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MOOC 2 – Unit 2 EMPATHY : psychologist's keystone in early intervention

Chapter 2 Using Empathy in Emergency Intervention

Developed by Institut Alfred Adler de Paris (FR)



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INTRODUCTION

One of the essential conditions for the establishment of empathy is a climate allowing the development of the relationship with respect for others in their differences, in a non-judgmental way and a « good enough » distance.

Thus, you can understand that in psychological early intervention making a correct setting adapted to the context is the principal tool. Teaching this ability implies emphasizing sensitivity to the people involved but also to the social and material environment. Empathy is therefore the instrument of choice of the biopsychosocial paradigm.

Teaching empathy is teaching to understand and keep in mind that the setting and its creation and composition allow empathy to settle. The setting is neither only physical (time and space), nor only psychological (reception and listening), nor only social (individual, group, community).

Empathy imposes the dynamic integration of reality levels, so it requires continuous listening to feedback in view of a constant change in individual and collective posture.

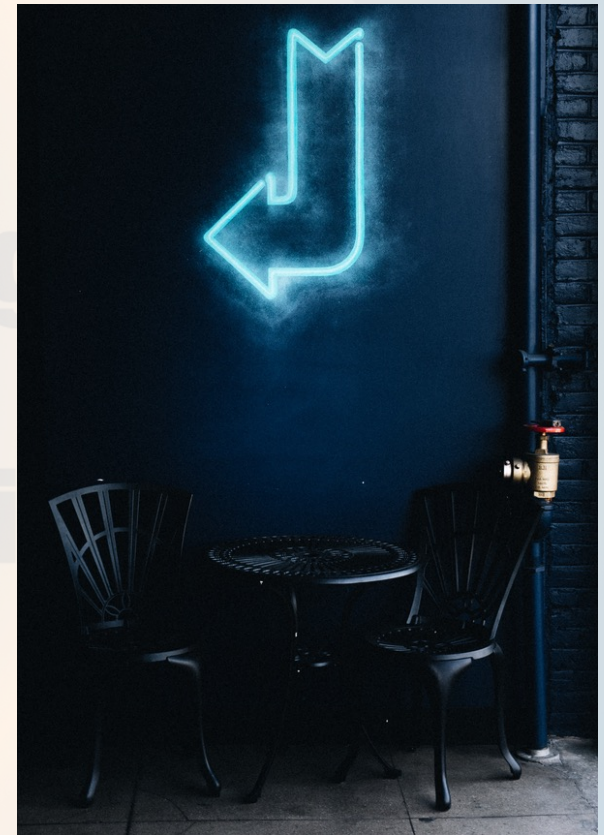


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§ 2.1 Empathy and setting up of alliance : individual, group and community

One of the essential conditions for the establishment of empathy is a climate allowing the development of the relationship with respect for others in their differences, in a non-judgmental way and a « good enough » distance.

In an individual situation, the first aid provider has to connect with one person by understanding his/her unique functioning. Balance is created in the «me – you» relationship and projections are made from the victim to the first aid provider.

In case of group support, the provider faces several people who are linked to each other in a more or less strong ways and sharing more or less common points. The level of differentiation between members varies. Balance is created in the «me – them» relationship. Projections are made on all the members of the group and from all of them.

In case of a community situation, members share a set of values, rituals, beliefs and customs. Strong links defined people to each other. The stratified balance is created in the «me – us» relationship and the provider may work with a group in case he/she belongs to this community.





§ 2.1 Empathy and setting up of alliance: individual, group and community

A way to respect the community is to activate meanings: resources and meanings are promoted in a new integrated way absolutely internal to the individual, the group and the community. The psychologist must take an active, but neutral listening posture: at the right distance, but anchored to the relationship.

For example: in a culture where the psychologist is not recognized as a support figure, but where the religious leaders are important, he/she tries to make alliance with them and facilitate their task as much as possible.



