

# The Life Cycle of Empathy

CADRE Symposium  
2017

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# Empathy

1. the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another....Merriam-Webster

## But what is it, really??

- Empathy is, at its simplest, awareness of the feelings and emotions of other people.
- It is how we as individuals understand what others are experiencing as if we were feeling it ourselves.

SkillsYouNeed.com

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## Compassionate Empathy

Compassionate empathy is what we usually understand by empathy: feeling someone's pain, anger, or frustration from their perspective, and taking action to help.

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## Empathy

Is a mindset,  
not just a  
word.



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## A working definition.

- The minimal, essential components of empathy include:
- (i) a receptivity (“**openness**”) to the affects of others whether in face-to-face encounter or as artifacts of human imagination (“**empathic receptivity**”);

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## A working definition.

- (ii) an understanding of the other in which the other individual is interpreted as a possibility—a possibility of choosing, making commitments, and implementing them (“**empathic understanding**”) in which the aforementioned possibility is implemented;

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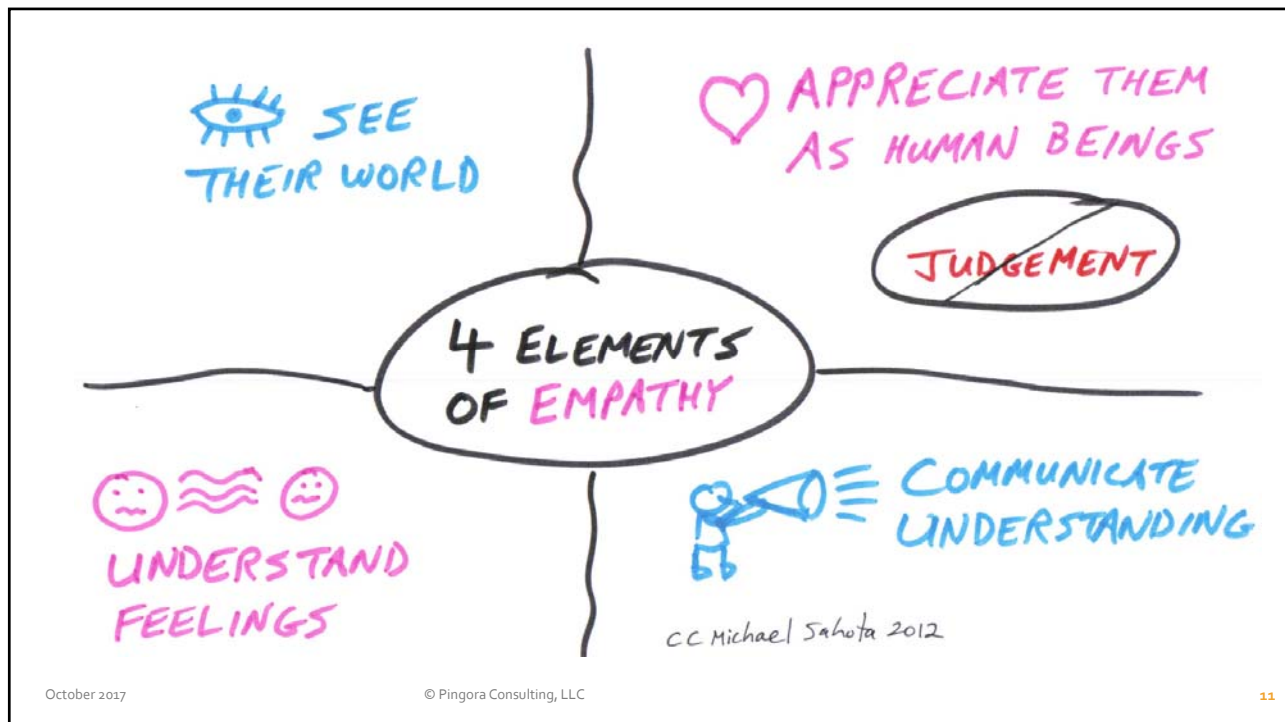
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## A working definition.

- (iii) an interpretation of the other from first-, second-, and third-person perspectives (“**empathic interpretation**”); and

## A working definition.

- (iv) an articulation in language of this receptivity, understanding and interpretation, including the form of speech known as listening that enables the other to appreciate that he or she has been the target of empathy (“**empathic listening**”).



