



beEmpathy

DESIGNING WITH AND FOR EMPATHY

Mediating empathy and emotional literacy among school children to foster intercultural competence, creativity, and complex identities

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“Design is essential to inclusive growth. It closes the gaps in the interactions between people and the world around them. We need solutions for human environments that adapt to fit individual needs, diverse bodies, and diverse minds.” (Kat Holmes, Mismatch, 140)

Design is essential to *empathetic growth*. It closes the gaps in the interactions between people and the world around them. We need solutions for human environments that adapt to fit individual needs, diverse bodies, and diverse minds.

Empathy is essential to inclusive growth. It closes the gaps in the interactions between people and the world around them. We need solutions for human environments that adapt to fit individual needs, diverse bodies, and diverse minds.



beEmpathy

ABSTRACT

In my Master thesis, I explore how design can mediate empathy among school children in order to foster creativity, intercultural competence, and complex identities. I focus on the psychology of empathy and on design-informed ways of establishing it. Not only does empathy define the framework of my design research and act as the driving spirit of my design process but it also formulates the desired outcome of my materialised project “beEmpathy”.

Empathy is crucial in all human interactions and leads to both inclusion and well-being. Children’s health can be significantly supported by informing them about how to deal with emotions. While growing into adulthood, emotional intelligence enables children to develop the skill of empathy. Based on valuing and using empathy consciously and with care, my project aims to support children in building healthy relationships with themselves and others. “beEmpathy” provides a clear framework that makes empathy understandable and adaptive in daily interactions. It comes together with a pool of exercises for middle school classes that can be conducted individually or within a workshop.

By defining empathy as an attitude and an ability, rather than a fixed set of methods, I bridge the “beEmpathy framework” to the field of design. I see my project as an encouraging suggestion of how Empathic Design can be applied in times of change and how it can be implemented in educational contexts. Through both individual and common experiences, my design process enabled me to develop a fundamental understanding of empathy that raises awareness for its importance as a designer, child, and first and foremost as a human being.

Keywords:

empathy, emotional literacy, intercultural competence, children, education, Empathic Design, Inclusive Design

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1 INTRODUCTION: Empathy is needed

“If one thing has become abundantly clear, it is that empathy informs a vital intergenerational, interracial, and international perspective that must be valued, vaulted, and cultivated on a grand scale. (...) Empathy training is the key transformative education.”¹ (Helen Riess)

Sweden was one of the first countries to sign the UN convention of the rights of the child. In 2020 it also incorporated the children’s rights into the law.² In Article 29 the UN convention states: “[T]he education of the child shall be directed to: (a) The development of the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential; (...) (c) The development of respect for the child’s (...) own cultural identity, language and values(...); (d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin”.³ This right matches with the fourth goal of the UN Sustainability Development goals that aims to “ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity (...)”.⁴ Since we live in a complex world of increasing cultural diversity and encounters due to globalisation, migration and digitalisation, these aims gain special importance. Every fourth child in Sweden has a multicultural family background.⁵ How can intercultural competence be developed? And how do we do that in times of insecurity and change?

Empathy is crucial in all human interactions and does not only lead to inclusion but also to well-being.⁶ It is easier to feel empathy with someone familiar or with whom we have something in common. Hence, empathy can be low or absent when someone is from e.g. a different culture.⁷ Additionally, the current Covid-19 pandemic has caused higher inequalities in education, decelerated inclusive and equitable learning⁸, and caused severe feelings of anxiety and distress

1 Helen Riess, *The Empathy Effect*, (Boulder: Sounds True, 2018), 71.

2 “Children in Sweden”, sweden.se, accessed April 1, 2021, <https://sweden.se/society/children-and-young-people-in-sweden/>.

3 “Convention on the Rights of the Child”, unicef.org, accessed April 1, 2021, <https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/convention-text>.

4 “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, Targets and indicators”, un.org, accessed April 1, 2021, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4>.

5 “Children in Sweden”, <https://sweden.se/society/children-and-young-people-in-sweden/>.

6 Trond Solhaug, Audrey Osler, 2018, “Intercultural empathy among Norwegian students: an inclusive citizenship perspective”, *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 22, no.1 (2018): 89-110. DOI: 10.1080/13603116.2017.1357768.

7 Riess, *The Empathy Effect*, 21.

8 “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, Overview”.

among children.⁹ I argue that empathy and emotional literacy are not only always highly important - but in times of change they are urgently needed and provide great opportunities for reflection and solidarity. Psychologist and director of the empathy research program at Harvard Medical School Helen Riess says: “Empathic capacity is an essential human trait that we carry into every aspect of our lives, from parenting to education systems, health care, the workplace, business, legal practices, the arts, the environment, the digital world, and in leadership and politics.” But “[a]s we look around the world today, we see less empathy than we would like.”¹⁰

In my Master thesis, I explore how design can mediate empathy among school children in order to foster creativity, intercultural competence, and complex identities. I focus on the psychology of empathy and on design-informed ways of establishing it. Not only does empathy define the framework of my artistic research and act as the driving spirit of my design process but it also formulates the desired outcome of my materialised project “beEmpathy”. “beEmpathy” is a workshop and concurrently a pool of exercises that supports school classes in establishing empathy and emotional awareness in their daily interactions. I aim to put empathy in the focus of education by providing both feasible and innovative methods that enable its conscious practice. Originally, “beEmpathy” aims to support the Swedish national school curriculum, though I also hope to inspire as many other schools as possible to spread the importance of empathy and to create a diverse network. Due to the pandemic, cultural institutions are currently closed and schools cannot conduct any extra activities. Therefore, “beEmpathy” is presented as a concept that is ready to be tested as soon as it is possible again.

By establishing an adaptive understanding of empathy, I want to raise awareness for empathy as a sensitive and effective skill that requires practice and care. By bridging this understanding to design, I want to contribute to the field of Empathic Design through establishing empathy as an attitude rather than a fixed pool of methods. Together with complementing methods of Inclusive Design, I have considered this understanding of empathy as my main methodology. As a communication designer, I base my work on empathy and curiosity to create invigorating designs that meet the user’s needs and can make a long-lasting positive change. I hope to inspire other designers to establish a fundamental empathetic mindset from where they can develop their own techniques of engaging with people and situations in emotional and compassionate ways.

“Design is really an act of communication, which means having a deep understanding of the person with whom the designer is communicating.”¹¹ (Donald A. Norman)

⁹ “Children at risk of lasting psychological distress from coronavirus lockdown”: Save the Children”, reliefweb.int, accessed April 1, 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/children-risk-lasting-psychological-distress-coronavirus-lockdown-save-children>.

¹⁰ Riess, *The Empathy Effect*, 12-137.

¹¹ Donald A. Norman, *The design of everyday things* (New York: Basic Books, 1988): x.

2 CONTEXT AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Ripples of empathy

“Lived empathy is the transgressive bridging of the surface with depth, outer with inner, and realizing that in fact, no division ever substantially existed. Lived empathy is the self-coherence that endorses emotional stability. Lived empathy and emotional stability describe how the goodness within people operates.”¹ (Frank John Ninivaggi)

With my degree project, I aim to foster empathy and emotional literacy among children of upper secondary schools. It explores the positive relationship between empathy, creativity, and intercultural competence as well as its benefitting consequences on children’s identity development. I discussed this relationship from the viewpoint of intercultural studies in my attached essay “Intercultural empathy - the positive interference of intercultural competence and creativity among cross-cultural children”. Particularly, I argued for creative programs as an effective way to establish empathy in social interactions and to build future communities based on mutual care and respect. In my thesis, I focus on the psychology of empathy and on design-informed educational ways of establishing it. Not only does empathy define the framework of my artistic research and act as the driving spirit of my design process but it also formulates the desired outcome of my materialised project.

