

Self-Empathy with the Enemy Image Process (EIP)

Self-empathy is a way of listening to ourselves, connecting with what we are observing, feeling, needing, and wanting. Self-empathy is self-connection, aware presence of what is alive in us moment to moment. It is something we can do during a difficult conversation or interaction with someone when we are having an “enemy image” of them, i.e. negative judgments and evaluations, seeing an “other” that is bad/wrong/to blame/to be punished somehow. More often though, especially in the earlier stages of skill development, we lose this quality of awareness and self-connection in the moment of the interaction. We can then apply this process with ourselves afterwards, and reengage the person later after we’ve reconnected with ourselves and are more likely to act in a way that will contribute to the well being of ourselves and others.

I. Empathy with yourself (OFN)

A. **Observation** – what are you observing in yourself, in your mind

1. What happened, the facts, description of behavior
2. Your thoughts, judgments, evaluations, demands of how things should or shouldn’t be, what’s right or wrong, good or bad. What thoughts do you observe going through your mind as you think about that event *in the present*? Be as free flowing and uncensored as you can with this. “Enjoy the jackal show.”

B. **Feeling** – what are you feeling in your body (vs. your thinking)

1. How you’re feeling *as you think about the event now* (rather than what you were feeling when it happened).
2. Be mindful of using “faux feeling” language that refers to your thinking rather than the internal feelings, sensations, emotions alive inside you. Use the FEELING SHEET handout if that’s helpful to you.

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3. ALSO, I suggest that you give yourself some space to really feel how you're feeling, experience being in your body awareness, rather than only mentally, conceptually labeling the feeling.

C. Needs – what needs of yours are not met about this?

1. What needs do you connect with in relation to what the other person said or did and your thoughts and feelings? What words or phrases for needs most deeply and satisfyingly resonate for you?
2. Be mindful of using language that mixes universal needs with specific strategies. Use the NEEDS SHEET handout if it's helpful.
3. Again, I suggest that you take the space to really feel what's happening in your body as you search for the words that best resonate with you, until you feel a "shift" quality in your body, a feeling of opening, relaxation, softening, peace, compassion and connection with yourself and others.
4. Once you have found some language for your needs, try "savoring" and deepening your connection to them, enjoying and appreciating the ways in which they have significance, meaning and importance to you and the richness they bring.

II. Empathy in yourself for the other person (OFN)

A. Imagine possible needs motivating the other person

1. What needs you imagine the other person might be meeting or trying to meet when they do what is not meeting your needs? Use the NEEDS SHEET for help if you want.
2. Don't worry about being accurate about what their needs are. The purpose as I see it is not to know what their needs are but rather to create connection and compassion in you by putting your attention on their needs that you can relate to because we all have the same human needs.

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3. Keeping imagining and wondering until you feel some kind of bodily shift in you of connection and compassion. You may need to periodically go back and reconnect with your needs not met in this situation.

B. Imagine what the other person might be perceiving, thinking and feeling

1. It may be helpful to you to guess the perceptions, thoughts and feelings that may be going on in the other when they do what they do.

2. Use the FEELINGS SHEET if it's helpful to you.

III. Requests/Planning/Practice

A. See if you have a specific, action-language, "doable" (what you do want rather than what you don't want) request(s) of yourself or of someone else to do something to contribute to your needs (your needs to care for yourself *and* your needs to care for others).

B. See if, rather than trying to figure it out or efforting in any way, instead, in putting your attention on your needs, see if a request already emerged, or if it arises spontaneously in your awareness as you are connected with your needs.

C. You may also want to plan out and practice what you might actually say to this person in a conversation and how they might respond, and then how you could respond to their response, and so on. Another possibility is to ask someone to role play with you to further plan and practice for the conversation.

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