

Fostering Empathy Reflectively

Mirror neurons fire when we watch others performing an action or experiencing an emotion. The research suggests they play a significant role in learning new skills and developing empathy for another's experiences (Thomson, 2010).

As social workers, we must become more aware of client (or service users) experiences as they can influence and affect our interaction with them.

Use this worksheet to improve your understanding of your and others' emotions and increase your empathy.

Try out the following exercise:

1. Watch an emotional scene in a film or drama between two to four characters.
2. Now, reflect on how the characters behaved and the feelings they may have experienced.
3. Write down how you think each character felt:

Name of character	Feelings

4. Write down what you think motivated each character:

Name of character	Motivations

Name of character	Motivations

5. Write down what you think each characters' intentions were:

Name	Intentions

6. Now, re-watch the scene. Then write down any indications of empathy between the character, including what they said and how they behaved or mirrored one another.

Name of character	Signs of empathy

The purpose of this exercise is to make you more aware of behavior and the emotions and thoughts underneath to increase your capacity for empathy.

References

- Thomson, H. (2010). *Empathetic mirror neurons found in humans at last*. Retrieved November 16, 2021, from <https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg20627565-600-empathetic-mirror-neurons-found-in-humans-at-last/>

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