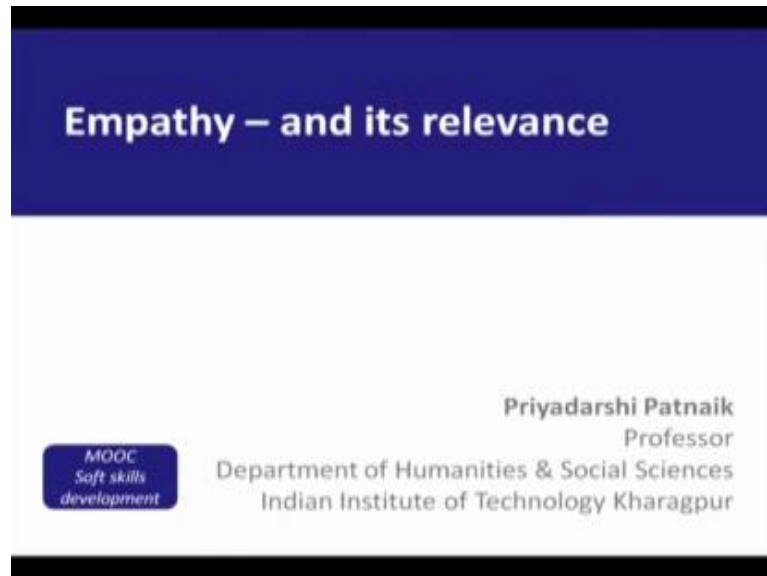


Soft Skills Development
Prof. P. Patnaik
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur

Lecture - 23
Empathy

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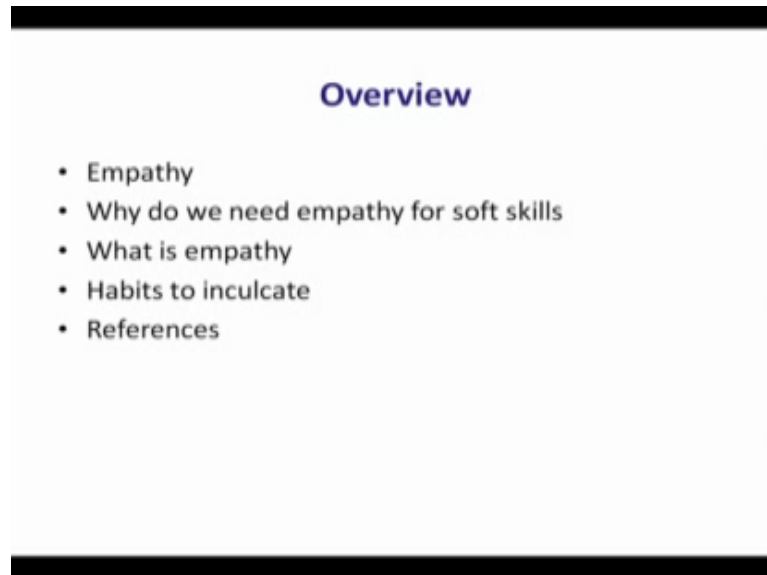


Hello friends, in this talk, we will be focusing on the concept of empathy and its relevance. The term empathy has an emotion oriented conversation, and many of you might be wondering, why is it that in a soft skills course empathy significant. We will talk about that, but before that I will ask you to refer back to the talk an emotional intelligence and to the talk listening where we did talk about empathetic listening, listening where you are trying to understand others. More important in today's world, we find that empathy has become by word is if not directly indirectly, because we have a different focus today on the concept of happiness. And a lot of courses, around the world are focusing on the concept of human well being and happiness; and again in the context empathy place a very, very significant.

We will try to look at these concepts keeping in mind the fact that when it comes to the concept of empathy in the Indian traditional, all though the word comes from Greek and European context plays a very significant role. Empathy in the Indian context has been a

very distinct over and its history; and we will talk little about that as we proceed with this particular talk.