Why is EMPATHY important??

Because it is nearly impossible to treat others badly when you empathize.

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And...

It is nearly impossible to treat others with compassion if you are unwilling to see from their eyes, or know their experiences.

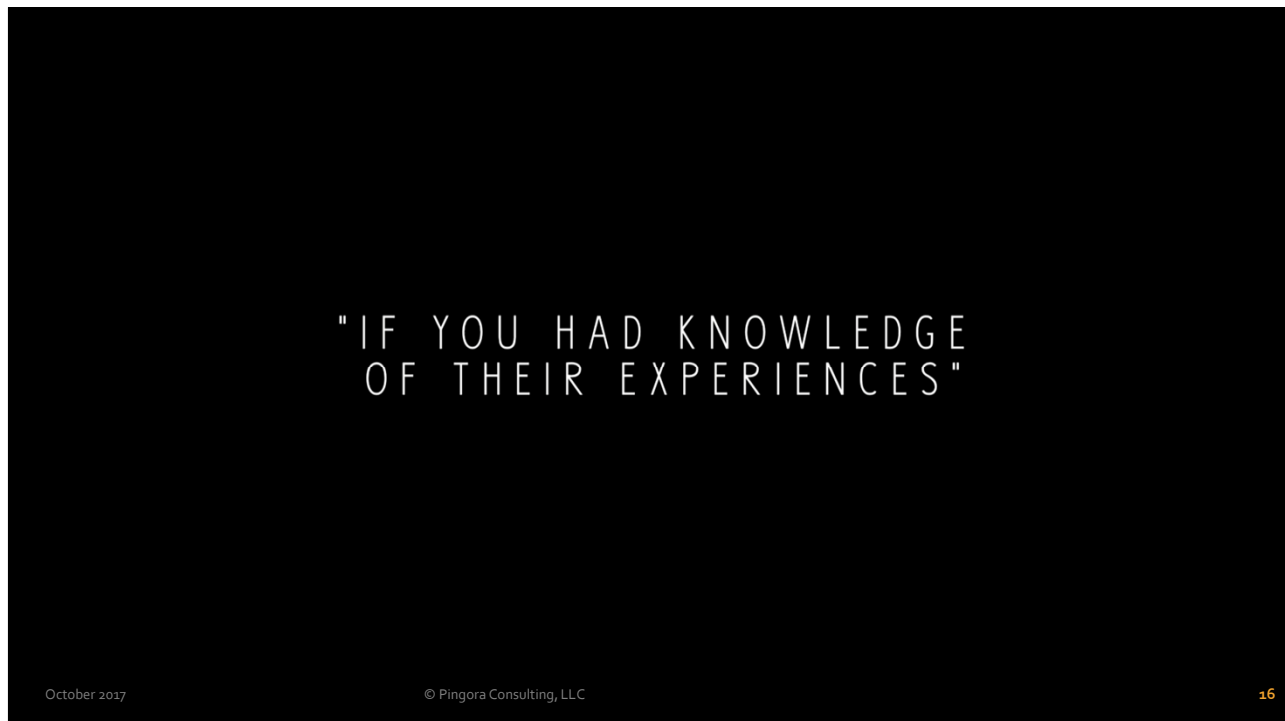




What opportunities will you miss . . . without empathy?

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This slide features a white background with a large orange rectangle on the left side. The text "What opportunities will you miss" is written in white inside the orange rectangle, followed by three dots. To the right of the orange rectangle, the text "without empathy?" is written in a dark grey font. At the bottom of the slide, there is a white footer containing the date "October 2017", the copyright notice "© Pingora Consulting, LLC", and the slide number "15".



"IF YOU HAD KNOWLEDGE OF THEIR EXPERIENCES"

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This slide has a solid black background. The text "IF YOU HAD KNOWLEDGE OF THEIR EXPERIENCES" is centered on the slide in a white, all-caps, monospace-style font. At the bottom of the slide, there is a white footer containing the date "October 2017", the copyright notice "© Pingora Consulting, LLC", and the slide number "16".



?

How could relationships change if we understood another person's challenges?

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Perspective,  
NOT...



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## Endorsement

“An endorsement is  
a sign of public support.”

