

**Psychology of Emotion: Theory and Applications**  
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**Module 11, Lecture 27: Skills of EI- Empathy**

I welcome you all to lecture number 27, it comes under module number 11. So, module 11 is about emotional intelligence part 2, and module 10 was part 1. So overall this is lecture number 27, and, in this module, we have been talking about different skills one by one. So, in today's lecture, we will be talking about another important skill related to emotional intelligence and that is empathy. So just to give you a brief recap of what we have discussed in the last lecture, in the last lecture we focused on one of the important skills related to emotional intelligence, which is self-motivation. In that context, we tried to discuss what is the concept of motivation and more specifically, what is self-motivation and how this self-motivation is the same thing as intrinsic motivation. We have discussed various dimensions of self-motivation and we tried to distinguish between the concept of intrinsic motivation, which is the same as self-motivation, and extrinsic motivation, which is basically when we are motivated by something that is outside of us. Intrinsic motivation is about when we are motivated from inside, because of the interest or the intrinsic value of doing something. In that context, we have discussed Self Determination Theory, and we tried to understand how self-determination theory talks about both intrinsic motivation as well as extrinsic motivation, and we tried to see how intrinsic motivation is addressed in the self determination theory and how that can be promoted. In that context, we have also discussed three layers and four C's of self-motivation which are connected to the self determination theory. These are some of the important concepts that we have discussed. We tried to define self-motivation and understood the various dimensions of it and we also tried to look at it from a particular theoretical perspective, which is self determination theory and we tried to understand how it can be promoted. So today we will be talking about empathy. In that context, we will be talking about the difference between empathy, sympathy, and compassion. We will also talk about the different components of empathy. We will also talk about the role of the mirror neuron system in the context of empathy, and we will also talk about how to cultivate empathy and what is the right kind of empathy. All these will be discussed in today's lecture.

So, let's start today's lecture. What is the meaning of the term empathy? We have touched upon this idea many times throughout this course, but today we will go deeper into this concept of empathy because it is one of the most important concepts related to emotional intelligence. Without empathy, we cannot be emotionally intelligent. So almost every theory of emotional intelligence emphasizes this concept of empathy.

The term empathy is derived from the Greek word “empathia”, which means “feeling into”. So that's the root word from where this word is derived. When we are faced with the emotions of another individual, individuals frequently experience a natural inclination to adopt and share that same emotional state. So, it's a natural human tendency that whenever we encounter the emotions of another individual, we experience and share the same emotion, the emotions of another individual influence us and we try to understand and share that emotion. So, empathy is connected to that.

So basically in this way, if another person's sorrows can transform into your sorrow, and another's happiness can become your happiness. So, when we see emotions in another individual, it influences us in a similar way. Not necessarily in all the context, but this is generally how we experience it, we are influenced by the emotions of others. So, this response where an observer mirrors the emotional experiences of another person has been termed as empathy. So, empathy is more like observing emotions in other individuals and you mirror the same emotion within yourself. So, this is empathy.

There is another term that is connected to that called “emotional contagion”, where unconsciously another person's emotions can influence you. You can become sad because of another person's sadness; it could be very automatically and unconsciously transferred to another person. But in the case of empathy, it is more conscious, in the sense that you are aware that you are mirroring the emotions of another person. That awareness may not be there in the case of emotional contagion.

Empathy is frequently described as the capacity of an individual to imagine themselves in someone else's position or someone else's situation, essentially putting themselves in the other person's shoes. So that is the basic idea, when we talk about empathy, we are talking about one's ability to put oneself in another's position, and trying to understand from their perspective, how they are looking at the world and how they are experiencing emotions. So, it's like a very deep identification with another person's mental world and understanding how they are experiencing the world from their perspective. So that's empathy.

It involves the skills of understanding and acknowledging their emotions and effectively expressing these feelings to others. Empathy involves being mindful of the feelings, needs, and concerns of others. So, it comes from a deeper understanding of other individuals, and then you mirror those. Without understanding you cannot be empathetic to other individuals. It encompasses a range of competencies, including understanding others, facilitating their development, embracing diversity, being politically aware, and so on. So, it comes from your understanding of others' life situations and their context, and only then you can understand and share their emotions. It could be because of the result of diverse other aspects of emotional intelligence.

In humans, empathy can even emerge in the absence of another person, simply through thoughts or imagination. So, a person may not be physically present in front of you, but you can still imagine their situation and can be empathetic towards that person.

Empathy relies on the ability to distinguish between oneself and others. So that is very important. So, you realize that empathy is directly coming from another person's emotional experiences, and you are also mirroring that. That realization is very clear. Recognizing that another individual is the origin of one's emotions.

So whatever you are feeling at the moment of empathy, that emotion is arising from another individual. So, this crucial distinction sets empathy from emotional contagion that we said. Emotional contagion is a broad term where you may not even be conscious that others' emotions are influencing you. Or by just being present in a situation where others are feeling sad, you may be feeling sad, but you may not be very conscious that the sadness is coming from another individual. So, other's emotions are infecting you, and may not be very conscious of it. So emotional contagion can include those aspects, but in the case of empathy, it is more conscious, and you are aware that your emotion is arising on behalf of another individual. So that distinction is very clear.

