers and show that one cares, as

opposed to just going by rules and regulations. The effect of empathy in communication makes sense to others and it helps to understand others when one communicates with others in any difficult situation. It is a great way social interaction and powerful stuff and it acts as one of the foundational building blocks that create a positive work environment.

Responding To Emotions With Words

Use of Empathetic Statements:

Use empathetic statements when trying to convey empathy. It is one way of showing the person you are talking to that you are trying to be empathetic. The following figure expresses some of the examples of empathetic statements.



Source: Gagan, J.M. (1983) Methodological notes on empathy. ANS Adv Nurs Sci, 5 (2) p65–72. THE N-U-R-S-E APPROACH

Employees' emotional statement: These deadlines are killing me.		
N	Name of the emotion or feelings	"It sounds like this has been frustrating."
U	Understand the emotion or feeling	It must be a herculean task.
R	Respect the employees	I must appreciate your commitment and hard work.
S	Support the employees	Please tell me if you need any help.
E	Explore the emotion	Tell me more about how these deadlines are affecting you.

Empathy: A Leadership Perspective

In this 21st-century leadership skill very much is demanding. In order to make the leadership skill to be more effective empathetic skill can act as a powerful tool in developing leadership skills that are instrumental in the development of better trustworthy work culture and motivated successful employees (Undung & Guzman, 2009). The presence of an empathetic leader in the organization is a very essential asset because they are able to effectively build and maintain relationships anywhere in the world. The leader who uses the attributions of empathy fosters better communication, tighter cohesion, stronger discipline, and greater morale throughout his or her organization. All leaders are not empathetic by born and they must acquire this skill and that will help them in fulfilling the mission, vision, and objective of the organization. By the application of empathetic techniques leaders will discover improved relations in both their professional and personal lives. Hence it recommended different researchers that organizations should provide training on empathy and educate their leaders on how to acquire and effectively use empathy as an important business skill. Because this gives leaders the ability to read and be aware

of people's emotions and through this skill, every leader can better perform critical leadership activities (Skinner & Spurgeon, 2005).

The use of positive emotions by the leader earns trust from their employees and creates bonding through their ability to understand others (Gardner and Stough 2002). Always there is a positive result on the use of empathic communication by the leader because empathy also allows leaders to be more aware of changing environments and be willing to adapt and do things differently (Tagore 2004). Through the use of these leaders become adaptive and that provides an advantage in cross-cultural situations and prevents them from offending employees (Stull, 1986). This enables leaders to have a better understanding of new social surroundings and helps them quickly learn and adapt to new environments also help leaders have a positive attitude towards adapting to new environments and trends which create a collaborative atmosphere (Mahsud, Yukl, and Prussia 2010).

Empathy: An Educational Perspective

All educational institutions always expect a secure, positive, and trustworthy work environment. The objective of the education will be fulfilled when all the individuals of the institution respect each other and care for each other. This is only possible when all individuals apply empathetic skills during their different work activities. The role of empathy in the educational institution is always Empathy has long been an intrinsic part of the education system, "if schools are involved in intellectual development, they also should work hard for emotional development" (Hinton, 2008, p. 90). Learning is always being affected by the learner's or students' emotions that are handled. As educators, it is their responsibility to connect and understand their learners in order to best serve those students' needs and they should focus on nurturing learning rather than judging performance" (Hinton, 2008, p. 91). The non-judgemental approach is always fruitful and successful in the learning environment. It makes a conscious effort not to be critical of the actions or thought of others and accordingly gives one's own opinion on other's actions and reactions. One remains more open-minded and becomes more open to new ideas and theories by attempting to reserve judgment.

Empathy a skill that can be taught and nurtured through a supportive educational environment and through the use of this one can care for another is not an innate ability to present more naturally in some people than others (McLennan, 2008). So teachers must have empathy not only to teach best but also to develop this skill among the learners. Always in the class teachers advises and guide students to improve their verbal and nonverbal communication skills in order to interact with their own peers because they know that their students learn best when they have a positive work environment those around them. Developing a positive work environment requires empathy skills like listening to others, understanding verbal and nonverbal cues, and learning to understand, and appreciate the differences in others. In the educational environment, the problem arises when classmates do not have the skills to understand and work with their diverse classmates because learners to their classroom with their lives and they do not leave their problems and feelings at the door. This is why the teacher needs to take into account, not only the child's current knowledge base but to look at the child holistically, with empathy to find their student's optimal learning environment.

Empathy can create a foundation for meaningful educational experiences and greater learning. Empathetic educators are capable of listening and clarifying the goals of students. They can be patient, supportive, and trustworthy in a non-judgemental and respectful manner. Always they should continue to value the learner's behavior, attitude, likes and dislikes that they would like to see with their learners and they should clearly outline appropriate behavior, praise learners about some other aspect of their behavior or accomplishments, and finally, state that they value having the learners as a part of the classroom community.

Conclusion

Empathy is a powerful tool that teaches teachers, parents, and other people the way how to feel other people feel in the same fashion. It is always challenging for every individual to have the same feelings and same experiences in the lives of others but it is possible to put oneself in others' shoes to feel what they feel. If every individual develops a better way how to feel the others feel, then they can maintain better relations than before. If

the people do not put themselves in somebody's place, there is a possibility of the creation of a misunderstanding, confrontation, and negative feelings of one with others. The contribution of empathy in education and business is more. The finding of the study has proved that it can create positive vibes, improve the personal and professional relationship, enhance one's own performance, and boost one's own morale and build trustworthy work environment. Therefore, this study suggests that feeling is the best way for beginners to learn many things.

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