

## Staff Training Curriculum: Developing Empathy and Compassion

Title: Understanding sympathy versus empathy

Time Required: 15 min.

Learning Outcomes of Exercise:

1. Students will understand the difference between sympathy and empathy
2. Understanding the difference, students will be able to begin to take up a practice that builds capacity for empathy

Alignment with which Co-Curricular Learning Outcome(s):

1. Being, Belonging, Becoming
2. Self-Awareness and Purpose

Materials Needed:

1. (1) 3x5 card for each participant
2. White board or flip chart (optional)
3. Sympathy/Empathy Exercise 1 and 2 (see attachment A)

Instructions:

1. Establish community standards for the session
2. Distribute a 3x5 card to each participant at the top have them write "Sympathy" have them turn the card over and at the top write "Empathy". Then ask each participant to write down the definition of each.
3. Ask several of the participants to share their definitions of "Sympathy" and "Empathy". If possible write the answers on a white board or flipchart so all the participants can see.
4. Discuss commonalities among answers and then share the following definitions which will be used in other trainings.

"Sympathy": to express sympathy is to make it known that you are aware of another's distress and that you have compassion for them; you feel sorry for them, but don't know exactly what they feel.

"Empathy": with empathy, you feel with a person and display compassion at a deeper level of understanding by stepping into the other person's experience.

A short way to remember is that you express sympathy but feel empathy.

5. Choose one of the two exercises in Attachment A and follow the directions provided with each exercise. Only one exercise need be completed.

Reflection Question(s):

1. During the exercise did you find it easier to be sympathetic or empathetic? Why?
2. In a work/classroom/community environment what might the benefits be of being empathetic versus sympathetic

3. Is there a time when being sympathetic is preferable to being empathetic?

Follow up actions:

1. During encounters with friends, classmates, customers etc.. challenge yourself to be empathetic instead of sympathetic. What difference did it have on your interaction?