Cénat, J. M., McIntee, S. E., Noorishad, P.-G., Rousseau, C., Derivois, D., Birangui, J.-P., Bukaka, J. & Balayulu-Makila, O. (2020). Guide d'intervention psychologique : Intervenir en cas d'épidémie de maladies infectieuses. Ottawa: Université d'Ottawa, Université de Kinshasa, McGill University, Université de Bourgogne Franche-Comté, Université de Lubumbashi
Disaster Mental Health Services, A Guidebook for Clinicians and Administrators – Bruce H. Young, Julian D. Ford, Josef I. Ruzek, Matthew J. Friedman, Fred D. Gusman



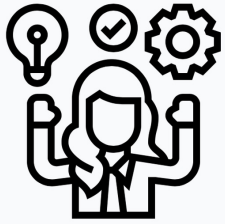
§ 2.2 Active listening*

Active listening (écoute active) : Non-directive skill and relational technique to facilitate communication between caregiver and patient.

Show empathy for the difficult experience that the person is going through, but also by seeking to understand their inner experience. This will allow you to stay in the emotions during your intervention. At this stage, the person needs above all to be listened to and understood. Do not be directive, on the contrary, listen, reflect their feelings, reformulate. Keep in mind these words of Carl Rogers: "When I was listened to and heard, I became able to see my inner world with new eyes and move forward. It's amazing how feelings that were perfectly frightening become bearable as soon as someone listens to us. It is amazing how problems that seem impossible to solve become solvable when someone hears us. "

* Cénat, J. M., McIntee, S. E, Noorishad, P.-G., Rousseau, C., Derivois, D., Birangui, J- P., Bukaka, J. & Balayulu-Makila, O. (2020).

**Carl Rogers (1975), Empathic : An Unappreciated Way of Being. The Counseling Psychologist, Vol 5, 2-10. [Note 4]



§ 2.2 Active listening

- **Paraphrasing** - "So, you want us to bring you food for your family and blanket for children?"
- **Brief verbal affirmation** - "I appreciate the time you've taken to speak to me."
- **Asking open-ended questions** - "I understand you don't feel well right now . What changes can we make to it?"
- **Asking specific questions** - "Who and what supports you in that moment ?"
- **Mentioning similar situations** - "People I met who had to face that kind of situation, usually feel confused and afraid."



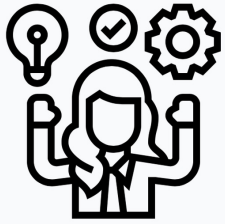
§ 2.3 Acting listening

Acting listening: It is defined by offering, in addition to active listening, concrete help to the person to help them deal with the crisis they are experiencing. This can include helping the person obtain information, services, resources and social support.

Make sure the person is safe

Then, you have to make sure that there is no risk in their family or community. After that you have to make sure that it does not constitute a risk to the health of their family or community. Depending on the concerns expressed by the person, it may be useful to inquire about suicidal ideation and other related aspects. In all cases, make sure that the person is safe and does not constitute a risk to themselves or to others*.

*Cénat, J. M., McIntee, S. E., Noorishad, P.-G., Rousseau, C., Derivois, D., Birangui, J.-P., Bukaka, J. & Balayulu-Makila, O. (2020).



§ 2.3 Acting listening

Empathy can be simple in its “*Acting Listening*” concrete modality

Example :

- a. Show or talk about the different services put in place by the emergency services in order to respond to practical needs of the victims;
- a. Give information on the situation in a practical way, without promise or excess of empathy in order to allow understanding;
- a. Facilitate access to family or community support figures.



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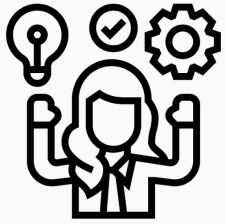
§ 2.4 Transcultural empathy

Adapting to culture and traditions as a common **cross thread** using :

Cultural Knowledge

- Ethno-psycho-sociological matching ecosystems, as a transcultural empathy;
- Transcultural psychiatry and ethno-psychiatry as a matrix nourishing the psychologist's empathy in his/her functions of assessment and management and clinical actions.





§ 2.4 Transcultural empathy

Culture and emotions

Expression of emotions in some countries is not the same as in Western culture. Decency is required and emotions are not verbalized or expressed with the interlocutor. In addition, a marked hierarchy imposes respect for ancestors and the family on individual feelings. The notions of honour, transmission and duties are rooted in a solid tradition. Thus conflict is not allowed in communication under penalty of greatly offending the interlocutor. Not losing face is more important than achieving the point of the discussion. Forcing the other person to answer firmly in the negative and to use pressure against them constitutes serious disrespect. So we can imagine if in a first aid situation the provider who's not aware of that cultural feature tries to obtain from victims their state of mind or the expression of their needs, he/she increases the possibility of facing anger or avoidance of the situation.