So empathic affect sharing represents just one of the potential reactions to someone else's emotion. So, we can react to others' emotions in many ways, empathy is one aspect. Other emotions such as envy and compassion can also arise in the context of another's emotions. But empathy is also one such state of emotion. So, what distinguishes empathy is its unique ability to provide insight into another person's internal state by reconstructing a representation of that state within the observer. So, the unique aspect of empathy is that when you observe another person's emotional experiences, you represent their internal state within yourself.

Empathy is one of the reasons human beings can lead a social life and we are connected to others. So, there is a sense of bonding and connection. One of the major reasons why people are bonded and connected to others or there is a harmonious relationship within individuals, is the sense of empathy that people have. Without empathy, we will not be able to be strongly connected to other individuals. So, it's a psychological super glue that connects people and undergirds cooperation and kindness.

It is because of empathy that we show kindness to other individuals, we are concerned about other's well-being, and we are bonding with each other, forming communities and societies. So, all these typical human social aspects are the results of empathy. Without empathy, we will not be able to connect with other individuals in a deeper sense.

So it's more like a psychological super glue that connects individuals and helps us to

experience many positive emotions like helping other individuals or experiencing kindness and so on. So, in that sense, it is very important to understand empathy and its implication in human behavior and the social world. So, empathy is recognized as a key characteristic of emotional intelligence. Without empathy, we cannot talk about emotional intelligence. So we have understood this whole concept of empathy in terms of understanding the definition of it.

Now imagine a world without empathy. Can we imagine a human world without empathy? If there is no empathy, what will happen to the whole human world and the social fabric of the human world? So here are some of those imaginative situations without empathy. Now let's consider a world devoid of empathy and people who are not empathetic and reflect on what will be the consequence of such a world. What will be the situation in such a world? For example, imagine a child crying due to hunger, desperately needing their mother's response but receiving none. No one is coming to rescue or help that child who needs food.

So, if there is no empathy, probably people will not come to support that child. Picture yourself in a very painful situation, in a hospital longing for the attention of nurses, who neglect to attend to you. You need attention because of a certain medical emergency, and no one is coming to support you. Envision being unable to walk due to old age yet finding no one is offering help or support in your old age. Visualize lying on the road seriously injured from an accident and no one willing to help you.

So you are an accident victim, and no one is coming to help you. You experience emotional turmoil, yearning to share your feelings with someone, only to find that no one is willing to listen. When you are really in dire need of sharing your experiences and emotional pain and no one is willing to listen to you. Imagine being consumed by depression after a major career disappointment and lacking anyone to console or provide encouragement. In a state of sadness and depression, no one is there to encourage you.

Situations like contemplating the heartache of expecting support from your children in old age, and they abandon you. Putting yourself in the shoes of a blind person and struggling to cross a street and no one is willing to offer assistance. So, these are some of the situations, these are examples where there is no empathy in the world. In all these situations, people will suffer, and no one will come to rescue those individuals and support them. And it will be completely chaotic.

So these are some of the examples that show to what extent empathy is important in the human world and social world to lead a harmonious life in the human world. If there is no empathy in all these situations, people will feel helpless, and they will be in a situation where they cannot get any support from other individuals. So, these situations emphasize

the profound repercussions of a world lacking empathy. So, this clearly shows how important this concept is.

It highlights the immense value of empathy in addressing human needs, providing comfort, fostering connection, and supporting one another through life's challenges. So, it is at the root of human kindness, human support system, human helping nature, and so on, and the root of it is empathy. It has a lot of practical repercussions in human life. So, three terms are generally used, and some people use them very synonymously, but they are different.

One is empathy, another is sympathy, and another is compassion. So let us understand the difference between these terms. Sympathy is a term that refers to feelings of pity and sorrow for someone else's situation or suffering. If someone is suffering or is in a bad situation, we feel a sense of sorrow for them or a sense of pity. So, you feel bad when somebody is going through some bad phase. This feeling is sympathy. It involves recognizing and acknowledging another person's emotions, without necessarily sharing the same experience. So, in empathy, you share their experience and try to understand and identify with their situation and try to share their emotional experience. In this case of sympathy, you may not share their emotions, you just understand and show concern for their situation. So, empathy is a little deeper, with more identification with the other person.

Sympathy often involves expressing care. You show care and try to express all your concerns and support for someone, but it may not involve the same level of emotional connection and understanding as empathy. So, in terms of emotions, both concepts are almost similar, but in the case of empathy, it is much more intense and much deeper, and you identify with that person's situation and try to see from their perspective. That identification is not present in the case of sympathy, it is more of just seeing the situation of another person and you are showing some care and concern for them.

Empathy, as we also said, involves not just understanding or looking at other person's life and showing concern. It is more of sharing their feelings and putting yourself in their situations and trying to understand the world from their perspective. So, it is deeper in that sense. So, empathy requires emotional connection and actively seeking understanding and validating someone else's feelings. It is focused on the emotions and perspectives of the other person.

