



empathy in the workplace

Abilities that relate to the identification and use of emotions in the workplace

Empathy is the ability to perceive and relate to the thoughts, emotions, or experiences of others. Those with high levels of empathy are skilled at understanding a situation from another person's perspective.

Empathy in the context of the workplace simply means that you are able to establish true, empathetic connections with one another that enhance relationships and performance. It's important to remember the difference between sympathy and empathy, as the 2 are often confused.

Sympathy is typically defined by feelings of pity for another person, without really understanding what it's like to be in their situation.

Empathy, on the other hand, refers to the capacity or ability to imagine oneself in the situation of another, experiencing the emotions, ideas, or opinions of that person.

Being empathetic toward someone does **not** necessarily mean agreeing with them. It means that you understand that person's truth. Sounds simple enough, right? It is, in theory. In application, however, you can find yourself in a more challenging situation when you must show empathy – because that's your job – even when you completely cannot relate to the person or vehemently disagree with their views, thoughts or opinions. Here's why keeping empathy at the forefront of your professional dealings (especially in a customer-centric environment) is important.

Demonstrating empathy in the workplace (a key part of emotional intelligence and role effectiveness) improves human interactions in general and can lead to more effective communication and positive outcomes.

Not to mention, diverse and inclusive offices can only truly work if there is empathy at play. Empathy allows you to embrace all our differences, and empathetic leadership fosters those differences—different ideas, different perspectives, different strengths and weaknesses—to build better teams. To build better companies.

Approach challenges from a different perspective Imagine the problem or situation from your team member's perspective. This can help you better understand their propositions and point of view. Even if you reach a different conclusion from them, you may have a better understanding of their thought process, which can inform future discussions.

Ask questions to understand Ask what experiences have led to a particular conclusion. Consider the potential underlying factors that caused the person to feel the way they feel. If you don't understand the situation, keep asking questions until you do. Empathy comes with a deeper understanding of what has happened.

Validate how the other person is feeling In your interactions, repeat the concerns of the person you're dealing with so they know you understand. For example, if you're working with an unsatisfied customer, tell them you know it's a challenging experience. Acknowledge their feelings and let them know that this is an appropriate way to feel.

Determine the preferred resolution Taking the time to understand someone's desired goal is a great way to show empathy. Ask questions and practice active listening when someone is trying to communicate a challenge they're facing.