2.2 The nature of empathy

“Empathy is the ability to grasp the emotional, cognitive, and need-seeking state of mind of another.”² (Frank John Ninivaggi)

The term empathy was first used by philosopher Robert Vischer in 1873³ and stems from the German word ‘Einfühlung’ which can be translated as ‘feeling into’. It has its origin in the Greek word ‘empathia’, ‘em’ meaning ‘in’ and ‘pathia’ meaning ‘feeling’. Initially, it described the phenomenon that a piece of art can arouse strong feelings in the perceiver who is therefore able to imagine the artist’s intentions and emotions.⁴

1 Frank John Ninivaggi, *Making sense of emotions: Innovating emotional intelligence* (London: Rowman&Littlefield, 2017), 353-354.

2 Ninivaggi, *Making sense of emotions*, 71.

3 Karla McLaren, “Einfühlung and Empathy: What do they mean?”, [karlamclaren.com](https://karlamclaren.com/einfuehlung-and-empathy/#:~:text=Einf%C3%BChlung%20Defined,dissertation%20on%20aesthetics%5Bi%5D), accessed April 1, 2021, <https://karlamclaren.com/einfuehlung-and-empathy/#:~:text=Einf%C3%BChlung%20Defined,dissertation%20on%20aesthetics%5Bi%5D>.

4 Riess, *The Empathy Effect*, 12-13.

Usually, empathy is described by two equally important aspects: emotional and cognitive empathy. Emotional empathy consists of three parts: “feeling the same emotion as the other person”, “feeling our own distress in response”, and “feeling compassion toward the other person.”⁵ Whereas cognitive empathy “includes emotion perception and perspective taking.”⁶ Psychologist Frank John Ninivaggi expounds: “Empathy encompasses cognitive, emotional, and behavioral processes whose interrelationships make it possible to respond to another person through a grasp of what the other is inferred to be sensing, feeling, thinking, and needing in the moment.”⁷ From the field of aesthetics empathy has been developed further and is now commonly used to describe one’s ability and willingness to recognise and understand someone else’s emotions, thoughts, and experiences.

2.3 Social-emotional relationships

It is easier to feel empathy with someone familiar or with whom we have something in common. Hence, empathy can be low or absent when someone is from e.g. a different culture.⁸ This is where my project ties on: It raises awareness for a shared uniqueness and the appreciation of diversity. Based on valuing and using the innate empathy skill, I want to help children to build healthy relationships with themselves and others. This becomes clear by understanding “that emotions and feelings are universal across cultures.”⁹ Ninivaggi explains that all experiences are motivated by feelings¹⁰ and defines emotions as everyone’s actual mother tongue.¹¹ “Emotional intelligence is the capacity to identify one’s feeling states, their personal and social meaning, and to use this understanding effectively. (...) Applying emotional intelligence in everyday life reflects emotional literacy - using feelings in an adaptive manner to synchronize oneself and one’s interpersonal relationships with stability in a dependable, sustainable, and reliable way.”¹²

Seeing ‘emotions as everyone’s universal mother tongue’ raises understanding for a shared need

5 Jodi Clarke, “Cognitive vs. Emotional Empathy”, verywellmind, accessed February 2, 2021. <https://www.verywellmind.com/cognitive-and-emotional-empathy-4582389> after: Hodges SD, Myers MW. Empathy. In: Baumeister RF, Vohs KD. Encyclopedia of Social Psychology. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing; 2007. DOI:10.4135/9781412956253.n179.

6 Ninivaggi, *Making sense of emotions*, 75. After: Marc A. Brackett et al., “Emotional intelligence: Implications for personal, social, academic, and workplace success”, *Social and Personality Psychology* 5, no. 1 (2011): 88.

7 Ninivaggi, *Making sense of emotions*, 75.

8 Riess, *The Empathy Effect*, 21.

9 Ninivaggi, *Making sense of emotions*, 123.

10 Ninivaggi, *Making sense of emotions*, xvii.

11 Ninivaggi, *Making sense of emotions*, 48.

12 Ninivaggi, *Making sense of emotions*, 81.

for personal well-being. It relativizes lacking appreciation of differences in opinion and behavior and opens up pluriversal possibilities. In my work as a substitute assistant teacher in an international preschool, children with several cultural backgrounds interact with each other daily. Those who are shown by their caregivers how to be empathetic can intuitively care for each other and communicate with emotional sensitivity rather than exclusively with their diverse native languages.

Children's health is an important aim that can be significantly supported by informing them about how to deal with emotions. Through practicing emotional literacy, emotional stability can be achieved. When a child is able to feel and behave in ways that are consent with its emotions, it can be its true self. While growing into adulthood, emotional intelligence enables children to develop the skill of empathy.¹³ This is why I am focusing on upper secondary students. They have already experienced different situations within the spectrum of empathy and are just at the intersection of building a moral identity that will eventually be carried into adolescence. Even though empathy and emotional literacy are extraordinarily important for the child's development towards a confident and open-hearted citizen, education curriculums still often focus on measurable knowledge acquisition without endorsing the importance of social and emotional skills. Insecure classroom atmospheres tend to outweigh safe and creative places of collective and individual growth. I aim to not only raise awareness for the positive impact of empathy but to put it in the focus of education by providing both feasible and innovative methods that enable its conscious practice. Both empathy and also social skills are based on emotional literacy. They complement each other and eventually lead to social inclusion. Emotional literacy makes people take initiatives and be engaged, it sparks creativity and imagination. It helps to see opportunities and to persist obstacles, it fosters self-agency and encourages to take responsibility.¹⁴ "Understanding our emotions gives us the motivation to change."¹⁵

2.4 Mirroring empathy

"Self-empathy is the acknowledgment that, like all human beings, you deserve understanding and compassion."¹⁶ (Helen Riess)

Within my aspiration to support children's development towards their 'true self', I want to stress that empathy towards others also requires empathy towards oneself. A child has to learn how

¹³ Ninivaggi, *Making sense of emotions*, 83-104.

¹⁴ Ninivaggi, *Making sense of emotions*, 6-45.

¹⁵ Ninivaggi, *Making sense of emotions*, 31.

¹⁶ Riess, *The Empathy Effect*, 189.

to take care of its own resources before it can be empathetic with others.¹⁷ It is crucial to not suppress self-empathy by empathy for others. One should rather concentrate on what one can actually do to support or be with someone else.¹⁸ “No matter how extensive or well developed your capacity for empathy may be, you cannot feel empathy for everyone all the time. Nor should you.”¹⁹ Consequently, empathy is never one-sided. But there is a big lack of programs that teach relationships how to co-create empathy.²⁰ I see my design project as a mediator of empathy and emotional literacy to address that issue. Thereby, I am especially interested in designing a playful experience that makes empathy adaptive and values the children’s strengths.

Psychologist Brené Brown explains that like every skill, empathy can be learned and improved. She formulated four aspects that help to make empathy adaptive: perspective taking, being non-judgmental, listening and recognizing emotions, and communicating understanding and validation.²¹ This concept comes especially useful in my intend to contribute to the implementation of the fundamental values of the Swedish school curriculum: “Education should give children the opportunity to develop their ability to express empathy and consideration for others by encouraging and strengthening their compassion for and insight into the situation of other people. Education should be characterised by openness and respect for differences in people’s perceptions and ways of life.”²² The curriculum of the compulsory school adds: “The internationalisation of Swedish society and increasing cross-border mobility place high demands on the ability of people to live with and appreciate the values inherent in cultural diversity.”²³ Empathy enables compassionate and respectful interactions and offers a valuable way to meet differences and diversity. Encountering this fundamental aim as a learnable skill highlights its importance and transfers it into valued action.

17 Riess, *The Empathy Effect*, 193.

18 Riess, *The Empathy Effect*, 36.

19 Riess, *The Empathy Effect*, 37.

20 Paul Parkin, TEDx Talks, “Reimagining Empathy: The Transformative Nature of Empathy”, July 9, 2015, video, 15:56, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e4aHb_GTRVo.

21 Melli O’Brien, “How to have more empathy: Learn the four attributes of empathy from Brené Brown”, *mrsmindfulness*, accessed February 2, 2021, <https://mrsmindfulness.com/four-attributes-of-empathy-brene-brown/>.

22 “Curriculum for the preschool, Lpfö 18”, *skolverket*, accessed February 2, 2021, <https://www.skolverket.se/publikationsserier/styrdokument/2019/curriculum-for-the-preschool-lpfo-18>.