So in that sense, it is a little deeper connection. So, empathy involves a deeper emotional connection with others, as it requires genuine experiencing and connecting with the emotions. Sympathy involves showing concern but may not involve the same level of emotional engagement as empathy. It focuses more on acknowledging and expressing care for someone. So, you acknowledge that somebody is in a bad situation, and you show

concern for them, without necessarily fully comprehending their perspective. You may not completely understand how they are, what they are going through, and how they are understanding or looking at the world, that is empathy. In this case, you may not be involved too much but only acknowledge that the person is in a bad situation, and you are showing concern.

Compassion, on the other hand, is a little bit deeper, even deeper than empathy. It is a broader concept than sympathy and even empathy. It encompasses empathy and sympathy but goes beyond them. So, it includes both the aspects of sympathy as well as empathy and it also goes beyond that. So, compassion involves not only understanding and acknowledging someone's emotions but also feeling a genuine desire to elevate their suffering and help in some way. So, when you feel compassion, you also show sympathy as well as empathy, and you try to do something in terms of actions to reduce their suffering.

So that is compassion. So, it is a much broader concept. So, it combines empathy and sympathy with a sense of action, that you want to do something for the other individual to elevate their distress. With the genuine use to provide comfort support or assistance to the person in it. So, it is a little bit broader concept, and both sympathies, as well as empathy, are included under compassion.

To summarize, empathy is understanding and sharing others' emotions. It includes understanding as well as sharing other emotions, you must also experience their emotions. Sympathy involves feeling sorrow for someone's situation and compassion encompasses both empathy and sympathy, while also emphasizing the intention to elevate suffering and offer help and support. So, compassion is a little broader and it includes both the concept, and it also includes actions to elevate the sufferings of other individuals.

Purushothaman in his book showed a diagram representing these concepts, from pity to compassion, in terms of its intensity.

So it is just the difference of intensity of the emotion in each of these phases. So, at the lowest level, it is pity where you just feel bad for someone's situation. In sympathy, you not only just feel bad, but you also show concern for other individuals. Physical display of pity hoping to relieve the pain of suffering. Empathy is a bit deeper, where you share the emotions of others and the perspective of other individuals.

In compassion, it includes both sympathy as well as empathy, and there is a desire to relieve the person from the pain and actively seek solutions. So, if you see from the intensity point of view, from pity to sympathy, the intensity is more in terms of emotion. Then empathy is a little bit more intense in terms of emotion as compared to sympathy, and compassion is at the highest level of intensity of emotion in terms of showing concern and

understanding other individuals. So, from lower intensity to higher intensity, we can move from pity to sympathy, to empathy, to compassion. So just the differences or intensity increases from one to another.

Now let's look at the empathy triad. Goleman in his model, talks about empathy in detail and he said that empathy has three components. He broadly defined empathy where compassion and other aspects are included in empathy itself. So that is how Goleman defined empathy. So, he said empathy has three important components. One is cognitive empathy; another is emotional empathy and the third is empathy concern.

So let us discuss these three dimensions of empathy. So, cognitive empathy means, as the name suggests, it is more at the mental level. Cognitive empathy is also known as perspective-taking empathy. It refers to the ability to understand and intellectually grasp the thoughts, beliefs, and emotions of others. So, you intellectually try to understand how the other person is looking at the world or how that person is going through something.

So you intellectually try to grasp the situation. So, you try to take the perspective of another individual. So, there is a mental aspect to it. So, cognition also involves mental understanding first. So, that is the cognitive part of it. So, you intellectually try to understand their situation from their perspective. That is cognitive empathy. So, putting yourselves in someone else's the typical definition, that we say you try to put and look through other's perspective and see the world from their perspective. Cognitive empathy relies on mental processes such as perspective shifting, theory of mind, and imagining how someone else might think or feel. So, you shift your perspective and try to understand the world from another person's perspective mentally and intellectually. So that is cognitive empathy.

Emotional empathy, also called effective empathy, involves sharing and experiencing the emotions of others. So, you share the emotions of others and experience their emotions. When you are able to take the perspective of another person, you share their emotions. So, their emotions become like your own emotions, and you understand things from their perspective. So, it is the capacity to feel what someone else is feeling as if their emotions are contagious. So emotional empathy is more about understanding or the capacity to feel how others are feeling, to what extent you can identify yourself with that person and feel the way they are feeling. So that is emotional empathy. So emotionally how much you can identify with another person and experience their emotion.

So emotional empathy enables individuals to resonate with and respond emotionally to the experiences and emotional state of others. So that emotional reaction comes from the emotional empathy part. It involves a visceral and automatic emotional reaction that mirrors the emotions of the other person.

The third one is called an empathic concern. It is also referred to as compassionate empathy. Goldman included compassion under the empathy itself. He more broadly included it as an important aspect of empathy or empathy compassion, which goes beyond understanding and sharing emotion. It involves a genuine and compassionate concern for the well-being of others. So, in the other dimensions of empathy, you try to understand others' perspectives mentally such as in cognitive empathy, and emotional empathy, you focus on the emotional component, or you try to feel the other's perspective. But in empathic concern, you not only go beyond those feelings and take perspective, but you are genuinely concerned about the other person and try to remove their problems, sufferings, and distress. So, in that sense, it is one step ahead of the other two dimensions. So empathic concern motivates individuals to act and help alleviate the sufferings and difficulties faced by others.