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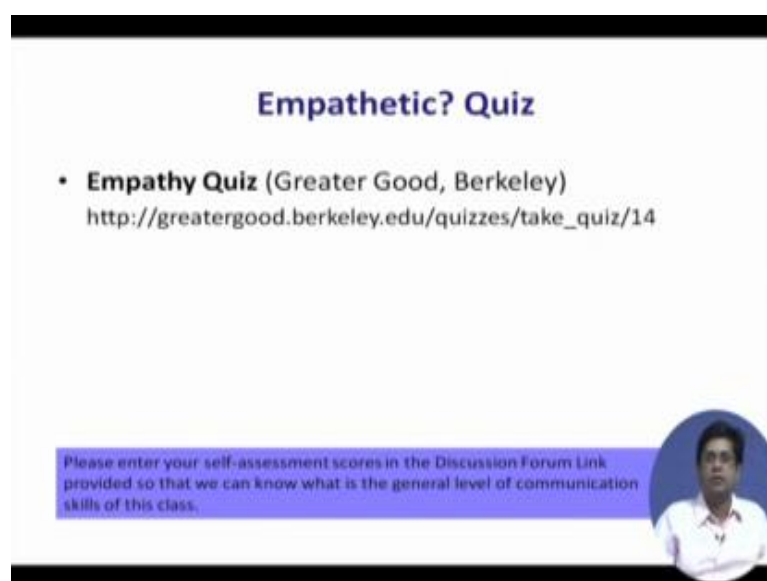


Overview

- Empathy
- Why do we need empathy for soft skills
- What is empathy
- Habits to inculcate
- References

These are the things we will touch upon; we will start by looking at what is empathy and then why do we need empathy. What are the various features of empathy, what habits we need to get in order to become more empathetic; and with that, we will end this particular talk.


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Empathetic? Quiz

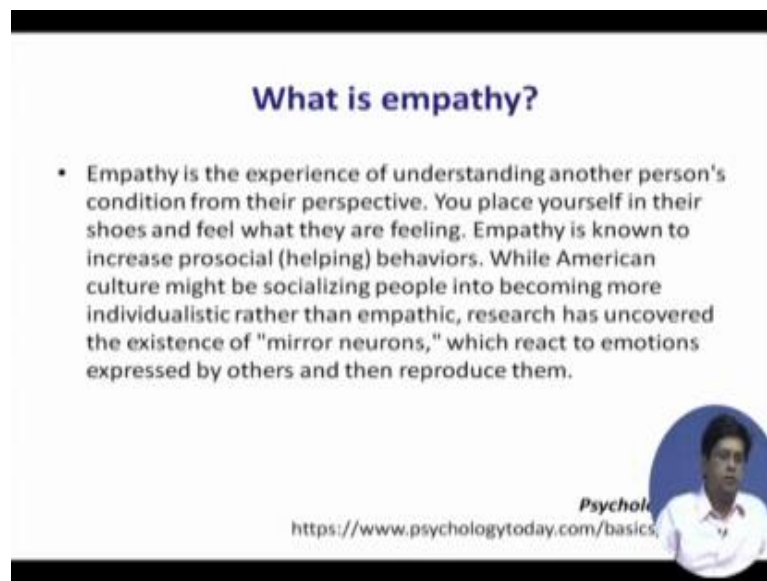
- **Empathy Quiz** (Greater Good, Berkeley)
http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/quizzes/take_quiz/14

Please enter your self-assessment scores in the Discussion Forum Link provided so that we can know what is the general level of communication skills of this class.



But before we go into that probably it is good idea to take a test, and find out how empathetic you are. Berkeley has a centre for Greater Good. And they have generated a lot of questions and quizzes, which will give you some insights into your basic in at nature when it comes to things like being happy, being empathetic and things like that. And do discuss it on the discussion forum has with the earlier quizzes that you have done so far.


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What is empathy?

- Empathy is the experience of understanding another person's condition from their perspective. You place yourself in their shoes and feel what they are feeling. Empathy is known to increase prosocial (helping) behaviors. While American culture might be socializing people into becoming more individualistic rather than empathic, research has uncovered the existence of "mirror neurons," which react to emotions expressed by others and then reproduce them.