23 “Curriculum for the compulsory school, preschool class and school-age educate (revised 2018)”, *skolverket*, accessed February 4, 2021, <https://www.skolverket.se/publikationsserier/styrdokument/2018/curriculum-for-the-compulsory-school-preschool-class-and-school-age-educare-revised-2018>.

3 METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

3.1 Empathic Design

In order to achieve that and to put empathy in the focus of education, I work with the concept of social-emotional learning (SEL). This curriculum teaches children through play and narratives to manage emotions, to develop empathy, to solve problems peacefully, to make responsible decisions, and to maintain healthy relationships.¹ I am especially inspired by the SEL tool ‘The Toolbox Project’ which helps children to consciously use twelve innate capacities. ‘The Toolbox Project’ establishes a common language for those capacities and provides opportunities and exercises to practice them. Thereby, the children develop resilience, self-mastery, and empathy for themselves and others, aiming to create a community of care and connection. ‘The Toolbox Project’ comes to the children all naturally and freely. It acts as a common ground of how to live together and encourages children to consciously rely on powerful tools they already possess.²

I consider ‘The Toolbox Project’ as a great example of Empathic Design since getting an “understanding of (...) existing capabilities combined with “the eyes of a fresh observer” in the user’s own contexts”³ is one of its most important methods. Empathic Design “focuses on everyday life experiences, and on individual desires, moods, and emotions in human activities, turning such experiences and emotions into inspiration.”⁴ Through sensitive fieldwork, inviting children into the design process, and critically asking for feedback, founder Mark Collin developed an empathic design solution that later became a written curriculum for many schools in the US. ‘The Toolbox Project’ demonstrates how Empathic Design can benefit schools and their curricula. Furthermore, it is a great inspiration for me in how to make emotions approachable for children. Bringing such a set of tools to life through play, teamwork, and imaginative story-telling defines the desired outcome of my project.

1 “Building a foundation of success”, cfchildren, accessed February 2, 2021, <https://www.cfchildren.org/what-is-social-emotional-learning/schools/>.

2 “Welcome to Toolbox Project”, toolboxproject.com, accessed February 2, 2021, <https://toolboxproject.com>.

3 Tuuli Mattelmäki, Kirsikka Vaajakallio, Ilpo Koskinen, “What happened to empathic design?”, *DesignIssues* 30, no. 1 (Winter 2014): 67. DOI: 10.1162/DESI_a_00249. After: Dorothy A. Leonard, Jeffrey F. Rayport, “Spark innovation through empathic design”, *Harvard Business Review* 75, no. 6 (November 1997). DOI: 10.1142/9789814295505_0016.

4 Mattelmäki et al., “What happened to empathic design?”, 67.

3.2 Related design discourse: Inclusive Design

Based on its main characteristics, I consider Empathic Design as part of 'Conceptual Design'. Blauvelt suggests that since the early 1990s design shifts towards its performative ability to facilitate social interactions. Practices include, amongst others, participatory, process-oriented, and open-ended methods that are viewed within a holistic context.⁵ Design is "moving away from the idealized concept of use toward the complex reality of behaviour. (...) taking us from the idea of an average or composite consumer to an individual purchaser among others living a similar social lifestyle community."⁶ Thomas and McDonagh even go one step further by claiming that this holistic approach is only made possible through empathy. This is because Empathic Design allows addressing both functional and emotional needs.⁷

"Appropriate, human-centered design requires that all the considerations be addressed from the very beginning, with each of the relevant design disciplines working together as a team."⁸

Inviting users and experts into the process and being aware of the numerous entanglements, I see the contextualism of Empathic Design as an important motivation to draw inspiration from other fields of design. During my design process, I have considered Inclusive Design as extremely rewarding to contribute to the recent development of Empathic Design as it provides approaches that are based on a mutual aspiration for equality and understanding. Designer Kat Holmes explains: "An inclusive designer thinks in terms of interdependent systems. They study human relationships. They observe the ways that people bring their skills together to complement each other."⁹ This understanding helps me to investigate the possibilities of Inclusive Design and allows me to see the bigger picture while working towards individual change. "The inclusive designer designs for users of different abilities, genders, languages, even cultures. (...) Empathy is key here, the feeling of belonging rather than feeling excluded."¹⁰ I consider its participatory methods as well as its sensitive but critical approach as highly valuable for my work. My artistic research shows that Empathic and Inclusive Design can inform a design project that equips children with lived empathy and emotional literacy while enhancing their sense of agency.

5 Andrew Blauvelt, "Towards relational design", *designobserver.com*, accessed March 9, 2021, <https://designobserver.com/feature/towards-relational-design/7557/>

6 Blauvelt, "Towards relational design".

7 Joyce Thomas, Deana McDonagh, "Empathic design: Research strategies." *The Australasian Medical Journal* 6, no.1 (2013): 3, DOI: 10.4066/AMJ.2013.1575.

8 Norman, *The design of everyday things*, xiv.

9 Kat Holmes, *Mismatch: How inclusion shapes design*, (Cambridge, The MIT Press, 2018) 59.

10 Prathyusha Moduga, "How inclusive design builds empathy and benefits everyone", *prototypr.io*, accessed February 2, 2021, <https://blog.prototypr.io/how-inclusive-design-builds-empathy-and-benefits-everyone-2263bfabeea2>.

I see my project as an encouraging suggestion of how Empathic Design can be applied in times of change and how it can be implemented in educational contexts. Turning Empathic Design into applied empathic behavior will embody a positive shift for children as well as for their caregivers towards intercultural competence, creativity, and complex identities.

“Helping children share and feel other’s feelings and understand their point of view imparts a lasting foundation to children’s emotional and social lives.”¹¹ (Frank John Ninivaggi)

Note:

Furthermore, I engaged with Pluriversal Design and Arturo Escobar’s theory of ontological design that highlights “the profound relationally and interconnectedness of all that is (...).”¹² Both Inclusive and Pluriversal Design approach their common awareness of designing for diversity and complementation from varying points of view. To include different perspectives and to curiously explore the whole width of Empathic Design, I found it extremely interesting to gain an understanding of both of them. It follows a dispute about both design fields.

¹¹ Ninivaggi, *Making sense of emotions*, 217-218.

¹² Arturo Escobar, *Designs for the Pluriverse: Radical Interdependence, Autonomy, and the Making of the Worlds* (Durham and London: Duke University Press Books, 2017): 20.

DISPUTE: ESCOBAR'S DESIGN FOR THE PLURIVERSE IN RELATION TO INCLUSIVE DESIGN

Escobar emphasizes the need for design to reorientate towards its 'relational dimension'. To do so, he introduces the 'ontological design' approach. Ontology is the philosophy of being. Escobar's idea of ontological design derives from the insight that all design creates ways of being. "[W]e design our world and our world designs us back - in short, design designs."¹ He sees ontological design as a way to enable the transition towards 'designs for the pluriverse'. Thereby design's role is the creation of a more livable world though redefining it as 'autonomous design'. This thesis is based on the human intention to thrive for autonomy and self-actualization. It aims to manifest design's relations to politics and life and is based on an ethical responsible practice.² Summarized, ontological design raises understanding for "the profound relationally and interconnectedness of all that is (...)."³ This requires being concerned about our ways of living and engaging with each other as well as with the earth.⁴

Due to its holistic interconnectedness, I consider Pluriversal Design as an important part of the Relational Design area. Also Holmes acknowledges that design shapes our society which will in turn effect us. She explains that this cycle defines exclusion since the effects of our designs will inform the next issues that design aims to solve. Holmes claims that the challenge of designing for human diversity lies within the undeniable truth that no single design solution fits everyone. Complexity cannot be met by trying to please everyone.⁵ "Inclusion is imperfect and requires humility. It's an opportunity to be curious and approach challenges with a desire to learn. It teaches us new ways to adapt our solutions to what people need (...)."⁶ When designing solutions, it is especially helpful to embed new perspectives. Inclusion becomes embodied by being critical towards the status-quo.⁷

Also Escobar emphasizes perspective taking as an effective design method. He describes his own work as design thinking and pays attention to both logical thinking and feelings, emotions, and intentions. What I find especially interesting is that he claims for designers "intellectual work is about making."⁸ Escobar refers to Paola Antonelli, curator at the MOMA, and her understanding of design as 'thinkering', meaning 'thinking with your hands' and 'doing hands on conceptual work'.