So when you understand others' perspectives, you also feel for them and try to remove or alleviate their sufferings. So that is the empathic concern. It includes a sense of warmth, kindness, and a desire to support and assist those in need. So here assistance is more focused on how one can assist other individuals.

So that is an empathic concern. It is more action oriented.

So, one is cognitively mentally oriented, another is emotionally oriented component, and the third one is more action-oriented component. So, these are the three important components of empathy. So, in summary, cognitive empathy focuses on understanding the thoughts and perspectives of others. Emotional empathy involves sharing and experiencing the emotions of others. Empathic concern encompasses the compassionate and action-oriented response to the well-being and needs of others.

So, that is what we have discussed now. These different aspects of empathy collectively contribute to our ability to connect. So, all these components are important in terms of genuine or holistic understanding and experiencing empathy.

Now let us discuss the concept of a mirror neuron system. So biologically, the neurological level might act as the hardwired for empathy. So, one aspect of empathy could be hardwired in terms of our nervous system or in the brain itself. So let us try to understand in terms of physiological aspects or terms of the brain, whether any specific aspects explain behaviors related to empathy. One aspect of the brain or neural system that can explain empathy as human behavior is called a mirror neuron system. So, a mirror neuron is a type of neuron that exhibits activity both when an animal performs a specific action, and when it observes another animal performing the same action. So these are the neurons that mirror others' actions or emotions.



There are sets of neurons in the human brain, as well as animal brains. It exhibits activity, meaning it becomes active when a human or an animal performs certain actions. So, when certain actions are performed like picking something with your hand, certain neurons will fire, and they will become active when you do certain actions. But in the case of mirror neurons, the same neuron will become active when you see someone else doing the same thing. So, when you see someone else picking the object, then mirror neurons will become active, even by just looking at the other person doing the same thing.

So, it mirrors even if you are not doing the action and just looking at the other person doing the same action. Thus, the same neuron will become active just by observing others doing the same thing. So, it mirrors if you are doing the same action. So, that is called the mirror neurons. This mirror neuron system has been proposed as the biological basis of social behavior in a lot of social cognitions including empathy. So, one of the reasons why people feel empathy for other individuals could be because of this hardwired aspect of the brain, particularly the mirror neurons. So, this encompasses a broad range of phenomena which includes a lot of aspects including empathy.

The initial research for this mirror neuron was conducted by Rizzolatti and his colleagues in the 1990s which then led to the discovery of mirror neurons. The mirror neurons are a type of brain cells that are active both when an individual performs an action, and the same neuron will become active when you observe someone else performing the same actions. So, it mirrors even when someone else is doing the same thing, it activates as if you are doing the same thing.

So it mirrors the other section also in your brain. These neurons mirror the observed section; hence their name is called mirror neurons. It mirrors other sections as if you are doing that. Rizzolatti and his team were originally studying the motor cortex of Macaque monkeys. So, they were doing some experiments on monkeys and trying to identify the neurons that are responsible for motor actions or some movements of the hands and body parts. Specifically, they were focusing on neurons that are involved in controlling hand and mouth movements.

So, they were looking at which neurons are responsible for the movement of hands and mouth in the monkeys Macaque monkeys. So, they used microelectrodes to record the activity of individual neurons in the premotor cortex area of the brain and the inferior parietal lobe of the monkey's brain. So, they were looking at whether neurons in these areas are responsible for hand and mouth movement. In that experiment, they interestingly or accidentally found something unexpected. They found that some of these recorded neurons in those areas not only fired when the monkeys performed the specific hand and mouth movements but also when the monkeys observed a researcher or another monkey

performing the same movement. For example, when they observed that the researcher was also gripping an object or another monkey doing the same thing, the same neurons got activated. This phenomenon was initially observed with actions such as reaching and grasping objects.

So, this is like just a pictorial depiction of that. So here basically at rest, those neurons did not have any signals, so, they were not active, meaning monkeys were not doing anything. When the monkey grasped an object, the mirror neuron fired, means that the neuron became active because it was using some motor actions or grasping some objects.

Interestingly, they found that when the researcher was grasping an object in front of the monkey, the same neuron fired. In this case, the monkey was not grasping any object, but the researcher was grasping the object. So just by observing another person doing the same action, the same neuron got fired. So, this discovery led Rizzolatti and his colleagues to propose the existence of mirror neurons. So, this specific neuron in those areas could mirror other's actions as if they are doing those actions.

Subsequent research in humans has provided evidence for a similar system in the human brain, known as the mirror system. So, it was also then subsequently found in the human brain as well. FMRI studies have also demonstrated that certain brain areas in humans, such as the premotor cortex and the inferior parietal lobe show activity both when individuals perform an action and when they observe others performing the same actions.