Psychology Today
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/basics>



Now, see that let us quickly look at some of the key concepts which are involved in the definition of empathy. Empathy is experience of understanding another person's condition from their perspective. Here we need to differentiate this word from the concept of this word from sympathy. Sympathy is where we try to relate to another person, but from our perspective. We do not want to take that somebody else's place, we are you now placed from here we want to support emotionally somebody else. You place yourself in their shoes and feel what they are feeling which is what you do not do in sympathy. Sympathy is where you are putting on your own shoes, but from there you are emotionally expressing your feelings to a certain extent, for the other person.

While American culture maybe socializing people into becoming more individualist rather than empathic, research has uncovered the existence of “mirror neurons,” which react emotions expressed by others and then reproduce them. Now, see that in one of the

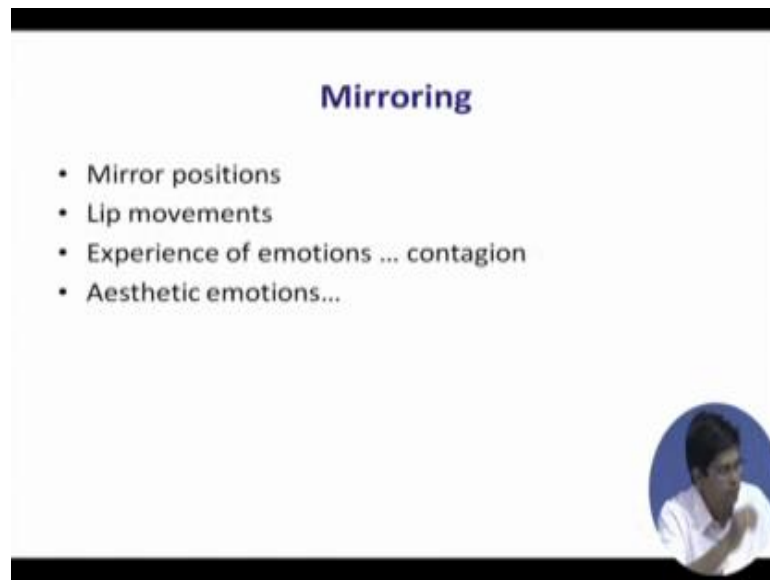
later talks on creativity, I will also talk about the concept of individualist cultures as oppose to collectivistic cultures. In collectivistic cultures, the focus is on sharing.

In fact, most traditional culture start of as collectivistic culture because you see that in the early phases of pre-civilization communities involved only on the basis of sharing. If you did not share with others then you did not survive. So the communities sharing were very, very significant. However, with time with the fact that within quotes was greater apparent autonomy. What I mean by greater apparent autonomy is the fact that economically we are dependent upon one another, but at an interpersonal level, at a level of socialization, they dependence on one another, in many cultures is much less than it is in many of the other cultures.

In that context let us say in the American context and why only the American contexts; in many of the urban context in India itself, you find that what has happened is that the individual becomes they focus, they family the others come after that. In fact, you can correlate it with the rates of divorce, whatever the you see that these people might talk about let us say women, gender differences and all that you find that wherever in the pockets in India where individuals or individual ideas individualism is emphasised. In this pocket, the level of divorce cases is much higher than in places where the individual is a subset of the social priorities or things, which are more considered more important socially, the family maybe the community maybe.

And you find that there is support to recent exploration of the cognitive sciences indicate that there is a lot of support which tells us that empathy is something which is biologically driven which means that we have empathy cells within our brains, and these are known as mirror neurons. And mirror neurons get activated when we see things happening by others; and these activities in such a way that we tend to copy those behaviours. And when that happens we have experience of empathy. So, there is a biological underlying you might say evidence which tells as that human animals essentially have a very strong empathetic component, rather you see that the intuit social formations though which took place to probably very often a biologically driven and much of the empathetic social bonding that took place was biology driven. And it is only with civilization probably, and with the complexity of civilization that empathy has become less strong, it has to become weaker.