"[C]ontemporary design approaches (...) are critical, activist, organic, and political; they are about thinkering (...), about problem finding and problem framing more than problem

1 Escobar, *Designs for the Pluriverse*, 4.

2 Escobar, *Designs for the Pluriverse*, 4-21.

3 Escobar, *Designs for the Pluriverse*, 20.

4 Escobar, *Designs for the Pluriverse*, 21.

5 Holmes, *Mismatch*, 9-21.

6 Holmes, *Mismatch*, 9.

7 Holmes, *Mismatch*, 10-14.

8 Escobar, *Designs for the Pluriverse*, xiv-xv.

solving (...); they are guided by ethics more than by user-friendliness. Design has developed a new sensitivity to the environment and to human predicaments, and is more attuned to its ability to contribute to creating a better world; it becomes a medium in the service of society rather than solution-making expertise in the service of industry.”⁹

Also Empathic Design aims to meet people’s needs based on their realities and experiences. Empathic design solutions address not only functional but also emotional needs and are therefore both usable and enjoyable.¹⁰

As a designer, I often thought about the fact that despite in other professions, we are not presented with problems but rather have to consciously look out for them. It is easy to see this as a burden on the way to problem solving, as if solving the problem wasn’t hard enough. Antonelli’s point of view allows me to become aware of a focus shift towards valuing ‘problem framing’ and my own capacities as a designer. Through my education in observing the world and its happenings from unusual and invigorating perspectives, I am able to look behind the obvious. Curiosity, positivity, and an open mind allow me to express my innate desire for change. Paired with my own sensitivity and empathy, I can identify access points and possible design solutions in a world far from measurable dualism. By saying design is rather about ‘problem framing’ than ‘problem solving’ Antonelli supports the designer in her role of being an authentic, critical mediator of change, a creator of meaningful experiences, who is first and foremost driven by her deep belief in a future of equality.

In that sense, I support the idea of design as being ontological. Escobar describes ontological design as “a conversation about possibilities” and as a contribution “to shaping what it is to be human”.¹¹ By thriving for the better, the designer aims to change the ways humans are interacting with the world. This includes a desire for sustainability in all areas, including social relationships as well as how to treat nature in all its living forms. Triggering ‘conversations about possibilities’ is thereby, in my opinion, an honorable approach as it provides space for discussion - space for differences and the pluriverse. Which is why I am sceptic towards his second understanding of ‘shaping what it is to be human’. Escobar himself raises the question of “What is real?” and argues for a non-dualistic way of designing and living. Hence, if the designer puts herself in the position to decide about what it means to be human, the worst opposite would come true. My own project makes a statement towards appreciating diversity and empathy as a base for human interaction. But in the desire towards equality, towards multifaceted scopes of ontology, I think the designer

9 Escobar, *Designs for the Pluriverse*, 34.

10 Andrés F. Tellez, Juanita Gonzalez-Tobon. “Empathic design as a framework for creating meaningful experiences.” *Conference Proceedings of the Academy for Design Innovation Management 2, no. 1* (2019): 2-3. DOI: 10.33114/adim.2019.03.408.

11 Escobar, *Designs for the Pluriverse*, 110.

has to apply the same standards in her own work by putting equality not only at the end but also at the front of the process. Throughout the whole process, empathy did not only define my desired design outcome but also my way of working towards that aim.

Escobar's vision of 'design for the pluriverse' is build upon his main concern about nurturing and appreciating differences instead of normalising or detesting them. He describes the pluriverse as "a world where many worlds fit" and as about "living fearlessly with and within differences".¹² To enable this shift in design - but, as I see it, also in mindset and behavior - he elucidates some forms of Transition Design. He emphasizes the importance of participation and that meaning is always created though interaction. Therefore the designer should distance herself from encountering the world with a mindset of only one existing reality.¹³ It implies "going beyond the commonly held idea that the world functions in terms of individual mental representations of a problem, toward a social perspective of patterned, embedded interaction - that is, a perspective that highlights our active participation in domains of mutual concern."¹⁴

Seemingly, this stands against Holmes theory of starting with designing for one individual and then broadening out to many.¹⁵ It is not clear to me, where Escobar intends to start the process. But in my understanding, he would do it the other way around: starting with the whole and then pint-pointing it down to the individual. Interestingly, both claim 'valuing differences' as their main reason. So which approach is more efficient in creating accessibility for the pluriverse? When I think about my own design process, it usually starts with an experience. An interactive situation with a defined group of people. Very soon it turns into a conscious observation of both the individual and the whole. The underlying relationships and dynamics are vital for 'framing the problem'. As a designer I see it as my responsibility to acknowledge both the individual and the whole.

Escobar names critical design studies as crucial when questioning the status-quo and allowing new perspectives. He exemplifies this by referring to feminist disability scholars and their approach of Universal Design. Holmes does as well talk about the concept of ableism as an effective way to explain human diversity and suggests Inclusive and Universal Design should mutually inform the designer.¹⁶ To read about Universal Design as a positive example for Critical Design that supports the author's and the books intention for 'design for the pluriverse' was, to be honest, surprising.

12 Escobar, *Designs for the Pluriverse*, xvi.

13 Escobar, *Designs for the Pluriverse*, 85-86.

14 Escobar, *Designs for the Pluriverse*, 113.

15 Holmes, *Mismatch*, 104.

16 Holmes, *Mismatch*, 48-57.

The Cambridge dictionary defines 'universal' as "existing everywhere or involving everyone" as in "a universal truth"¹⁷. This definition ties on the idea of one reality that is true for all - the idea that Escobar deliberately wants to replace. Pluralism is defined as "the existence of different types of people who have different beliefs and opinions, within the same society".¹⁸ Looking at the first part of this definition, "the existence of different types of people who have different beliefs and opinions", one can reasonably argue that this is the opposite of "a universal truth" - which explains my initial surprise. Looking at the second part, "within the same society", makes me think about the commonalities of universal and pluralism. Society is defined as "a large group of people who live together in an organized way, making decisions about how to do things and sharing work that needs to be done. All the people in a country, or in several countries, can be referred to as a society."¹⁹ Doesn't that mean that a society 'exists everywhere and involves everyone' within? If the world is now being encountered with the knowledge about 'the existence of different types of people who have different beliefs and opinions', couldn't that be the 'universal truth' that the 'society' defines 'how to life together' and 'how to make decisions'? And isn't that what the designer and every change maker works towards? I see empathy as the vital link that is able to establish this kind of mindset in design and in social interactions. For me, Escobar provides a moral framework whereas Holmes describes practical ways of applying it. In the end they might even complement each other, which is the core of both Inclusive Design and design for the pluriverse. I consider empathy as both inclusive and pluriversal as it sees and hears different perspectives and manages to meet individual needs.

"Being a transition designer means adopting different values and perspectives. It is therefore a process of learning, but, for the same reason, a challenge. It requires designers to acknowledge the hypocrisy that comes from being a change agent toward a new system from within the old system."²⁰ (Cameron Tonkinwise)

17 "universal", [dictionary.cambridge.org](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/universal), accessed April 7, 2021, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/universal>.

18 "pluralism", [dictionary.cambridge.org](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/pluralism), accessed April 7, 2021, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/pluralism>.

19 "society", [dictionary.cambridge.org](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/society), accessed April 7, 2021, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/society>.

