

EMPATHY

Leadership in Action - A look at fostering effective leadership traits

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PME 803 Organizational Leadership

“Empathy is seeing with the eyes of another, listening with the ears of another, and feeling with the heart of another.”

-Alfred Adler

Empathy Defined as Part of Leadership



“The capacity for empathy is an innate human trait” (Gourguechon, 2017). “A true leader has enough open-mindedness to understand their followers’ motivations, hopes, dreams, and problems so that they can forge a deep personal connection with them “ (Enfroy, 2020). Leaders who are able to demonstrate their keen ability to truly understand their followers will be better equipped to improve their organization’s productivity because they know how to motivate their employees, inspire their followers because they will trust their leader has their best interests at heart while working towards a common goal, and ignite creativity in a way that utilizes the knowledge and skills of others to entice the collective creative mind (Enfroy, 2020).

How to Build Your Empathy?

According to Jay Steven Levin, empathetic leaders should make one feel understood (*Empathy*, n.d.). As such, in order to begin fostering your ability to truly understand your followers, engage in the following suggested activities:

- **“Serve others”** (*Empathy*, n.d.): Take a moment out of your obligations to assist those who need help especially if it is out of your usual job description. This will create a sense of fairness and humility between the leader and follower.
- **“Listen as a beginner and for the right reasons”** (*Empathy*, n.d.): It is vital to be attuned to those who are opening themselves to you. When you listen to them as if it is for the first time and for reasons that are ethical and just, they will feel heard and understood .
- **“Ask more questions”** (*Empathy*, n.d.): This shows a keen interest in your followers. Key questions that really encourage one to reflect can not only demonstrate empathy but can also encourage the individual to begin finding solutions to their concerns or predicaments.
- **“Suspend your assumptions and be present”** (*Empathy*, n.d.): It is easy to allow your preconceived notions and ideas about an individual affect your approach towards them. Resist this inclination and instead be actively present in their lives through listening, asking, observing, and offering help when you feel necessary.
- **Practice calming activities:** Engage in empathy scenarios, complete self-reflection worksheets, practice relaxation techniques, attend workshops and read-up on strategies for building empathy.

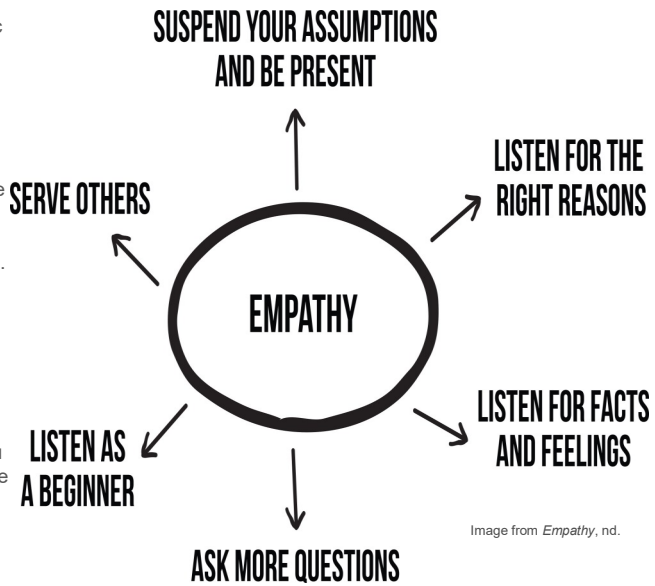


Image from *Empathy*, nd.

Empathy Checklist

Use this checklist to help monitor your progress as you continue to work on building your empathy This checklist is an adaptation of Jessie Lahey’s *Quick Checklist for Being an Empathetic Leader* (n.d.).

CHECKLIST

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- ◇ Are you curious about what other people think for honest reasons?
- ◇ Are you sensitive and attuned to others’ emotions?
- ◇ Are you practicing authentic listening when others speak?
- ◇ Are you respectfully vulnerable? Do you wait to be approached but then respectfully share your feelings with others?
- ◇ Do you often wonder what it would be like in others’ situation?

References:

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