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## The Emotion

- Understand and operationalize the subtle difference between empathy and sympathy:
  - Empathy is the demonstration of understanding, compassion, and responsiveness.
  - Sympathy is the demonstration of endorsement, compassion and pity.

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Three decorative hearts arranged vertically on the left side of the slide. Each heart is black with a white spiral pattern inside, resembling a stylized 'H' or a heart shape. The hearts are positioned to the left of the main text.

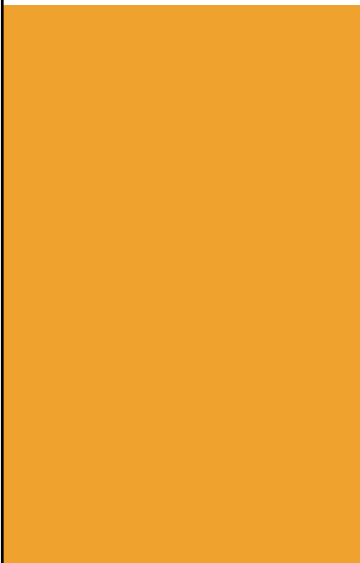
Empathy is walking a  
mile in somebody else's  
moccasins. Sympathy  
is being sorry their feet  
hurt.

-Rebecca O'Donnell

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'Sympathy' is when you share the feelings of another.

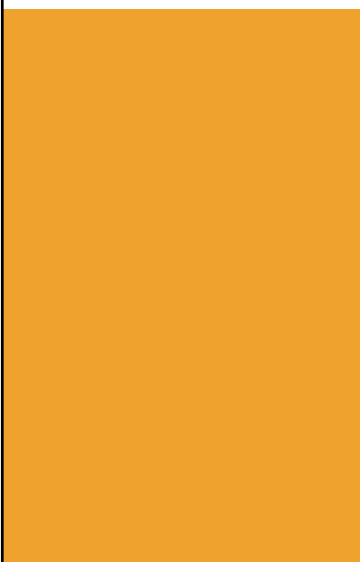
...

'Empathy' is when you understand the feelings of another but do not necessarily share them.

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*No Judgment*

Empathy allows you to demonstrate compassion without infringing on your beliefs.

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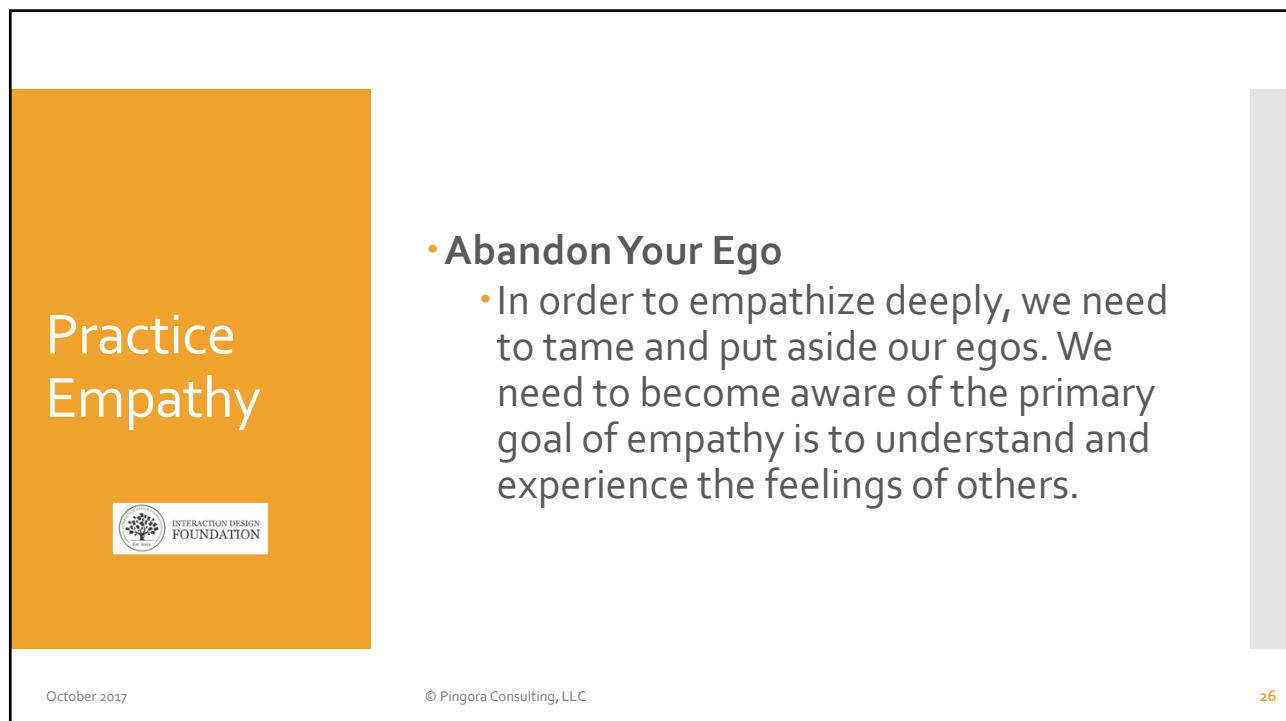