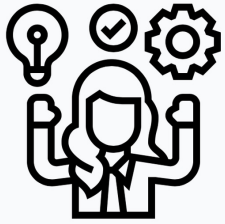
Cultural Competences





§ 2.5 Empathy and assessment

- Assessment in a dynamic setting is already a psychological intervention. Indeed, the individual is approaching their suffering and is trying to understand how to make contact with their anguish and to calm it.
- Assessing people is offering help. It is important to recruit volunteers specifically trained and certified in early intervention psychology and who have previously been correctly assessed. The empathy experience has a price: both positive and negative.
- First responders of all levels and sectors must be prepared in order to be able to cope with the important amount and degree of suffering that crisis situations impose. Otherwise, they could reach the ranks of the 6 types of victims [cf. here MOOC 1, UNIT 2]. For this reason, supervision is also important during the management of crisis situations.



§ 2.5 Empathy and assessment

Empathy Assessment Resources [EAR - V]: Victims

1. (First) Calm him/herself, and the others
2. (Second) Understand the situation,
3. (Third) Overcome it,
4. (Fourth) Make the grief conceivable and then more bearable.

Brief: *also in assessment we must think about the goal of the interview: the well-being of the patient-victim of the ongoing crisis.*

Empathy Assessment Resources [EAR - R] : Rescuers (Victim of III° type)

1. (First) Support the rescuers running through the EAR-V protocol
2. (Second) Select the volunteers, if possible ...
3. (Third) Create Balint Group for all rescuers, psychologists or not
4. (Fourth) Create supervision for all rescuers, psychologists or not



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Empathy and assessment : Victims table by Taylor, Frazer (1981)

6 Typology of victims in crisis situations

- Victim of I^o type: those who directly suffer the impact of the event
- Victim of II^o type: relatives or loved ones of the deceased or survivors
- Victim of III^o type: rescuers, emergency/emergency workers /psychologists
- Victim of IV^o type: the community involved in the disaster
- Victim of V^o type: those who, due to pre-critical characteristics, can react by developing a short- or long-term psychological disorder
- Victim of VI^o type: those who could have been a victim of the first kind or who feel involved for indirect reasons



CHAPTER 2 § 2.5 TIP 1

[cf. Psych.E.In MOOC 1, UNIT 2]



§ 2.6 Empathy and supervision

A balance must be struck between psychiatrization of human suffering and trivialization of psychological impacts.

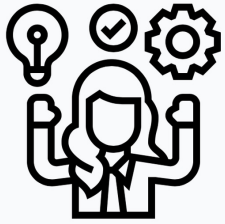
Empathy is a pivotal tool to be used on yourself as a crossing function to understand the emotional contagion of different kinds of victims and their necessity to deny their **victim status**. Supervision tool is also fundamental to understand this typical unconscious defense.

Understanding the difference between Emotional Contagion, Empathy, and Mindfulness leads to a quick understanding of the risks to the rescuer and the caretaker posed by the vicarial function of patients in mental suffering.

Supervision for groups professionally linked to human suffering and death rests on techniques developed by several authors such as Balint, or Carl Roger's T-Group. We invite you to go to Unit 5 of this MOOC 2, dedicated to the supervision tools.