20 Cameron Tonkinwise, 2014, "Design's (Dis)Orders and Transition Design", *University of Technology Sydney*, 12.

4 MY DESIGN PROCESS: THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

4.1 Empathy is ubiquitous

“[E]mpathic design was never conservative (...).”¹ (Mattelmäki, Vaajakallio, Koskinen)

From the field of aesthetics, the concept of empathy was further investigated in psychology, philosophy, and sociology. Only then, almost 100 years later, it caught design researchers' attention.² In 1997 Leonard and Rayport suggested a set of techniques they called 'Empathic Design'. Unlike previous design methods traditional market research was complemented through user observation in their own environments. Leonard and Rayport especially emphasized the value of identifying people's unarticulated needs that can challenge assumptions and lead to innovation.³ From there on different designers have explored this new design field and formulated different definitions and guidelines. Thereby, Empathic Design has always been seen as context-sensitive, open-ended, dialogue-based, ambiguous, and inspired by human emotions and interactions.⁴

“Designers have become explorers of people's realities, and people have become partners and experts of their own experiences. Adopting these new roles has required from designers the development of new skill sets, in which empathy is fundamental as it allows for rationally understanding and emotionally connecting with other people's lives and circumstances.”⁵

Mattelmäki, Vaajakallio, and Koskinen define five core beliefs of Empathic Design research: First, what is meaningful for people becomes visible in social interactions. Second, design research should be done in real life because this is where design becomes relevant. “Third, research methods should come from design and be visual and tactile, inspiration-enhancing, deliberately cheap and low tech, playful, tested in reality, and targeted at the fuzzy front end of the design process.”⁶ ‘The fuzzy front end’ describes the early phase of the design process where the user's perspective is most valuable to search for and design a concept.⁷ When evaluating the research the aim is not to find universal explanations but to draw meaning from it for the design.

1 Tuuli Mattelmäki, Kirsikka Vaajakallio, Ilpo Koskinen. “What happened to Empathic Design?” *DesignIssues* 30, no. 1 (2014): 75.

2 Yumei Dong, Hua Dong, Shu Yuan. “Empathy in design: A historical and cross-disciplinary Perspective.” *Advances in Intelligent Systems and Computing* (2014): 6. DOI: 10.1007/978-3-319-60642-2_28.

3 Dorothy A. Leonard, Jeffrey F. Rayport. “Spark innovation through empathic design.” *Harvard Business Review* (1997): 103-113. DOI: 10.1142/9789814295505_0016.

4 Mattelmäki, Vaajakallio, Koskinen, “What happened to Empathic Design?”, 68.

5 Tellez, Gonzalez-Tobon. “Empathic design as a framework for creating meaningful experiences”, 2.

6 Mattelmäki, Vaajakallio, Koskinen, “What happened to Empathic Design?”, 68.

7 Ilpo Koskinen, Tuuli Mattelmäki, Katja Batterbee. *Empathic Design: User experience in product design* (IT Press, 2003), 49.

Lastly, those meanings need to be explored with design methods, especially “through the process of making”.⁸

“[I]t is crucial to understand how the user sees his world. (...) Empathy is ubiquitous.”⁹

4.2 *beEmpathy*

4.2.1 Rethinking empathy: *The beEmpathy framework*

This understanding has helped me to position myself in design research. During my process, I have considered empathy as my main methodology in defining and working with meaningful access points. Disputing different approaches and concepts, I noticed that often a basic understanding of empathy was missing in design processes. Well-intentioned techniques diverted the focus towards user manuals, forgetting about the actual meaning of the skill behind them. I realised that Empathic Design, for me, is not about universal methods that intend to make design processes more human-centered but about the designer’s mindset and willingness to consciously use her ability to empathise. “Many authors mention the ‘empathic’ factor in design and indicate avenues of inquiry; however, the definition of what ‘the empathic’ exactly is stays rather intuitive.”¹⁰ Therefore, I used my design process to develop this missing underlying understanding of empathy.

In the course of this, I was especially inspired by Brown’s ‘four attributes of empathy’ and Riess’s ‘E.M.P.A.T.H.Y.’ tool. Both psychologists provide guidelines for empathetic communication. While Brown presents an adaptive framework for primarily verbal communication¹¹, Riess pays special attention to non-verbal communication such as eye contact, mimic, posture and tone of voice.¹² Before reframing empathy in design, I wanted to develop a fundamental understanding that is subsequently transferrable into diverse contexts. Eventually, I was able to define the “beEmpathy framework” that serves as a structural tool to understand the empathy skill. It suggests to consider empathy as an essential ability both as a human being and a designer. The framework

8 Mattelmäki, Vaajakallio, Koskinen, “What happen to Empathic Design?”, 69.

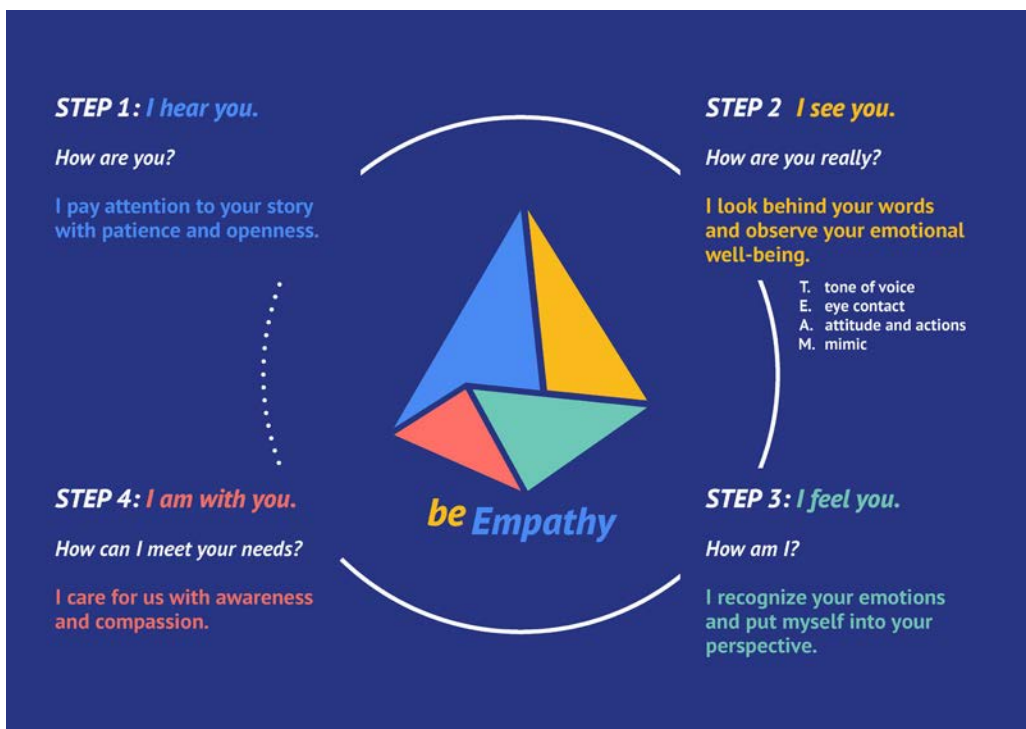
9 Ilpo Koskinen, Katja Batterbee, “Introduction to user experience and empathic design”, in *Empathic Design*, ed. Koskinen, Mattelmäki, Batterbee, 49.

10 Merlijn Kouprie, Froukje Sleeswijk Visser. “A framework for empathy in design: Stepping into and out of the user’s life.” *Journal of Engineering Design* 20, no. 5,(2009): 444. DOI: 10.1080/09544820902875033.

11 O’Brien, “How to have more empathy”.

12 Riess, *The Empathy Effect*, 43-60.

is divided into four steps whereby the interaction does not have to end with the fourth step but rather allows to start again with step one. Every step is narrowed down to its essence and explained in an adaptive manner. The first step “I hear you” describes the importance of listening to someone without judgement or the desire for agreement. The second step “I see you” focuses on non-verbal signs of communication. With the help of Riess’s tool, I elaborated a new acronym that symbolises the core of step two. ‘T.E.A.M.’ stands for tone of voice, eye contact, attitude and actions, and mimics. Its simple memorability supports people in noticing the more subtle parts of their interlocutor’s story and their emotional response to it. The third step “I feel you” is about understanding the other person’s feelings through emotional literacy and perspective taking. Step four, “I am with you”, highlights the importance of taking on one’s own perspective again to realise what is needed and which reactions are not only appropriate but also doable. By expressing this compassion, one is literally empathetic in being with the other. Through my underlying focus on children, I aimed to develop a concept that is easily understandable and adaptive and therefore useful for many others, too.



