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# MOOC 2 – Unit 2

## EMPATHY :

### psychologist's keystone in early intervention

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# EMPATHY: Psychologist's Keystone in Early Intervention

## INTRODUCTION

Mental health professionals work in collaboration with non-professional first aid workers, even if they do not belong to the pre- or post-disaster response team. Non-professional first aid workers can be trained in psychological first-aid techniques, in order to be able to assess high-risk survivors. The assessment focuses not only on the presence of acute symptoms or stressors (such as self-harming or aggressive behaviour, disorientation in time/place/person, missing family member/s, direct threat to life because of disaster, significant physical injury to self or family members, delayed relief and/or evacuation), but also history of past mental illness and/or substance abuse or addiction, as it was in the first time of the first aid psychological intervention.

The profile of the psychologist in early intervention is first defined as mental health professional, but it also covers a multi-dimensional role: education, training, administration, negotiating, collaboration, fundraising, skill transferring, advocating, treating and rehabilitation.

As soon as possible, it is important to target stress high-risk population in the disaster area without provoking stigmatization, promote accountability and share standards of good practice.

It is also crucial to monitor the disaster relief workers' mental and physical health status, as they are exposed to risk of burnout, compassion fatigue and vicarious traumatisation using stress management techniques.

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## EMPATHY: Psychologist's Keystone in Early Intervention

### INTRODUCTION



Empathy is the keystone of the tradition of all psychodynamic psychotherapies.

Early Intervention Psychologist can stay in synchrony with this tradition without losing focus and timing: a methodological listening/feeling that makes a difference for all other technical tools.

The universal basic competence of the psychologist in early intervention is actually an internal transversal posture, a crucial meta-competence necessary to exercise this complex role which allows the psychologist in every context and setting to observe with an open mind, to listen without bias, to deeply understand the real needs, to enter the relation for an efficient communication and fluid coordination with different individuals and complex organisations, communities, cultures, always with respect and an open mind.

This psychological early intervention keystone is EMPATHY. It allows to perform all other competences, maintaining an efficient order of priority and especially teaching it correctly. Otherwise, you can miss the concrete meaning of the help and support that is truly needed, or understand the role of psychologist as a superman, so nearly a mission impossible that it can turn into personal burnout.

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### CHAPTER 1 : EMPATHY and its Forms

Introduction: GENERAL DEFINITION OF EMPATHY

§1.1 The three types of empathy

§1.2 Phases of empathy process in autistic studies

§1.3 Neurological basis of empathy

- a. a focus on fear
- b. modulation and learning

§1.4 Can we teach empathy?



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### CHAPTER 3 : Risks Associated with Empathy

Introduction

§3.1 Deficit of empathy

§3.2 The risk of empathy in crisis: vicarious syndrome

§3.3 The abuse of empathy in supervision

Psychological  
Early  
Intervention

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### CHAPTER 4 : CONCLUSION

#### GOOD PRACTICES

Introduction

- 1 Teaching empathy- introduction
- 2 Teaching sensory-motor empathy
- 3 Teaching cognitive empathy
- 4 Teaching emotional empathy
- 5 Teaching empathy evolution

#### QUIZ

#### REFERENCES