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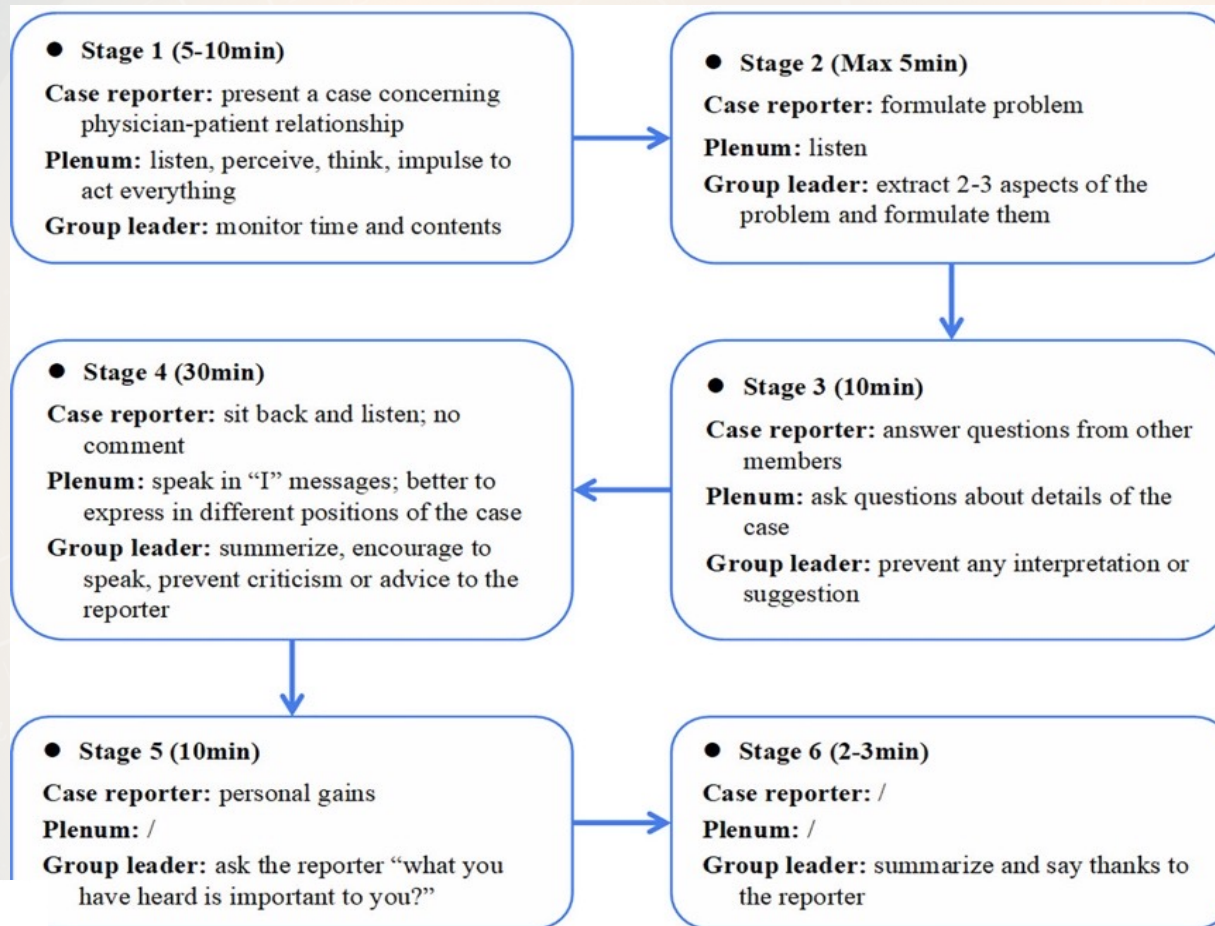
§ 2.6 Empathy and supervision

The Balint's method of the group supervision is a good practice example how to correctly use the empathy competences of a group and individuals to stay in a regulated state, even during a traumatic situation. Balint had created the Balint Group precisely for doctors to help them process their contact with the suffering of their patients. This becomes particularly evident for certain categories of patients such as newborns and their mothers in neonatal pathology service. The emotional charge becomes stronger and harder to control in relation with the impact of patient identification.



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This is a good example of a safe Balint group setting to promote empathy in supervision.



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CHAPTER 2 §2.6 TIP 1

The Balint Group Rules

- Ideally fixed membership
- Two leaders
- Focus on doctor-patient relationship
- Power of the group
- Preference for an ongoing case
- Less conscious aspects of relationship
- Confidentiality
- Respect
- Turn Taking
- Avoid Advice
- Ownership (engagement)



CHAPTER 2 §2.6 TIP 2



GOALS Functions of a Balint Group

- To provide a safe place for emotional reflection on troubling cases
- To help presenter consider other understandings about the case
- To look at blind spots, assumptions
- To help members feel less isolated, less shame, more open to learn
- To help members grow and develop



CHAPTER 2 §2.6 TIP 3



Balint Group Benefits for Physicians

- Explore difficult or troubling situations
- Refine crucially important patient-doctor relationship skills
- Hear and learn from others' cases
- Connect with others
- Experience the power of a group
- Remember what matters about our work
- Avoid burnout, increase engagement and resilience



CHAPTER 2 §2.6 TIP 4

LINK OF BALINT ORGANISATION <https://prezi.com/xqo84w6znlte/balint-group/>