Avoid judgement.

DON'T JUDGE  
MY CHOICES  
WITHOUT  
UNDERSTANDING  
MY REASONS.  
KUSHANDWIZDOM

JUDGEMENT

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Practice Empathy

- **Abandon Your Ego**
  - In order to empathize deeply, we need to tame and put aside our egos. We need to become aware of the primary goal of empathy is to understand and experience the feelings of others.

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## Practice Empathy



- **Adopt Humility**

- When we adopt humility, we naturally improve our ability to empathize, because through humility we elevate the value of others above ourselves. Humility is a characteristic of leaders who are willing to admit their own shortcomings as well as to abandon preconceived ideas for the good of the overall vision and goals.

## Practice Empathy



- **Be a Good Listener**

- So as to empathize, we need to listen and listen attentively. We need to choose actively to block out our inner conflicting voices, and allow the other's voice to resonate. We need to train ourselves to control our natural tendency to formulate our own opinions and voice them before the other person has finished talking.

## Practice Empathy



- **Hone Your Observation skills**
  - In order to develop empathy towards others, we need to do more than listen. We need to observe others, and have a close reading of their behaviors, subtle indications, their non-verbal expressions, body language, and environments.

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## Practice Empathy



- **Be Curious**
  - Being genuinely curious makes engaging in empathy not only easier but also extremely rewarding as we learn to understand what motivates people. By being curious, we are naturally inclined to dig into unexpected areas, uncover new insights, and explore all aspects of people's lives. These details will expose the most important information we need for problem solving.

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## Practice Empathy



- **Care**

- A genuine concern about the state of others, leading to the desire to act and assist, is required. This is one of the important drivers that allow us to overcome our own needs and wants and seek to understand others. We must build a sense of care, a deep concern and desire to want to help, nurture, and provide assistance.

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## Practice Empathy



- **Be Sincere**

- Nothing kills empathy more than a lack of sincerity. When we approach people with a superficial agenda or any mindset that may undermine our sincere intention to understand their experience deeply, we are placing a barrier between us and those we seek to understand.

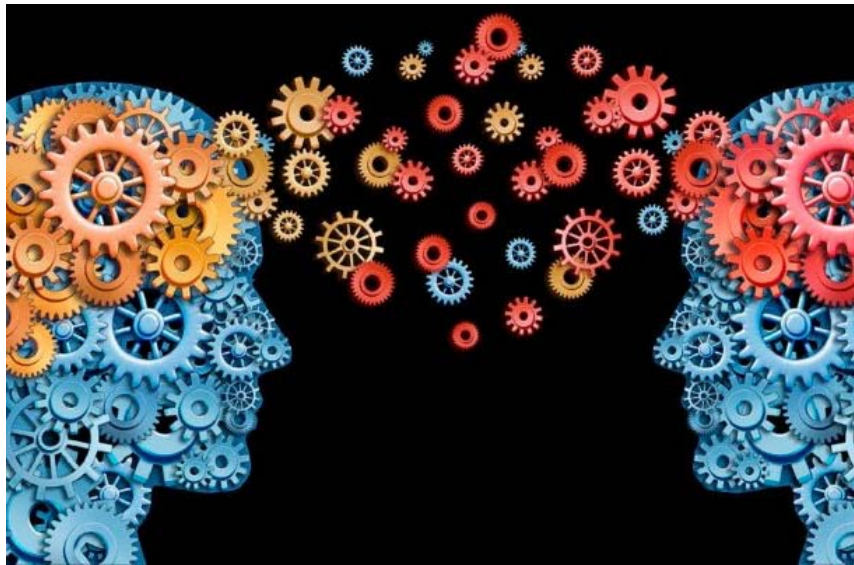
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Communicate empathy with sincerity.