4.2.2 Rethinking empathy in design: *The beEmpathy manifesto*

“Empathy as a way of understanding the world is underused.”¹ (Jane Fulton Suri)

The “beEmpathy framework” does not only provide orientation in daily interactions. It also guided my design process and builds the base of my final project the “beEmpathy workshop”. By bridging it to the field of design, I developed my own understanding of Empathic Design. The framework allowed me to formulate the “beEmpathy manifesto”, a design statement that defines my intentioned approach and desired aims of Empathic Design. With the manifesto I hope to inspire also other designers and to support their processes regardless of any circumstances and methods. The manifesto helps designers to establish a fundamental empathetic mindset from where they can develop their own techniques of engaging with people and situations in sensitive and emotional ways. The following keywords of the manifesto can provide orientation during the design process: Interest, Observation, Connection, and Compassion. First, the designer has to be willing and open to noticing mismatches. Our environment, including people and objects, define our possibilities of participation. Interacting with others, all relationships, influence how we encounter the world. “When we meet those access points, sometimes we can interact with them easily and sometimes we can’t.”² When we can’t, we find ourselves in mismatched situations that offer the chance for change. The mismatch should be observed and engaged with in a sensitive, holistic way. In order to be able to connect with it, to frame its core and the scale of its related meanings, the designer needs to take on the perspective of those who experience the mismatch first-hand. This will inform the following design process, where the designer has to put on his own shoes again to be able to develop what solves the mismatch and enhances life. Part of mismatched interactions is that we often categorize people or make assumptions about them instead of seeing their multifaceted identities. As designers, we must consciously break through these habits in order to design inclusive solutions.³ “Each time we remedy a mismatched interaction, we open an opportunity for more people to contribute to society in meaningful ways.”⁴ In summary, the “beEmpathy framework”, and the consequential “beEmpathy manifesto”, are both the foundation and the result of my design research.

1 “Insights on human-centered design from Jane Fulton Suri”, ideou.com, accessed March 9, 2021, <https://www.ideou.com/blogs/inspiration/insights-on-human-centered-design-from-jane-fulton-suri>.

2 Holmes, *Mismatch*, 12.

3 Holmes, *Mismatch*, 31-38.

4 Holmes, *Mismatch*, 12.



*be*Empathy manifesto

I agree to practise empathy.

1 Interest

I actively explore the world with curiosity and an open mind. I am sensitive to the context as well as to my own biases and perceptions in order to discover situations that require special attention. I put all my personal assumptions aside and focus on the user's story. I acknowledge that the user defines the timing.

2 Observation

I make an effort to understand the user's state of being affectively. I absorb human behavior multi-sensory and am mindful towards intuitive actions. I observe relationships from a holistic point of view and uncover insights.

3 Connection

I see the user as an expert of their own experiences. I take on the user's perspective and feel as if I were the user myself. I recognize my own emotional reactions and find meaning in them. I relate with the user through a cognitive connection.

4 Compassion

I take on my own perspective again and acknowledge the situation objectively. I thrive for making a positive change of the user's situation. I care about meeting the user's needs with awareness and compassion. I conduct a design process that is informed by the user's perspective and complemented with my own qualities as a designer. If needed, I conduct the previous steps again.

I agree to design with empathy.

SITUATING *the beEmpathy manifesto*: KOUPRIE'S AND SLEESWIJK VISSER'S UNDERSTANDING OF EMPATHY

In an effort to provide a concept for the missing understanding of empathy in the field of Empathic Design, also Kouprie and Sleeswijk Visser developed a four-phase framework. It helped me to reflect upon my own framework even more attentively and informed. Thereby, I realised that our concepts show similarities as well as differences. Within their framework, Kouprie and Sleeswijk Visser promote the particular importance of mastering the 'empathy trap' by not only stepping into but also stepping out of the user's perspective again.¹

Note:

In the field of Empathic Design some consider the so-called 'empathy trap' as a possible limitation of the design process. The 'empathy trap' describes the risk of the designer to losing her objectivity by being drawn too much into the user's feelings and experiences. In so doing the designer will only reflect the user's perspective. To avoid this trap the designer is asked to find a good balance between the user's and her own interpretation. Only by informing the design process with additional insights and inspirations as well as nurturing both the emotional connection and the analytical mindset, the designer can assure an effective empathetic approach.²

"The four phases proposed by the authors are (1) discovery, in which the designer makes a first contact with the user that raises his curiosity, interest, and motivation; (2) immersion, in which the designer explores the user's world to expand his knowledge and understanding of another's experience; (3) connection, in which the designer connects with the user on an emotional level by recalling his own feelings and experiences; and (4) detachment, in which the designer detaches from his emotional connection with the user to analyse and distil insights from his immersion."³ With their concept Kouprie and Sleeswijk Visser had the same intention I have with my research as they realised: Despite all the proposed techniques and "[a]lthough the need for empathic approaches in design has been repeatedly stressed, a fundamental basis of the concept of empathy is missing."⁴

Both of our frameworks highlight the importance of the initial willingness of the designer to engage with the user. As well as to stay open-minded and curious throughout the process. We both consider affective and cognitive connection as vital to reflect upon the user's situation empathetically. Also, the steps follow the same structure which is probably the case as both concepts are based on the psychological view of empathy.⁵

1 Kouprie, Sleeswijk Visser, "A framework for empathy in design", 444.

2 Tellez, Gonzalez-Tobon. "Empathic design as a framework for creating meaningful experiences", 7.

3 Tellez, Gonzalez-Tobon. "Empathic design as a framework for creating meaningful experiences." 5.

4 Kouprie, Sleeswijk Visser, "A framework for empathy in design", 438.

5 Kouprie, Sleeswijk Visser, "A framework for empathy in design", 441.

I consider their framework as highly valuable, though I think the “beEmpathy framework” is even more adaptive as it distinguishes its four steps - and thus the core of empathy - even more clearly from each other. I consider Kouprie and Sleeswijk Visser’s first step rather as the general mindset that comes by establishing empathy. In the third step, Kouprie and Sleeswijk Visser propose that “the designer connects with the user by recalling explicitly upon his own memories and experiences in order to reflect and be able to create an understanding. (...) At this phase both affective and cognitive components are important (...)”⁶ In phase two they describe that the designer is being “pulled into the user’s world”⁷ which from my experience does not allow a nuanced observation of the user which will then form an impression of the user’s well-being. But only this acknowledgement of the user’s real state of being allows the designer to recognize the user’s feelings and relate to them with own experiences. I also do consider the emotional and cognitive connection as equal and crucial parts of the process, but they neither naturally happen at the same time nor should the designer, who is trained in making informed interpretations, jump to conclusions too quickly. Their fourth step terminates the interaction with the user since it asks the designer to step back again and to enter the next level, the actual design work. Based on its title ‘detachment’, the empathetic process seems to end here.⁸ Whereas in my framework, this is where the expressed empathy is at its highest, hence does not end the process but rather expresses real compassion and sets free the actual goal of empathy: to truly be with another person.

6 Kouprie, Sleeswijk Visser, “A framework for empathy in design”, 445.

7 Kouprie, Sleeswijk Visser, “A framework for empathy in design”, 445.

8 Kouprie, Sleeswijk Visser, “A framework for empathy in design”, 445.

THE DESIGN OF EVERYDAY THINGS - AND WHAT IT TELLS ME ABOUT THE DESIGN OF EVERYDAY SITUATIONS

In preparation for formulating the “beEmpathy manifesto”, I read and reflected upon Don Norman’s book “The design of everyday things”. He describes the characteristics of everyday objects and dos and don’ts in product design. Inspired by his manual on how to do things purposefully wrong¹, I set myself the task to write an equally sarcastic guideline of how to be apathetic - the opposite of empathy - to then turn it around and reformulate it into a useful concept.

