

Practicing Empathy and Compassion

When you have more capacity to extend empathy and compassion to others, two ways to cultivate these qualities are to practice [mindfulness](#), which can increase your awareness of others, and to avoid placing blame, which disconnects you from the feelings of others.

For some practical steps in displaying empathy, [Dr. Helen Riess](#), Associate Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, developed an acronym, EMPATHY:

E: Eye contact — usually the first indication someone has noticed us.

M: Muscles of facial expression — the look on a person's face says a lot about their emotional state.

P: Posture — it powerfully conveys connection.

A: Affect (the scientific term for expressed emotions) — when you label someone's emotion, it changes how you hear what the person is saying.

T: Tone of voice — a powerful conveyor of emotion.

H: Hearing the whole person — not only hearing words but also understanding the context of the other person's life. Clarifying questions and statements are key to making others feel heard.

Y: Your response to the other person.