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B. Ed. 2nd Year

EPC 4..Understanding The Self

Topic:- **Importance Of Empathy**

What is Empathy?

Empathy involves the ability to emotionally understand what another person is experiencing. Essentially, it is putting yourself in someone else's position and feeling what they must be feeling. When you see another person suffering, you might be able to instantly envision yourself in the other person's place and feel sympathy for what they are going through.

While people are generally pretty well-attuned to their own feelings and emotions, getting into someone else's head can be a bit more difficult. The ability to feel empathy allows people to "walk a mile in another's shoes," so to speak. It permits people to understand the emotions that others are feeling.

For many, seeing another person in pain and responding with indifference or even outright hostility seems utterly incomprehensible. But the fact that some people do respond in such a way clearly demonstrates that empathy is not necessarily a universal response to the suffering of others

Types of Empathy

The term *empathy* was first introduced in 1909 by psychologist [Edward B. Titchener](#) a translation of the German term *emfühlung* (meaning "feeling into").

There are also different types of empathy that a person may experience:

- **Affective empathy** involves the ability to understand another person's emotion and respond appropriately. Such emotional understanding may lead to someone feeling concerned for another person's well-being, or it may lead to feelings of personal distress.
- **Somatic empathy** involves having a sort of physical reaction in response to what someone else is experiencing. People sometimes physically experience what another person is feeling. When you see someone else feeling embarrassed, for example, you might start to blush or have an upset stomach.
- **Cognitive empathy** involves being able to understand another person's mental state and what they might be thinking in response to the situation. This is related to what psychologists

refer to as theory of mind, or thinking about what other people are thinking.

Benefits of Empathy

There are a number of benefits of being able to experience empathy. Some of these include:

- Empathy allows people to build social connections with others. By understanding what people are thinking and feeling, people are able to respond appropriately in social situations.
- Empathizing with others helps you learn to regulate your own emotions. Emotional regulation is important in that it allows you to manage what you are feeling, even in times of great stress, without becoming overwhelmed.
- Empathy promotes helping behaviours. Not only are you more likely to engage in helpful behaviours when you feel empathy for other people; other people are also more likely to help you when they experience empathy.

Influences

Not everyone experiences empathy in every situation. Some people may be more naturally empathetic in general, but people also tend to feel more empathetic towards some people and less so towards others.

Some of the different factors that play a role in this tendency include:

- How people perceive the other person
- How people attribute the other individual's behaviours
- What people blame for the other person's predicament
- Past experiences and expectations

At the most basic level, there appear to be two main factors that contribute to the ability to experience empathy: genetics and socialization. Essentially, it boils down the age-old relative contributions of nature and nurture.

Parents pass down genes that contribute to overall personality, including the propensity toward sympathy, empathy, and compassion. On the other hand, people are also socialized by their parents, peers, communities, and society. How people treat

others as well as how they feel about others is often a reflection of the beliefs and values that were instilled at a very young age.

Why People Lack Empathy

A few reasons why people sometimes lack empathy:

- **They fall victim to cognitive biases.** Sometimes the way people perceive the world around them is influenced by a number of cognitive biases. For example, people often attribute other people's failures to internal characteristics, while blaming their own shortcomings on external factors. These biases can make it difficult to see all the factors that contribute to a situation and make it less likely that people will be able to see a situation from the perspective of another.
- **People tend to dehumanize victims.** Many also fall victim to the trap of thinking that people who are different from them also don't feel and behave the same as they do. This is particularly common in cases when other people are physically distant. When they watch reports of a disaster or conflict in a foreign land, people might be less likely to feel

empathy if they think that those who are suffering are fundamentally different than they are.

- **People tend to blame victims.** Sometimes when another person has suffered through a terrible experience, people make the mistake of blaming the victim for his or her circumstances. This is the reason why victims of crimes are often asked what they might have done differently to prevent the crime. This tendency stems from the need to believe that the world is a fair and just place. People want to believe that people get what they deserve and deserve what they get — it fools them into thinking that such terrible things could never happen to them.