“Appropriate, human-centered design requires that all the considerations be addressed from the very beginning, with each of the relevant design disciplines working together as a team.”²

Norman explains that the standard procedure of achieving something always starts with an idea of what the achievement actually is, the goal. Then one has to take action, either by doing something by oneself or by manipulating someone or something else. Afterward, one looks at what has been done to assure the goal has been achieved. This procedure consists of the two main steps “execution” (doing something) and “evaluation” (checking). But what if the initial goal is not easily identified nor achieved? “Goals do not state precisely what to do.”³ Becoming more empathetic, to feel with someone, is a very desirable aim. But it does not tell us how to get there. Let alone how to get to the state where one does it intuitively; without much of an effort and with the awareness of how valuable this skill is. Norman offers a solution for this dilemma: “To lead to actions, goals must be transformed into specific statements of what is to be done, statements that I call intentions. A goal is something to be achieved, often vaguely stated. An intention is a specific action taken to get to the goal.”⁴ Hence, what follows upon the goal of becoming more empathetic, is an intention to actually do something in order to achieve this goal. But what is it that should be done? According to Brené Brown one should take on the other’s perspective, be non-judgmental, listen to recognise emotions, and communicate understanding.⁵ But even this simple description is not just promptly executed. At this point, Norman would probably refer to a light switch or a door. Pressing a switch to put on a light or pushing a handle to open a door, are actions that are deeply internalised and should happen automatically. But what about those bars of switches that all look the same but each regulate a different lamp? What about those doors that need labels to tell people if they should be pushed or pulled? Not even the most obvious things always follow the same principle. Empathy can have various shapes depending on different people and situations. But just like pressing a switch, empathy is a skill that can be learned. Just like every skill, it will be improved, and eventually internalised once it is practised regularly.

1 Norman, *The design of everyday things*, 178-179.

2 Norman, *The design of everyday things*, xiv.

3 Norman, *The design of everyday things*, 46.

4 Norman, *The design of everyday things*, 46.

5 O’Brien, “How to have more empathy”.

And since Osler and Solhaug state that empathy is important in all human interactions, one doesn't have to worry about sufficient possibilities for practising.⁶

Norman explains that there exist two forms of knowledge. "Declarative knowledge" is the knowledge of something. It "is easy to write down and to teach"⁷ and includes rules and facts. "Procedural knowledge" is just the opposite. It is the knowledge of how to do things, it "is difficult or impossible to write down and difficult to teach. It is best taught by demonstration and best learned through practice."⁸ Developing the "beEmpathy framework" equips me and my design process with the needed declarative knowledge by providing a fundamental understanding of empathy. By using it to design a materialised project, I will create the basis for its procedural knowledge. When using my design, children should be able to experience, practise and eventually understand the empathy skill. I want to encourage them to recall their empathy experiences, specify their knowledge, and use their capacities more purposefully, more aware, and more frequently.

Norman provides seven principles that a designer can use to turn a challenging task into a simple one. Especially three of them are relevant for the production of my design project. The first rule "Use both knowledge in the world and knowledge in the head" shows that it is easier to learn or execute a task when one can draw on external knowledge about it. It should be easily applicable by demonstrating the expected effects of the conducted actions. Furthermore, it should support knowledge that has already been internalised and is therefore even more efficient. A well-developed conceptual model helps the user to understand a product.⁹ What I take from this principle is that I first have to establish why empathy matters. This information should be made understandable and adaptable. The children need to be able to relate to empathy with their own experiences. Also, it is easier to follow an action or a situation if one gets immediate feedback on what is happening. This is possible through active listening (step 1: "I hear you.") and observation (step 2: "I see you.").

The second principle "Simplify the structure of tasks" builds upon the first by explaining that tasks should not be difficult and complexity should be structured. "Here is where information in the world is important, to remind us of what can be done and how to do it. Limitations on attention are also severe; the system should help by minimizing interruption, by providing aids to allow for recovery of the exact status of the operations that were interrupted."¹⁰ Besides keeping the task simple, things should be made visible to allow feedback and conscious behaviour. Hence, in my design project, I not only have to establish knowledge about empathy but I also have to

6 Solhaug, Osler, "Intercultural empathy among Norwegian students", 89-110.

7 Norman, *The design of everyday things*, 57.

8 Norman, *The design of everyday things*, 57-58.

9 Norman, *The design of everyday things*, 189.

10 Norman, *The design of everyday things*, 191.

make it visible. The knowledge about how to actually be empathetic should be explained in a comprehensible and usable way. Moreover, the given circumstances must be turned into a safe space that allows opening up and active listening.

The fifth principle “Exploit the power of constraints, both natural and artificial” asks to “[u]se constraints so that the user feels as if there is only one possible thing to do - the right thing, of course.”¹¹ Careful design based on correct mappings and natural constraints is crucial to reduce unwanted alternatives. This rule describes the desired outcome of my design project: To make children aware of their empathy skills. To make them trust their emotional intelligence to guide them through interactions with others and to develop confident and complex identities. (Self-) Empathy has to become the only right thing to do.

beApathy

Additionally to the seven principles for designing simple tasks, Norman also offers a list of how to do things purposefully wrong. He actually introduces it before the seven principles; which confirms my impression that it is not only a charming and humorous way to reach the reader but also a smart way to get to the actual goal of formulating usable guidelines. Differently said, the goal is translated into specific intentions. I will now try the same.

What is the goal I want to achieve?

Formulating a set of declarative knowledge, that can then be internalised and turned into procedural knowledge. Thereby, the structure of the task “be empathetic” will be simplified and the principles of operation will become visible.

How do I achieve my goal?

I will look at the task from another perspective and formulate specific statements of how to be not empathetic at all.

What is the intention behind the task?

The exercise is supposed to help me and others to then develop an informed understanding of how to be empathetic. Approaching the seemingly complex theory of empathy like this will help to put it into action.

To elaborate on how to be non-empathetic, the opposite of empathy has to be established. In my photographic journal “The Empathy Spectrum” I identified different stages and forms of empathy. Thereby I proposed apathy, a “behaviour that shows no interest or energy and shows that someone is unwilling to take action, especially over something important”¹², as a possible opposite of empathy.

The exercise

The guideline is based on my online survey “How are you?” where I asked people about their understanding of empathy. Almost every single answer was thoughtful and full of empathy. I reversed them deliberately.

DO YOU WANT TO BE APATHETIC? HERE IS WHAT TO DO:

1. Never allow or respect dissenting opinions and impressions. Strictly avoid taking a different perspective. You are always right. Don't even try to understand someone else. Especially not his or her feelings.
2. Be as cold as ice. Be selfish. Egoistic. And filled with hatred. Treat other people like your worst enemies. Under no circumstances, treat them like you want to be treated.
3. Neglect your own needs and emotions. They will potentially hinder you from following the straight way of life.
4. Interrupt open-hearted talks and change the topic to something less sensitive. Tell others that they are alone with what they going through.
5. Always put your schedule first. Patience and mindfulness will only delay it. Watch out to not accidentally care for people and experiences that aren't useful for you.

¹² “apathy”, dictionary.cambridge.org, accessed April 7, 2021, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/apathy>.

6. Do not listen. In case it happens unintentionally, only listen to what has been said. Body language and hidden emotions are only irrelevant human errors.
7. Judge as much as you possibly can. Others have to know that they are not allowed to feel that way. You strongly disagree with everything.
8. Immediately make every conversation about you. That's most important. Eliminate the following traits: responsibility, compassion, and kindness. It is especially effective to not ask any questions.
9. Do you have an idea about how to make someone else feel better? Keep it a secret. You might even want to give the person a contrasting advice that makes them feel worse. Help and support are just arduous tasks.
10. Keep everything superficial. It might make a positive difference for you and others to explore thoughts and feelings. You don't want that. Never.

Since feedback is essential for every design process: What have I learned from this sharp and sarcastic exercise? That empathy isn't actually as complex as initially expected. While doing this exercise, I once again realised that empathy is an inherent human trait that has to be enticed away from all the learned protection measures and misinterpretations. It has to be acknowledged for what it actually is: a powerful but equally sensitive skill that enables a life based on appreciation and togetherness.