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Phase I:  
The Early  
Years

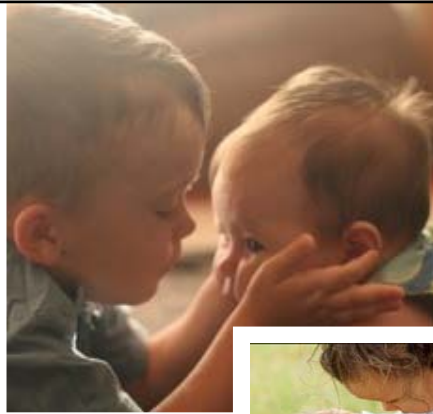


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# Wired for Empathy



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It starts early.


- Babies as young as four months old can feel empathy.
- The new research suggests that the foundations of empathy may be something we are born with.

University of London Report 2017

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- Watch this clip of a year old child demonstrate empathy each time she perceives her caregiver to be in distress.

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The message?  
Cultivate empathy early  
and continuously.



Phase II:  
The  
School  
Age Years



## Keep Cultivating

- Studies show that when young people have empathy, they display:
  - More classroom engagement
  - Higher academic achievement
  - Better communication skills
  - Lower likelihood of bullying
  - Less aggressive behaviors and emotional disorders
  - More positive relationships

How to Build Empathy, Making Caring Common Project, Harvard University

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Expand students' circle of concern.

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**CIRCLE OF CONCERN**

- People are inclined to feel more empathy for those who are similar to them or in close proximity to them.
- But when it comes to building a school community and developing caring students, that's not enough.

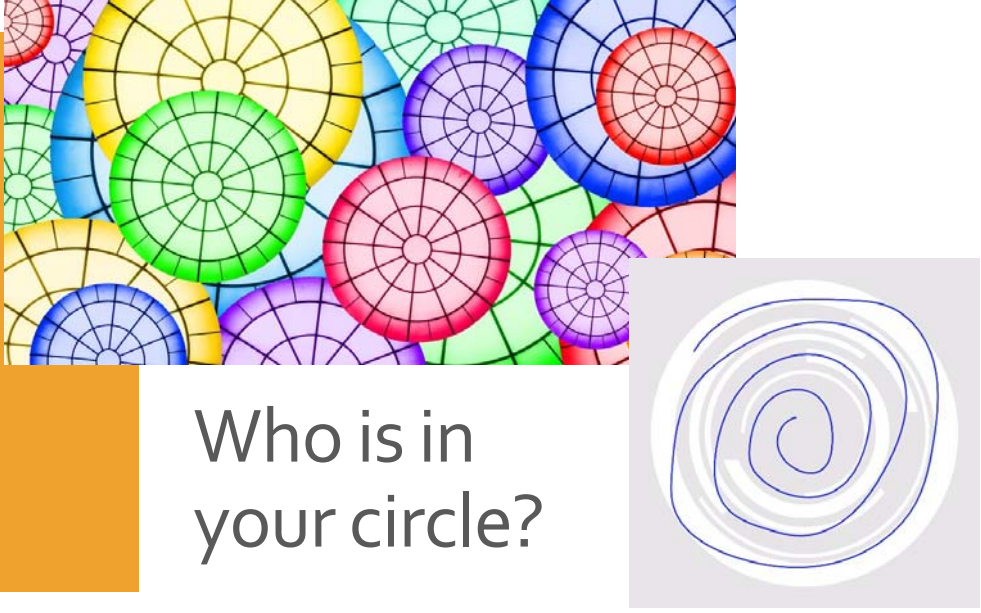
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**CIRCLE OF CONCERN**

- In strong school communities, students (and adults) have empathy for everyone – including those who are different in background, beliefs, or other ways.
- When educators show that they care about *everyone* in the school community and expect students to do the same, it can help students open their eyes and ears to others, including those who are sometimes treated as invisible.

