

What empathy means to me

[Life](#), [Emotions](#)



Although there are many definitions for the term empathy, one of which states that it "refers to the reactions of one individual to the observed experiences of another (Davis, 113)", a very fitting definition, however empathy is so much more than just a label for a reaction to a situation. Personally I don't think empathy is measurable by scientific assessment, rather empathy should be viewed as a means of moral virtue. A large part of empathy is respect; disagreeing with someone's choice or thought, while being able to view a situation from their point of view without judgment is truly key.

This being said, that doesn't mean you have to agree or change your thoughts, but the ability to take in both opinions and react appropriately is empathy. Both of my parents taught me "have you thought about their side of the situation?" This used to frustrate me until I discovered that taking a step back from my perspective and looking at it from a different approach usually made me change my attitude about the situation. No, it didn't always fix the situation, but it encouraged me to change my attitude from negative to understanding.

Matthew 7: 12 states "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets." Empathy is like a mirror, a reflection, but a reflection of emotions that you feel in your life being applied to the lives of those around you. This expression though commonly thought of as a sympathy or a form of comfort, isn't always the case. Looking at life through the eyes of others is how empathy is expressed. This realization of others' feelings can create a bond between you and them.

Reflecting on your experiences and applying the emotions from your life to situations of others is part of this mirroring.

Empathy was defined by [www. newyorker. com](http://www.newyorker.com) in the article *The Baby in the Well* by Paul Bloom as " an instinctive mirroring of others". He also brings up the case of " The Empathy Altruism Hypothesis" a study done by psychologist C. Daniel Baston. This theory states that taking into consideration others points of view produces a form of self-satisfaction. This self-satisfaction is selflessness; that in itself self-motivates that person to express more empathy. I agree that there is self-satisfaction in helping others that drives you to want to help again, without any form of repayment.

Empathy isn't just thinking about doing something, but taking action. Empathy as an action seems to fall into a grey area where compassion, kindness, and comprehension all mesh together in a common meaning. According to [www. thesaurus. com](http://www.thesaurus.com), these terms are synonymous; in this way, empathy is some much more in-depth than just a term. Theodore Roosevelt once said " No one cares how much you know, until they know how much you care". Part of being human is having expression, and emotion. Without it, what would separate us from a robot? Gary Small and Gigi Vorgan wrote the article

Is the internet killing empathy? (found on [www. cnn. com](http://www.cnn.com)) and bring up the statement " have our brains become so desensitized by 24/7, all-you-can eat diet of lurid flickering images that we've lost all perspective on appropriateness and compassion...? " I agree that it has. Empathy is something to be learned over time through personal experience. This cannot

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be achieved without interaction with others face to face. If someone never experiences a situation how are they to know think that much of our perception of empathy comes from our learning though personal interaction.

The only way that empathy can be taught is by experience. Whether that be reading someone else's reaction to something, or taking the " monkey see, monkey do" approach. Regardless, empathy to me is my connection, reaction, and personal views of a situation being expressed toward others at all times and having respect for both of our views. I appreciate that I was taught from an early age to view others opinions, no matter what the case may be, and interpret situations in that manner. Listening, understanding, and interacting with others is the appropriate action in all things in life.