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Now, mirroring is something which is not only depending relevant in the context of mirror neurons. We mirror various kinds of things, when we are empathetic with somebody when we tend to agree with somebody we tend to emulate that behaviour if somebody is unhappy as and as made us sad face, we make a sad face. If somebody stands in a dejected manner, we might stand in a dejected manner. Now, you see that this is the mirroring of positions. When you find that somebody is having a lot of difficulty let attuning is few what is somebody who is has a stammer, you might sunny find that you are trying to silently mouth the what is trying to utter as if indirectly trying to help that person speak, now this mirroring to take place. Experience of emotions vary often are what are known as contagion - emotional contagion, these experiences are where you see that we are influenced by what we see.

Now, this is something which I have already briefly said in our hour music study, but we find that for instance when we did research and music, we found that if you listen to music for a fairly long period of time, the music has its impact on the way you feel. The same has been studied and we have done studies where you see that your facial expressions reflect the visuals that you see like the audio visuals may be movie - sad movies, happy movies and you find that this is too very great extent are contagious responses or empathetic responses. Aesthetic emotions where you see that where you reading the story, and it stories sad and you feel sad with the story. So, contagion, mirroring these is two different things that take place.

Contagion is very well infected by somebody else's emotions, and can lead both to sympathy as well as to empathy. And mirroring is where you see that you are trying to put yourself in the other person's place and experience that or you are trying to emulate that copy that even in your behaviour as in your mind.

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Why do we need empathy?

Daniel Goleman identified five key elements of empathy:

- **Understanding Others**
 - (listening skills, non-verbal communication)
- **Developing Others**
 - (mentoring, getting feedback, motivating others)
- **Having a Service Orientation**
 - (help, support, customer service)
- **Leveraging Diversity**
 - (team building, conflict resolution)
- **Awareness about people, society, culture**
 - (core skill of communication)

"What is empathy," *SkillsYouNeed*
<http://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/empathy.html#ixz>



Why do we need empathy? Now, you see that Goleman has identified key elements of empathy and using that we can look at some of the very, very significant relevance is of the empathy in the context of soft skills. You see that the five elements that are linked to empathy or understanding other people. Or developing other people that are developing a community a response, empathy leads to trying to help other people, so that having a service orientation, where you think less about yourself and more about the other person. Permitting diversity different varieties of opinions openness; and a larger awareness of people, society, culture, culture the politics and all that now, these are the five elements which make you more empathetic, because to begin with the more perceptive and then obviously become more empathetic.

And as you can see I have listed below listening skills, nonverbal communication get link to understanding others we have done that. Developing others is where used to mentoring, getting feedback, motivating, others having a service orientation help support customer service and all kinds of things. Diversity - building teams, resolving conflicts, awareness about people, society, core skills of this is some of the core skills of the

communication. You find that if you are looking at all these elements are probably why you need to be let us say empathetic does not need a very strong argument.

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Habits to develop

- Curiosity – inquisitiveness – explore the new (as in relations)
- Challenge stereotypes / prejudices and become inclusive
- Put yourself in another’s place/shoes
- Listen, but with a difference
- From empathy to action
- Wide coverage – ambitious about empathy

Karunaa

“Six Habits of Highly Empathic People.” Roman Krznaric.
http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/six_habits_of_highly_empathic_people1



But then how do we become empathetic is it that people are naturally empathetic and we cannot developed the concept of empathy or the culture of empathy rather than within ourselves will probably that is not the case. What are the habits that help us being become more empathetic and this is again from the Barkley site where they have. In fact, currently running courses on happiness which has a subset have empathy as a significant component. Curiosity - inquisitiveness - exploring the new as new person is stranger real sincere desire to know about the other person without any kind of scorn or a sense of inequality, or distant in once mind, and that the first thing that we have to have. So, the next time, we meet strangers with are genuinely curious about how they are similar to us, how they are different to us.