So this suggests the presence of mirror like response in the human as well. So particularly these are some of the brain regions where these mirror neurons are observed, particularly in the region of parietal lobe and primary motor cortex. But there is an inherent challenge in identifying very specific neurons because identifying each specific neuron one by one neuron is very difficult because mostly, we can study the neurons in a region, not individual neurons. So directly studying individual neurons in the human brain is very complex and very difficult and challenging. Research is yet to provide definitive proof of the existence of mirror neurons at the individual single-cell level. However, most of the studies in humans have relied on non-invasive techniques like FMRI studies which provided insights into brain activity on a larger scale and cannot isolate the activity of individual neurons. But at least it identified certain regions where neurons could act like mirror neurons. So, it is worth noting that the absence of direct evidence for individual mirror neuron in humans does not negate the existence of a mirror system of neurons, where there are neurons that are connected in certain regions of the brain, and they could act like mirror neurons. These neurons especially fire when they observe others doing some actions. So, the term mirror neurons often refers to this broader concept of this network of brain regions and cells which helps us to understand imitation behaviors. Thus, when we imitate somebody else and look

at someone else doing something those neurons get fire.

So it can explain how humans and animals imitate the behavior of another individual. It is not about just individual cells. So, the mirror system in humans is believed to involve a distributed network of interconnecting brain regions rather than isolated mirror neurons. So, it is more like a system of neurons, rather than one or two individual neurons. So, these neurons allow individuals to understand and interpret the actions and intentions of others by internally simulating the observed action in their brains.

So these are the neurons that help us to imitate others. Therefore, these nerve cells can help us to reconstruct the world from another perspective. When you observe the behaviour of someone else, these neurons help us to reconstruct or simulate the actions of another individual. So, in that sense, we understand other's perspectives. The finding of mirror neurons has very significant implications for our understanding of human cognition, social behavior interactions, and so on.

It provided a neural mechanism for how human beings can understand and mimic the actions of others. How we can mimic or copy other individuals and do exactly the same things. This neuron could be one of the important reasons for such imitation behaviors as they help us to reconstruct other's behaviour in our world and add to the development of social skills or contribute to social skills, language acquisitions, and ability to empathize with other individuals. So, to create and experience empathy, we need to understand others' perspectives and behavior, and then reconstruct it in our minds.

So this mirror neuron could be one of the important candidates that help us to empathize with other individuals and learn many other social skills and language skills and so on. So, for example, a child learns language by imitating or repeating what other says. So, how children learn different behaviors could be connected to mirror neurons.

Since their discovery, mirror neurons have been studied extensively in both humans and animals. The discovery of mirror neurons opened many avenues of research and has a profound implication for understanding human behavior and brain functions, especially understanding things like empathy and social behavior.

Now, how more specifically mirror neurons are connected to empathy? Let us see some of the possible connections.

Many researchers have studied mirror neurons in the context of empathy, like Marco Lacoboni, Gallese, and Keysers did a lot of research specifically in the context of mirror neurons and empathy. They found that the mirror neurons could be one of the potential mechanisms for empathy. Why do people experience empathy? Because these mirror

neurons help us to experience empathy, or it gives us the ability to empathize with other individuals. The idea is that when we observe someone else's actions or emotions.

So specifically in the context of empathy, when we observe someone else emotions, mirror neurons in our brain mirror systems get activated. So, when you see someone else showing some emotions, this system gets activated, creating a neural simulation of the observed action and emotions. So, it creates a neural simulation of how others are experiencing emotion. Because we also experience all these emotions mirror neurons help us to activate and create and simulate the world of the other individual within us. This simulation allows us to "mirror" or internally simulate the experiences of others which may contribute to our understanding and sharing of their emotional states. So, one of the biological mechanisms could be that these neurons help us to reconstruct the world of other individuals or the experiences of another individual.

And that is how we experience other's world view, their emotional experience and share them through empathy. The activation of mirror neurons during observation could potentially lead to vicarious experiences of the emotional experience. So, when we see someone else get influenced by other's emotions, the mirror neurons could be at the biological mechanisms of it. So, when we witness someone expressing happiness or sadness, the mirror neuron system may activate similar neuron circuits associated with our own experiences. So, when you see someone as sad, the mirror neurons could activate those similar neural circuits which are associated with sad experiences and allows us to understand how that person is feeling.

Because those emotional systems are already within us, the mirror neurons could activate those systems associated with those emotions and help us to empathize with other people. So, it is important to note also that mirror neurons are just one component of a larger network involved in empathy. So, empathy is a very complex ability of humans, and mirror neurons could be one important aspect of it. It cannot explain every aspect of empathy, but at least at the biological level, this could also give us the capacity for empathy. But empathy could also include many other aspects and mirror neurons could be one important part of the whole network of explanations in the context of empathy.

So empathy is a multifaceted construct, and it involves cognitive processes like mental processes, and things like perspective taking, it also includes mentalizing (the ability to contribute mental states of others or understand others). It also includes things like emotion regulations. Mirror neurons alone cannot fully account for everything, but you know this could be one important aspect of it. So, overall mirror neurons are a promising area of research for understanding empathy, but they are just one piece of a larger puzzle. Further studies obviously are needed, and it is still ongoing, and more and more clarity will

probably come in future research. So, what empathy can predict? So, if we experience empathy or if a person has higher empathy, what behavior it can predict? So, let us see some of the research findings.

