

Empathy

Check My Understanding With Care

Adults and teens 13+ | 10 to 15 minutes

Empathy does not mean knowing someone's feelings by looking at them or agreeing with every choice. Choose a low-pressure conversation. Practice being curious about the person's experience, checking your understanding, and asking whether listening, practical help, or space would be useful.

Use a recent conversation or a neutral rehearsal. Keep interpretations tentative and allow the other person to correct you.

Listen for their meaning

Notice the person's words and preferred communication, not just facial expression or tone.
Try: It sounds like the change was frustrating; have I understood? Different people show emotion differently, and you can ask rather than guess.

Respond with boundaries

Ask what response would help before offering advice. You can acknowledge a feeling without accepting mistreatment or taking over the problem. If you lack capacity, explain what you can offer and suggest another support where appropriate.

1. What did the person communicate in their own words or format?**2. What do I think matters to them, and what might I be missing?****3. How can I check understanding without assuming I know?****4. What response can I offer while respecting both people's limits?****Clinical use and adaptation**

Avoid evaluating empathy through eye contact, facial imitation, or neurotypical communication norms. Do not assign emotional labor to someone experiencing abuse or require understanding an aggressor as a condition of support. Adapt language and communication access; preserve the option to decline the exercise.