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Who is in your circle?

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The Empathy Action Gap

**think. care. act.**

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## The Empathy Action Gap

- Encourage students to take the leap from having empathy to acting on it.
- But we all sometimes fall into the *empathy-action gap*, when we care about a person or cause but don't do anything to help.
- Educators can help young people overcome this gap by modeling and encouraging them to take action, whether it's standing up for someone who is teased, helping to solve a problem, or simply listening to someone who is feeling down.

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Watch this test of the empathy action gap.

What would you do?

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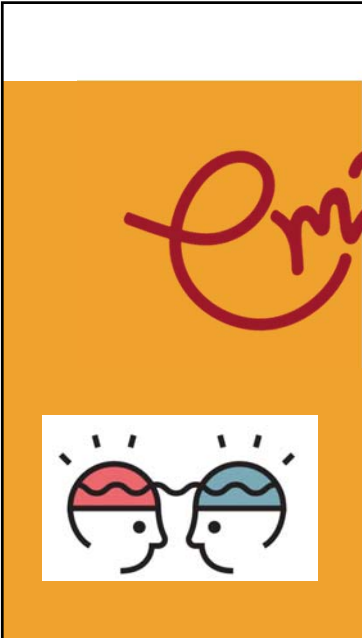
# What about empathy and bullying?



Research demonstrates that empathy has an inverse relationship to aggression.

The Development of Empathy and Prosocial Behavior Through Humane Education, Restorative Justice, and Animal-assisted Programs. Dawna Komorosky & Keri K. O'Neal, Contemporary Justice Review Vol. 18, Iss. 4, 2015.

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If we look into the heart of bullying, what we often find are deficits of emotional control and empathy.

Empathy: The Antidote to Bullying. Lynnea Gillen, 2016.

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## Phase III: The Adult Student



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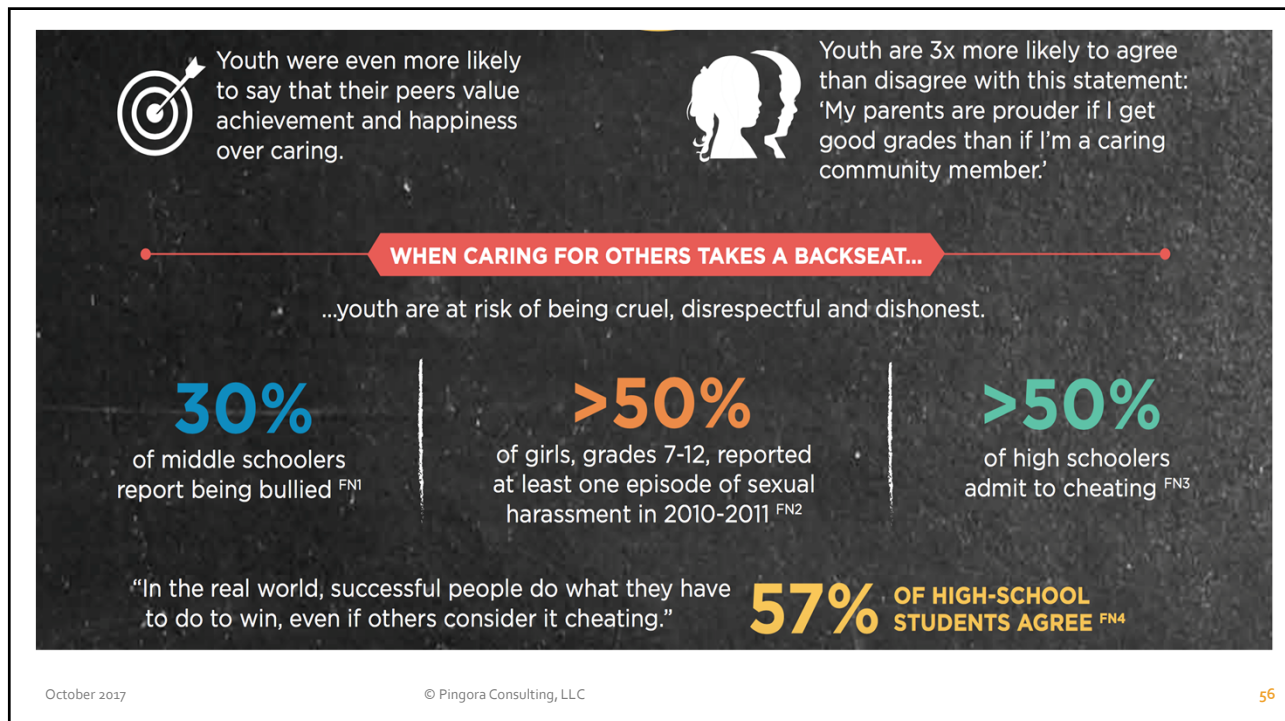
## What do young adults need to be successful?