Research has shown that empathy can predict many positive behaviors like indicators of pro-social behavior such as forgiveness, volunteering, and helping, and it is negatively associated with aggression and bullying. So, research indicates that empathy is associated with many positive behaviors, higher empathy can lead to or is positively connected with pro-social behaviors, various aspects of pro-social behavior where it is about helping other individuals. So, one person may experience more forgiveness, the person can volunteer or help other individuals more, and they will experience less aggression and bullying if they have higher empathy. Research also shows that empathy is also positively correlated with charitable donation behavior.

So more empathetic people make more charitable donations. Empathy can also override non-cooperation, causing people to be more generous, forgiving, and less retaliative. So, these are again connected to the first findings. Empathy can also help people adopt more positive attitudes and help behavior toward stigmatized groups. Research has also shown that people who have higher empathy also show more helping behavior towards stigmatized groups, some groups of individuals where society at large may not look at them positively such as disabled and homeless individuals, those with aids, and so on.

So, generally, people with higher empathy show much more concern and helping behavior toward this marginalized population. So, research findings show that empathy is associated with many positive behaviors, most of which are connected to helping behavior. Now when we talk about empathy, research also shows that empathy can have different aspects, and particularly the right empathy is important in terms of which can lead to more positive outcomes. Probably all kinds of empathy may not lead to all the positive outcomes. Some aspects of empathy could be called right empathy, which may be associated with all these positive attributes that we have discussed now.

Now, despite all these potential advantages, empathy alone does not guarantee positive social outcomes. According to some research, all kinds of empathy will not necessarily lead to positive social behavior. The cultivation of empathy for effective assistance necessitates the right strategy or right empathy. So, if it is not correct empathy, then it can become an emotionally draining skill, because taking the perspective of another individual can sometimes be very draining, and it can negatively impact the individual who is empathetic. Too much empathy sometimes can lead to a lot of emotional drains because you are getting into the heads of other individuals and trying to understand their emotions, which can negatively influence you.

So excessive identification with someone else's emotions can sometimes induce stress, and trigger the cardiovascular stress response, like the physiological reaction that would be experienced in painful and threatening situations. So, because you are identifying with another individual, it can induce a lot of stress and distress depending on what others are experiencing and can lead to much negative physiological stress. Empathy, by directing helping behavior primarily toward individuals within one's group, may even impede helping behaviors to others. If it is not the right empathy, it can also promote or impede helping behavior in some contexts. Therefore, how one employs empathy and perspective may determine the differential outcomes.

So, what is this right empathy? There are two types of empathy in terms of how a person empathizes with the other person. So, there could be two possible ways. One is self-oriented perspective-taking or self-oriented. Another type is the other-oriented perspective taking. So let us see how these two are different and how they can lead to different outcomes. So, self-oriented perspective-taking empathy could lead to a lot of these negative impacts. It is more about imagining oneself in someone else's situation. So, you are putting yourself in someone else's situation. So, you are suffering along with that individual.

So in the self-oriented perspective, you are putting yourself in other's positions and so if the other person is suffering, you are also suffering. So that is the self-oriented perspective taking. So, this could be very draining in some sense, and it could lead to fatigue and may not lead to many positive outcomes. It can be connected to a lot of positive intentions and do good for other individuals, but it can lead to fatigue and stress, which can hamper or impede many positive outcomes. So, engaging in a self-oriented perspective where individuals imagine themselves in other person's position can lead to significant personal distress, thereby hindering the display of pro-social behavior, because of compassion fatigue. So, you could be suffering with those individuals, and may not be able to do the right actions that are required and may not lead to many positive outcomes that were discussed earlier. So, you are putting yourself in another person's perspective and suffering because of too much identification with that person. So, it can lead to fatigue and stress, and so on.

On the other hand, other-oriented perspective taking, or empathy is about imagining and understanding another person's point of view. So, you are not just putting yourself in their position, you try to imagine and understand what the other person is going through, rather than putting yourself in their position. So that is called other-oriented perspective-taking. It is more about imagining and understanding how others are, what's their point of view. So, objectivity distance is maintained in some sense, and that can lead to many positive impacts, because emotional drain may not happen in this case. You can grasp the experiences in a broader sense. So, this form of empathy proves most beneficial for both

the giver and the receiver and is characterized by other-oriented responses. So, engaging in this perspective-taking can lead to the development of empathy concern, commonly referred to as compassion, which can be perceived as an emotional response stemming from a cognitive process, and can stimulate helping behavior.

So both are types of empathy. In the first case, empathy involves understanding and showing concern, and identifying with another person. However, the problem is that excessive identification can lead to compassion fatigue, stress, etc. And if you yourself suffer, then probably you may not be able to help other individuals. But, in the case of the other-oriented perspective, some objectivity and distance are maintained. You can understand what that person is looking at, identification is present, but you are not suffering as much as the other in the self-oriented perspective. It is more of an objective understanding and trying your best to help that person.