Challenging stereo types you meet a person from another culture, from another linguistic community, from another country, you have certain frequency notes stereo types of about that what kind of a person that is American or let us say informal British’s of formal Germans are contemplative not expressive, French people are passionate, villagers are very inquisitive about your personal information and so town people are distant and do not feel like talking to people different cultures within India having different variations. We have a lot of prejudices lot of stereotypes within our minds and we have to get rid of

them. When you are meeting a person for the first time, when you are moving into a culture for the first time do not give into the stereotypes be open and that in itself is the second step in the direction of empathy because you are open to new ideas. This is also relevant in the context of creativity as well be discussing in the context of those lectures.

Put yourself in another places, shoes. Try to put yourself in somebody else's which is apparently it will be difficult, but after a point of time you can think from the others perspective. In very difficult situations, it is obviously, difficult, but as I have shared with you because empathy is something, which is biologically embedded within us, probably this is definitely possible. Look at somebody else's perspective, we should do that also you become more creative, because you have the ability to think from another different position.

Listen, but with a difference listen not to fight as we have discussed earlier but to understand to share a listen with an openness that is something which we have already discussed to a very great extent in our lectures on listening and speaking. From empathy to action, just being empathetic is not enough good enough. Empathy should lead to some kind of activities, some kind of act, which concretise whatever you are doing. Doing service from others and studies find that the issue serve others without any selfish interest if you, help others without any specific interest or selfish motivation then you feel more happy, now this is a scientific finding.

In fact, what I will intrude you to do is to join us in some of the experiments that are link to these particular slides, where we will look at explore how actually, we are empathetic or not empathetic, and what factors influence our concept of empathy, what rational factors, what emotional factors into what extend. And how empathy is probably related to the concept of grief, how grief is abutted sympathy these are some of the things we can actually try out as a experiments as has been already indicated in the links provided and I request you to participate, so that we can actually learn together what are the findings.

Now, you see that wide coverage - ambitious about empathy, not empathy let think about small things, but together empathy about large construct, large concerns be empathetic about larger things, about the greater good of mankind. If you are able to do that probably we actually are more evolved; and in the end probably more happy. Now you

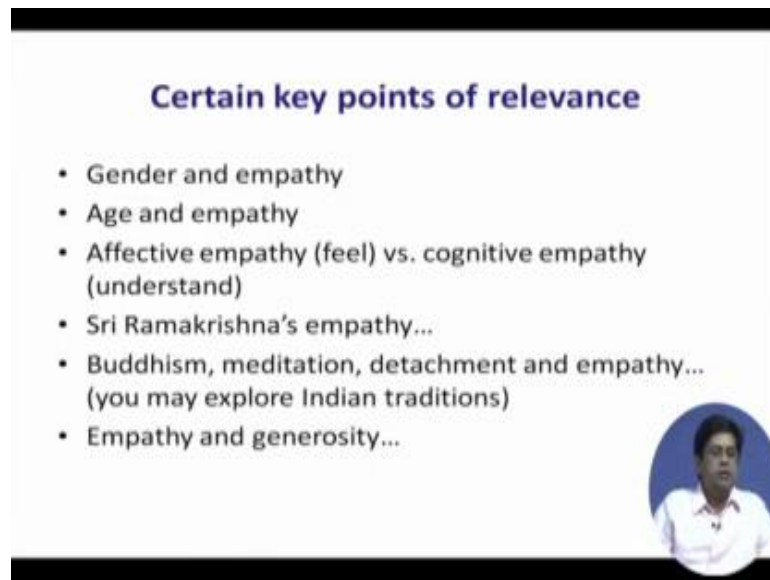
see that as I told you, you might say that happiness is linked to the self that is true it was very great extent, but as I also told you happiness is also link to sharing with others, sharing about others, experiencing from others perspective. And it also is going to be very, very relevant in the context of creativity. So, you actually benefit from it in various ways.