## Is empathy on your list?

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### ARE ADULTS 'WALKING THE TALK'?

A gap exists between what parents say are their top priorities for children, and what children perceive these priorities to be.

**WHAT PARENTS SAY...**

**WE WANT CARING KIDS!**

**96%**

say moral character in children is "very important, if not essential" FNS

**WHAT KIDS THINK...**

**THAT'S NOT WHAT I HEARD!**

**81%**

think happiness or achievement is their parents' top priority

### ARE WE READY TO ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY & RETHINK PRIORITIES?

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## Phase IV: The Rest of the World



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**85%**  
OF EMPLOYEES BELIEVE  
EMPATHY IS UNDERVALUED  
BY U.S. ORGANIZATIONS,  
A 5% INCREASE FROM 2016.

Workplace Empathy Monitor 2017

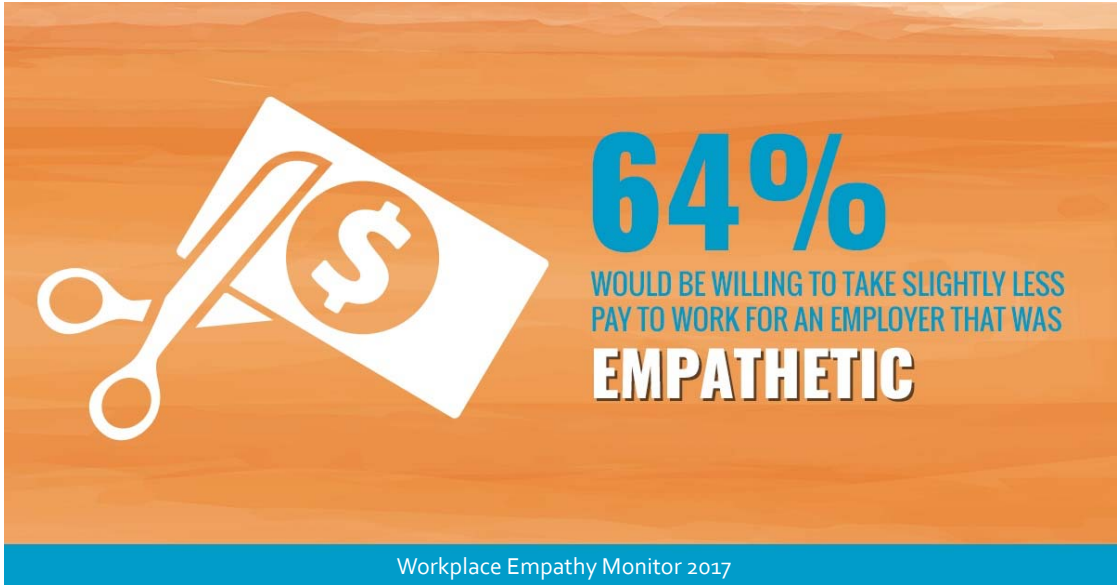
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**60%** OF CEOS SAY  
ORGANIZATIONS ARE EMPATHETIC, BUT ONLY

**24%** OF EMPLOYEES BELIEVE  
ORGANIZATIONS ARE ACTUALLY EMPATHETIC.

Workplace Empathy Monitor 2017

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**64%**  
WOULD BE WILLING TO TAKE SLIGHTLY LESS  
PAY TO WORK FOR AN EMPLOYER THAT WAS  
**EMPATHETIC**

Workplace Empathy Monitor 2017

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**EMPATHY  
IN SCHOOLS**

Think about the  
importance of empathy  
in education.