So, what are the steps that can lead to the development of empathy? So according to Purushothaman, the first is step towards building empathy need to recognize.

So, you recognize the emotions of other individuals. Understanding and recognizing is very important. So, you look, observe, and recognize the emotions and the situation of another person. Then in the next step, you remove your shoes, biases, or filters, and without any judgment and prejudices, try to see how others are perceiving the world and experiencing it at that moment. If you have your filters, biases, and judgment, you will not be able to understand what other people are experiencing.

So to understand others' perspectives, you must remove your own biases and judgments, then only you can identify with another person. So that is very important. The third step is that once you remove your judgments and biases, you can wear another person's shoes and feel and understand from their perspective. So, this step is about the feeling, imagining, experiencing, mindset, motives, aspirations, and beliefs of other individuals, and how it is experienced in that moment. The last step is to respond to understand other's perspective, so you can respond appropriately in that situation. So, these are broader steps that one can take.

So, the last most important question is can we cultivate empathy? Can we develop empathy or is it hardwired that some people are only empathic while others are not empathic? Let us try to understand this question or address this question. Some individuals may have automatically higher empathy. It is innate and biologically, they are more empathy-oriented. They have more sense of concern and compassion for other individuals. Other individuals can slowly acquire empathy through different life experiences, or some deliberately learn it by seeing the positive impact of it or by focusing on taking the perspective of other individuals. So, developing this skill can help reduce compassion

fatigue or the right empathy people can also be learned.

So obviously some people are hardwired, or some individuals are more empathic than others. So, these individual differences are present. There may be some biological reasons for it. But a large chunk of empathy can be learned. Research shows that it is a learnable thing. Specifically, about understanding other's perspectives and what can be learned.

So there is a possibility of enhancing empathy by effectively teaching individuals how to practice it. So, by effectively learning about it, and different aspects of it, one can learn and enhance empathy. Abramson in 2021 recently listed some of the important strategies to cultivate empathy or develop empathy within individuals. We will be discussing some of the important steps or some of the important things that one can do to develop and cultivate empathy.

So, the first is the desire to grow in empathy. You cannot develop empathy if you don't have any desire for it or see the value in it. So, the first important step is that you must desire to learn about it and to develop it because you see the value of empathy in the human world. Without this you know you cannot imagine a sane world. So, for the first step, you need to value this concept, and understand this concept, and must want to grow it. So, the aspiration to foster empathy can act as a driving force. So, if you see the value of it, automatically you will try to enhance it and learn more about it or try to implement it. Therefore, the first crucial step in increasing empathy is embracing a growth mindset, which involves believing in one's potential to develop and expand empathetic abilities.

So the growth mindset I can grow and develop empathy is very important. People who believe that empathy can be developed are more likely to exert effort in empathizing. Those who believe that it can be learned, are more likely to learn it. So, for instance, those individuals may actively seek to empathize with individuals who are unfamiliar or different from themselves. This contrasts with individuals who perceive empathy as a fixed trait and are less inclined to invest in an effort in its enhancement. So, the people who view it as a learnable thing, such people can generally empathize with even unfamiliar people or people who are different from them. So that's related to your growth mindset. So that is the first thing.

The second thing is exposure to differences. One thing is that to understand or develop empathy, you need to understand other's world views, then only you can understand how others are feeling and how others are experiencing life. If you just are focused on your own understanding and own view of the world, then you cannot understand others' perspectives. To understand others' perspectives, it is very important to understand, focus, and get exposed to differences in the opinions and world views of other individuals.



The more you understand the differences, the more you will be able to empathize with them. Without understanding other's perspectives and other's worldviews, you cannot empathize with them. So that's very important. So, exposure to differences is very important to effectively imagine another person's perspective, and having a richer context of understanding others is very important. So engaging with diverse forms of media such as reading books, watching movies, featuring protagonists from different racial backgrounds, or actively participating in someone else's culture can provide a backdrop for adopting someone else's viewpoint.

To understand or to empathize with people who are very different, it is important to understand their worldviews by reading books about them, by watching movies featuring protagonist from different racial backgrounds, or actively participating in others' cultural worldviews like festivals and connecting with them socially. So, all these things can provide a deeper understanding of others' perspectives and help us to develop empathy for even people who are different. One can connect with people who are similar very easily, but if they are different, some of these steps can help. So, by paying closer attention to others, regardless of whether one is actively engaging in perspective-taking, individuals are more likely to develop a heightened concern for others. Therefore, paying attention is important, without attention you cannot understand anything, so everything boils down to your attention.

The third important thing is sometimes reading fiction could also help us to develop empathy. How could that be? So, engaging with works of fiction and other character-driven stories can contribute to the deeper comprehension of both others and the world. So, if you see fiction and stories, these are all reflections of the real social world. The characters of stories or fiction are taken from our real world. So even reading fictional characters can contribute to understanding various personalities and different types of individuals. By immersing ourselves in narratives of different stories, we can enhance our capacity to understand real individuals in the real world. So, the idea is that the more you get exposed to different worldviews and different types of characters, the more you can empathize with them.