And here I will just touch up on one particular idea, the concept of Karunaa. I told you right at a beginning that we have derived a lot of insights into theories of empathy as well as application of empathy from Indian tradition. We have done to a great extent this from the meditative tradition by especially of significance is the concept of Karunaa. Karunaa is Sanskrit word very strongly to be identified in the context of Buddhism and in one of the kinds of meditation that is practice. One is told to wish for the good of your friends once, once start the practice by using oneself good saying that let me be happy, let me be a well, let me be healthy, let everything would happen to me, all kinds of things. Once you have master this, then you move onto step when you say that let my friends be happy let them the successful let everything is good with them so that this is the first step in the direction of empathy then this rather than the second if you are looking at chain of let say steps.

The third one is where you say that let any stranger you are asked to focus on any stranger that you do not know, and you wish that person well. You say that let be happy let be happy everything good happened to that person. And fourth and the ultimate step is where you identify somebody home you do not like you identify, somebody who is operant to enemy and then you develop the technique of wishing that person complete happiness and wellness. And this is a probably the ultimate step you can take the direction of empathy.

Now, these techniques are techniques which have been identified as being capable of generating through studies of the brain, through fMRI studies as well as through EEG studies activation of brain centre which are associated with extreme happiness and calmness. It is not that this is on the basis of theology or religious bias that I am sharing these ideas with you. These have been scientifically proven and you find that much of this has been derived from our own tradition and we need to explore it.

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Certain key points of relevance

- Gender and empathy
- Age and empathy
- Affective empathy (feel) vs. cognitive empathy (understand)
- Sri Ramakrishna's empathy...
- Buddhism, meditation, detachment and empathy... (you may explore Indian traditions)
- Empathy and generosity...

Certain key points of relevance about empathy, which will touch upon gender and empathy. Generally, it is found that women are more empathetic young men. Age and empathy; it has been found that by the time we are 2 years old we start becoming empathy think about other people's pain. And kids within the range of 5 to 7 and 8 feel other people's pain in very intense. And as we become adults we kind of master the tendency and become more details in order to navigate better in society and in the world. Affective empathy has been differentiated from cognitive empathy, where you can feel effective is emotion related to empathy where you feel it experience it and cognitive is where you understand it.

Now, obviously, they are very closely linked and they may not be debateable and differentiated. And you say that empathy can be very extreme where for instance we have the story of Sri Ramakrishna, who sees one person sweeping with another person and immediately after that you find that wounds of the other person appear on his back. Not because he is actually getting punished, because you see that he feels with the other person pain to certain extent that physiology of it get manifest on his body. So, these examples are there of extreme empathy as well.

As I told you in Buddhism, we talked about empathy and there is a pathway to it. And you see that the pathway to it is what is known as mindfulness meditation. What basically happens is that your told to observe yourself be mindful, mindful of what,

mindful of your emotions, mindful of whatever activities and going on in your mind. If you are mindful this then the next step is to detach yourself automatically, because if you are able to identify your emotions that means, that you are able to detach yourself from yourself at a certain level and said that ok now I feeling angry, I can see that I feeling angry. So, there are two self one is the experiencing self and other one is the understanding of discriminating self. So, it is not just the theory, it is just practice. And as you keep on practicing in this certain degree of detachment from your emotions, gradually lead in the direction of being able to control your emotions and in understating other people's emotions.

Again you see that the western tradition has accepted this concept that you see that mindfulness can lead to empathy and empathy can lead to happiness in a certain sense. And I have also illustrated briefly earlier how empathy can be very, very relevant for whatever we are dealing with in this particular course. And finally, in this particular slide at least I would like to empathy the fact that and empathy generosity very closely linked together. Because if you put yourself in somebody else's shoes and if you can experience somebody else's pain then it makes you act which is what we talked about earlier, and might lead you in specific directions. These are the some of the things; we will study together as I said a little earlier.