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# Empathy impacts the team process.

- IEP Teams
- Staff Teams
- Facilitation
- Mediation



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# How can empathy make a difference?



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What is missing?



**empathy?**

What went wrong?

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## What happens when we act without empathy?

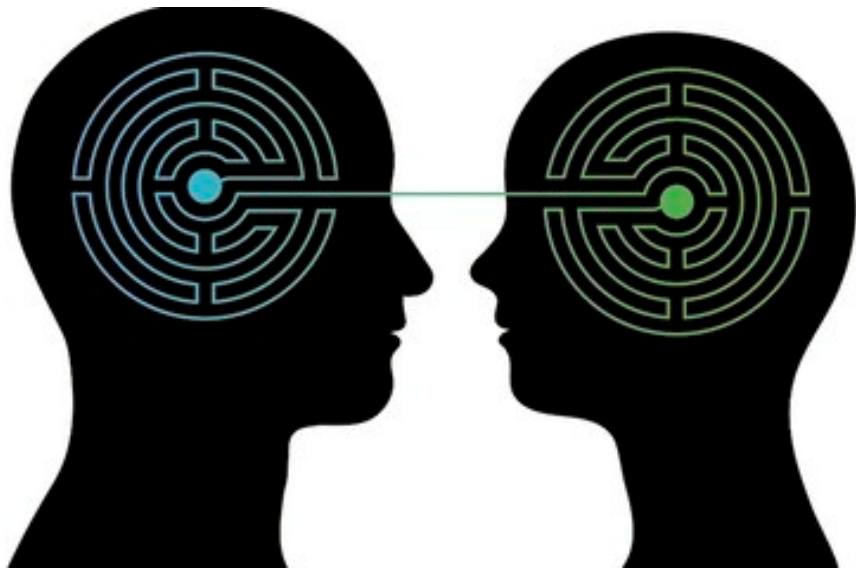
- Critical thinking is impaired.
- Not all perspectives are considered.
- Barriers to deeper understanding of problems are created.
- Anger escalates.
- Injury occurs.

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## Foster change through empathy.



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## Where can we make a difference?

- Cope with stress
  - Teachers
  - Students
  - Parents
- Keep Biases in check
  - Teachers
  - Students
  - Mediators
  - Facilitators
  - Administrators
- Reduce school suspensions
  - School Staff
  - Administrators
  - Students
- Restorative Justice
  - Students
  - School Staff
  - Community Members
  - Administrators
  - Parents

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## Brainstorm:

Identify what you can do tomorrow to cultivate empathy.



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Remember, the skill must be practiced...

If empathy isn't practiced, it can erode over time or be lost entirely.  
Create an empathic mindset.  
Cultivate it!

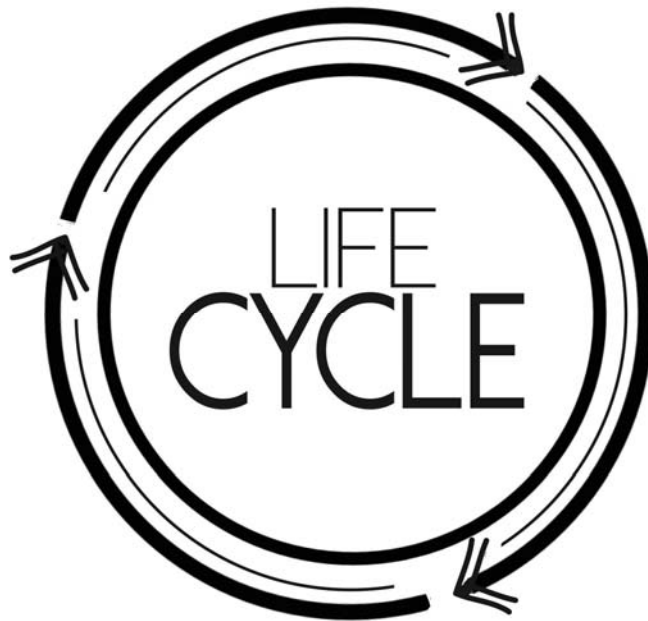


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Remember, empathy is not an event. Empathy is critical throughout the life cycle.



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