Third is harnessing the power of oxytocin. Oxytocin as a hormone which has been found to be very important in terms of making connections and bonds with other individuals. So, whenever we form an affectionate relationship with other individuals, oxytocin as a hormone gets released and it plays a very important role in forming social bonding. So known for its social effects, oxytocin as a hormone contributes to the facilitation of empathy. It can induce a helping response even among individuals who lack blood relationships.

So a lot of activities that are related to the release of oxytocin, can also enhance our

empathy biologically. So, by engaging in oxytocin-releasing behavior such as eye contact and gentle physical touch, we can bond with people. Thus, by making eye contact and gently physically touching people, humans can harness oxytocin to foster empathy and promote helping behavior within specific contexts. So biologically, this power of oxytocin can also be used, if possible, in certain contexts that can also help us create more bonds and help us to experience empathy.

The fourth important thing is to identify common grounds with other individuals. So, we all have multiple identities in the social world. The same person can be a father, a son, as well as a leader. So, we have multiple identities. So many times, conflict results from our focus on one identity of another individual. So, conflict happens when we focus on the difference. If you can find common ground with other individuals, then it will also help us to empathize with them and create bonds. So, finding a common ground is very important and it can be found because we all have multiple identities. Instead of focusing on one identity, we need to focus on other important aspects of people's identity which can be common with us. An effective method to enhance this motivation for empathy is by manipulating the perception of who belongs to you in your in-group. Many times, people view themselves as part of a group and other individuals as out-group, which means they are part of another group, then differences are created and then people are not able to empathize with other individuals. The moment people see common ground, it helps them to empathize and understand others. So, to cultivate empathy in your interactions, prioritize identifying similarities rather than fixating on the differences.

For example, let us say two individuals have opposing political ideologies. If they only focus on political identity, then they will have conflicts because they believe in different ideologies. Every time they meet, if they only focus on their identities, they are more likely to have a conflict and may not understand each other. Let us say these two individuals who are neighbours, can find common ground. Let us say the one common ground could be both have children of the same or the same age group and attend the same school.

So that could be a common ground. So, if you focus on that aspect, probably you will be able to understand others more and empathize with each other. So, the idea is that we have multiple identities, if you only focus on different identities that lead to differences, it will create more conflicts. Therefore, it is important to understand or find out the common grounds that will help us to understand others and empathize with them. So basically, by building upon this similarity or common ground, one can cultivate greater empathy. As individuals, we encompass multiple identities and part of being socially intelligent involves discovering shared identities or common identities. So that is an important part of empathy as well as of emotional intelligence.

The fifth important aspect is understanding your blocks. Many times, we are not able to empathize with other individuals because there is a block. One may have some negative biases towards a group of individuals, which could be a block. So, one needs to understand those blocks and work on those blocks to enhance their empathy. So, it is very important to overcome these various blocks and promote pro-social behavior, paying attention to personal patterns and focusing on areas where connecting with others and understanding their experiences is difficult.

Sometimes for all of us, it is difficult to empathize with certain individuals. It could be one individual, because of certain experiences, or it could be a group of individuals for whom we might have many prejudices and stereotypes and we may dislike that group itself. So those may be blocks and one needs to understand those blocks, and work towards it. That could be another important way of developing empathy. For instance, if you find it challenging to be around certain individuals or groups, you will not be able to empathize with them.

Confronting this difficulty by intentionally spending time with them or understanding them could be one of the ways to enhance your empathy. Reflecting on a time when you had a negative outlook and trying to understand it. During this interaction, it is crucial to listen attentively without interrupting or formulating immediate rebuttals or responses. So, removing your own biases and judgment is very important to empathize with someone else then only we can understand others' perspectives.

So whenever possible, we can address those blocks. If those blocks are artificially created by our biases and judgments, then it is important to remove them by understanding those blocks. So this is something very important. Another block is our assumptions. These are all connected to our thought processes.

We may have many assumptions and automatic reactions that can be related to racism in everyday interactions, related to prejudices, and so on. These aspects are related to our assumptions. So, we need to observe ourselves while making negative assumptions. Many times, these assumptions are very unconscious and automatic.

We need to observe those assumptions when they are expressed in real-life situations, like “I am behaving negatively with a person without any proper reason simply because of my biases”. So, one needs to catch oneself in those negative assumptions. So, embracing this mindset of continuous questioning and catching oneself in all this is how one needs to grow in life. This is like the mindset of a scientist regularly reassessing their assumptions of life.

We need to reassess and question, am I, right in this assumption? If not, then we need to

change it. So those unconscious assumptions also need to be looked at. This can foster empathy and deeper understanding. So, these are some of the things about empathy. Empathy is very important, without empathy, we cannot imagine a sane world, harmonious world.

So empathy is the foundation of a peaceful and happy human existence. The more human beings have empathy, the better the world will be. Empathy is very important also for emotional intelligence. We can also develop empathy through different aspects that we have already discussed. So, with this, I will stop here, and we will talk about other skills in the next lecture. Thank you.