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Acknowledging emotions

- Anger
- Apathy
- Guilt and shame
- Hatred
- Fear
- Worry-anxiety
- Confusion
- Jealously
- Sadness
- Happiness
- contentment

It helps us understand ourselves better as well

The Art of Empathy: A complete guide to life's essential skill. Karla McLaren, SoundsTrue, 2009



And one of the other things that I would like to empathize as we be kind of movie in the direction of the end of this session is acknowledging emotions. You see that if you looking at some of these emotions, these kind of communicative wide arrive emotions there are still other certain variance of the emotions. I have discussed with you the six dominant emotions you find that these are of subsets or different variations of the emotions. For instance happiness can be let say thrilled and happy, it can be joy, it can be calm and happy. You can have different kinds of happiness the different degrees of happiness and all that.

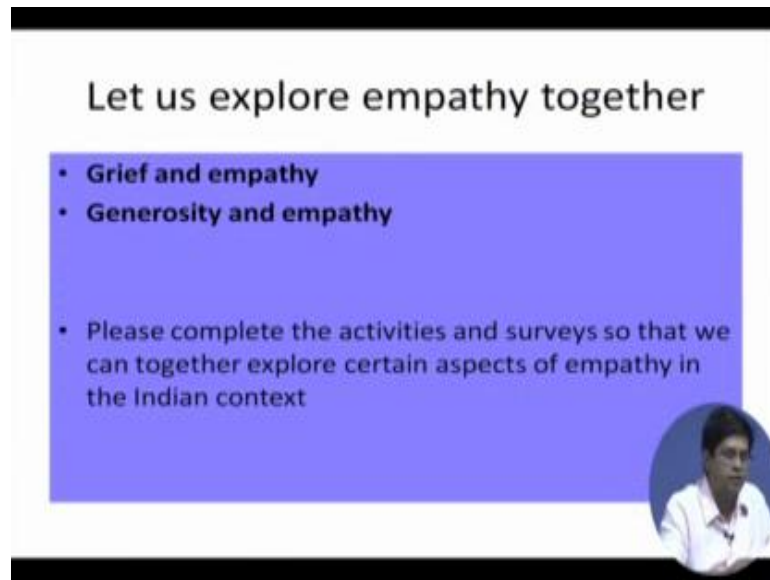
Now, the important thing is that each case here is what helps us a lot, if I am angry and if I am able to detach myself, and ask few questions about anger probably, it is going to not only lead in the direction of better management of anger, but also the direction of empathy both the things together. What is it that causes this anger that means, if I am able to identify the causes, probably I will able to handle those causes in a much better way? Anger is for a reason, anger might be linked to even let say jealousy. You are angry with somebody because somebody has been successful in a particular context. Now, once you find the cause of this anger, and you try to analyse that cause in a detached way probably you would be able to master that and you would be able to self regulative yourself better.

You see that again we come back to the situation where understanding our self is a way moving in the direction of understanding others which is what one of you earlier presentations is about. You see that we are just talking about a wide array of emotions in this particular context. And in each case, please ask yourself every time you feel let us say bored, I do not want to do it. Ask yourselves this question, what is it that causing that is that is causing me not to do this, what are the reasons, is it fear sometimes it is possible that you tend to postpone things which you are afraid of, they are complex, they are critical, they are anxiety, so let me post pone it.

Empathy apparently looks like laziness, but no, deep down probable it is did not fears or something else. If you start analysing the emotions, you are able to identify the causes of this emotion. And very often the causes and not directly linked to that, for instance as I told you anger caused by something else apathy caused by maybe fears. The various complexities of the interrelationships or something which you are able to identify and that helps you better manage yourself. And once your able to better manage yourself you

are also in a position to take the first step in the direction of better managing, but better understanding other people and then obviously, moving in the direction of better managing other people.

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Let us explore empathy together

- **Grief and empathy**
- **Generosity and empathy**
- Please complete the activities and surveys so that we can together explore certain aspects of empathy in the Indian context

I believe that the last thing I will share with you is that we will be doing some studies with grief and empathy, generosity and empathy. And we will request you to part of it and we will share the results of whatever we do with you.

Thank you very much.