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**THE POWER OF EMPATHY:  
WHY IT'S GOOD FOR  
BUSINESS & YOUR LIFE**

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# The Power of Empathy: Why It's Good for Business & Your Life

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In this handout I'm going to share some strategies for cultivating empathy in your life.

Empathy is the cornerstone of my work as a User Experience Designer and Researcher. It helps us connect better with others, run our businesses and how we show up in the world.

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**Empathy** is the ability to step into the shoes of another person, aimed at understanding their feelings and perspectives, and to use that understanding to guide our actions. It is about becoming aware of what other people feel and sharing their emotions. It serves as a way to link yourself and another person together.

**Sympathy** is caring and understanding for the suffering of others. *"I feel sorry for you."*

**Compassion** means to show concern or pity for someone else. Compassion recognizes the "me" in "you," the shared commonality of feelings between individuals.

*"Empathy is a deeper feeling, but sympathy can be just as honest and heartfelt. However, empathy can forge a deeper and more meaningful connection, thus serving as a bridge for greater communication between individuals or between a leader and his or her followers." -Diffen*

## Empathy Exercises

### **1. Volunteer to work in a community that's very different from your own, especially one that is ethnically different.**

This will allow you to see and experience things you wouldn't ordinarily experience.

**2. Practice active listening skills by asking others for their perspectives and/or feelings regarding a situation.** Helps you gain a deeper understanding of what they have gone through. Pay attention to the person's tone of voice, volume, pace, and whether or not they emphasize certain words. The non-verbal cues such as facial expressions, body language and even breathing patterns say things that might actually mask true feelings and insecurities.

**3. Day in the Life:** Spend a day in the shoes of the person you want to gain more empathy for. For example if you want to know what it feels like to be a fireman you can spend a week working alongside of them.

### **How you can develop empathy:**

- Set aside your assumptions about that person.
- Become a better listener known as active listening.
- Observe more - learn to pay attention to body language, environments, and expressions (non-verbal).
- Ask for feedback.
- Have the right attitude - you're doing it to understand, find solutions, and build relationships with other people
- Be humble - Be willing to admit your own shortcomings.

**One final note:** When practicing empathy it's easy to get emotionally drawn into the other person's world, where their problems, pain, and experiences essentially become our own. This can become overwhelming and interfere with our quality of life and our ability to help others. Protect your mental state as you dive into this work.