

Center for Empathy Research and Training (CERT)

Ben Freer, PhD

Steve Dranoff, PhD

What is empathy?

- Understanding a person from his or her frame of reference rather than one's own, OR vicariously experiencing someone else's feelings, perceptions, and thoughts (APA)
 - Other-centric focus
- Two types of Empathy
 - Cognitive: ability to identify and understand others' emotions
 - Affective: sensations and feelings we get in response to others' emotions



Summary of CERT perspective

- State of the world
- Brain does not like to think
- Binocular Perspective of Empathy
- Empathy is a process, not a destination
 - Focus on understanding others, not solving problems for others
- Empathy is not just being kind or “good”
- Role of Roadblocks

5 Skills of Empathy

- Cues
- Pulling the Curtain
- Shifting
- Boundaries
- Shifting

Roadblocks to Empathy

- What prevents or hinders empathy?
 - Misperceptions that bypass the brain
 - Misperceptions, misconceptions, misattributions
 - Biases and prejudices
 - Previous experiences
 - Schemas
 - Environmental triggers
 - Fatigue and being overwhelmed
 - Preoccupation and distraction
 - Rule-based behavior



Summary

- Society and culture introduce challenges to our ability to consistently behave with empathy.
- CERT's training teaches attendees to assess their environment to identify the needs, wants, and feelings of others and oneself to foster meaningful interactions and relationships that engage with and resolve conflict.

CERT Empathy Trainings

- CERT offers:
 - 2-day, 5-hour Empathy Training to focus an organization's community on a consistent language and culture of empathy
 - 2-day, 6-hour Empathy Train-the-Trainer Training to develop trainers within an organization to develop a sustainable model of empathy.

CERT Trainings

- CERT offers:
 - Risky Business
 - School-based training for students from 3rd through 12th grade that is grounded in empathy and focuses on decision-making and peer relationships.
 - Harassment Training