"Everyday activities are conceptually simple. We should be able to do most things without having to think about what we're doing. The simplicity lies in the nature of the structure of the task."¹³

5 MY DESIGN PROCESS: PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

**“Research inevitably inspires her, but her research creates more than inspiration: it also creates an empathic understanding that helps her to choose between hunches and concepts.”¹
(Ilpo Koskinen and Katja Batterbee)**

My design experiments exemplarily demonstrate how the “beEmpathy framework” can be implemented. The four steps of the framework structure my design process. They provided me orientation both during the work and also when reflecting about it. The biggest challenge I have been confronted with during the whole process is the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic as it made the main characteristic of Empathic Design - to engage with the user in his own environment - very difficult and even impossible. But due to my approach of seeing empathy in design rather as a mindset than a defined set of techniques, I constantly tried to see those restrictions as inspiration sources to strengthen my theory and to develop empathetic methods that can work anyway.

“Through observation, we become informed, and through empathy, the human connection, we are inspired to imagine new and better possibilities for people.”²

5.1 INTEREST: Discovering relationships and access points



I ACTIVELY EXPLORE THE WORLD WITH CURIOSITY AND AN OPEN MIND. I AM SENSITIVE TO THE CONTEXT AS WELL AS TO MY OWN BIASES AND PERCEPTIONS IN ORDER TO DISCOVER SITUATIONS THAT REQUIRE SPECIAL ATTENTION. I PUT ALL MY PERSONAL ASSUMPTIONS ASIDE AND FOCUS ON THE USER’S STORY. I ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THE USER DEFINES THE TIMING.

¹ Ilpo Koskinen, Katja Batterbee, “Introduction to user experience and empathic design”, in *Empathic Design*, ed. Koskinen, Mattelmäki, Batterbee, 47.

² Jane Fulton Suri “Empathic design: Informed and inspired by other people’s experience”, in *Empathic Design*, ed. Koskinen, Mattelmäki, Batterbee, 54.

5.1.1 From the perspective of humanities

Inspired by my previous projects, I wanted to further explore the underlying mechanisms of human behaviour and how design can tease out its best. I chose to engage with the concept of empathy with an open mind. Therefore, I explored empathy from different angles such as psychology, pedagogy, and sociology. I took an extra course at the Faculty of Humanities (University of Gothenburg) in “Language and Intercultural Communication” to explore its global benefits. I used the course to get a deeper understanding of how empathy can act as a moderator of mutual understanding in intercultural art and design projects. In particular, I discussed how creative projects can establish empathy amongst cross-cultural children to foster, amongst others, the confident development of complex identities. The extra course made me discover new entanglements of empathy and helped me to gain a different perspective of the topic. Once again I realised how powerful this ability is when living in a world of growing migration and mobility. Also, I noticed a surprise amongst some of the other students who were not used to discussing issues of their education program with a student from the Faculty of Arts and Design. I received the feedback that they had not yet considered a rewarding connection between our education programs. This made me understand that creative projects are not only a possibility to foster empathetic relationships but urgently needed.

“Design is such a ubiquitous force, rooted in every aspect of our lives. (...) And as tragic as the pandemic has been, it also became an extraordinary platform for design, and made clear how resourceful, courageous, gutsy, public-spirited, and empathetic designers could be.”³
(Alice Rawsthorn)

5.1.2 Mapping and the “be.mpathy” journal

Through research in form of reading, I found several connections and insights that allowed me to map out even more ripples of empathy. My mappings revealed relationships and gaps in existing research but also in its implementation in daily life. They helped me to identify stakeholders and sites such as ‘The International Preschool Gothenburg’. During my work there as an assistant substitute teacher, I experienced firsthand what it means to work with children in a multicultural environment. The preschool’s curriculum is based on the Swedish (pre)school curriculum which has been cited earlier. “This includes providing children with the tools they need to become more open-minded to diversity in our society (...). The method is to highlight each

³ Nick Compton, “Paola Antonelli and Alice Rawsthorn on design as a powerful tool of change”, wallpaper.com, accessed April 20, 2021, <https://www.wallpaper.com/design/design-emergency-paola-antonelli-alice-rawsthorn-design-change>.

child as an individual (...).⁴ To achieve that they work with social and emotional learning. They do so because “[i]t works by helping the children to understand their feelings, how to manage them, and provides them with empathy skills that they are able to use in everyday life.”⁵ While working there, I experienced that even though children have similar problems, their needs are met differently. One child can be soothed by sitting down with it whereas another child needs some time for itself. Those children and teachers who were able to see and hear each other’s individual needs, could interact more empathetically and were better included in the community. Also, I experienced that often time and resources were missing to really stick to the preschool’s intentions. Routines and a calm atmosphere supported a peaceful togetherness. Inspired by my regular encounters with the teachers and the children, I started to keep an empathy journal. I anonymously documented situations and conversations that represented the presence or absence of empathy. Thereby I realised that very often only small sentences can make a big difference in order to empathise with someone or not. As I wanted to raise awareness for this simplicity of an otherwise often considered complex concept, I created an Instagram account where I regularly uploaded the empathetic quotes I had received.

I expanded my field of research and developed a special awareness for these expressions in other parts of my life, too, such as in interactions with family and friends. The “be.mpathy” account provided a good possibility to archive my journal digitally as well as to share and establish the importance of empathy. Later, I also used the account to share definitions of empathy that helped me to build my own understanding of empathy.

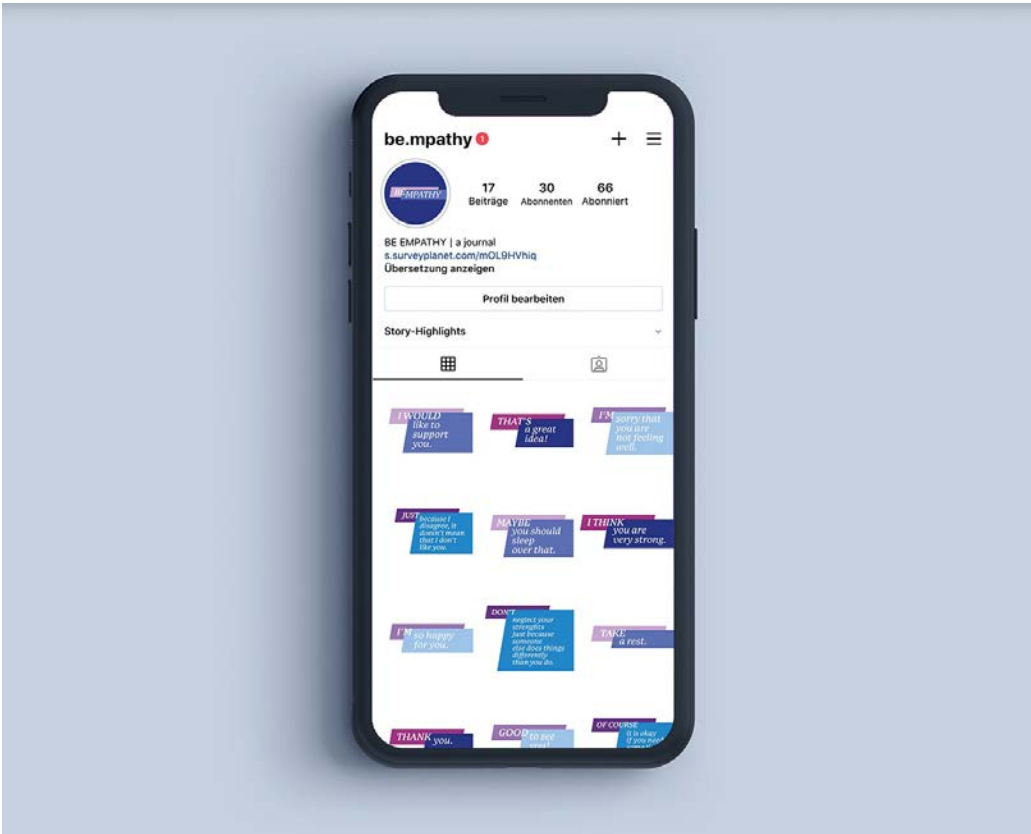
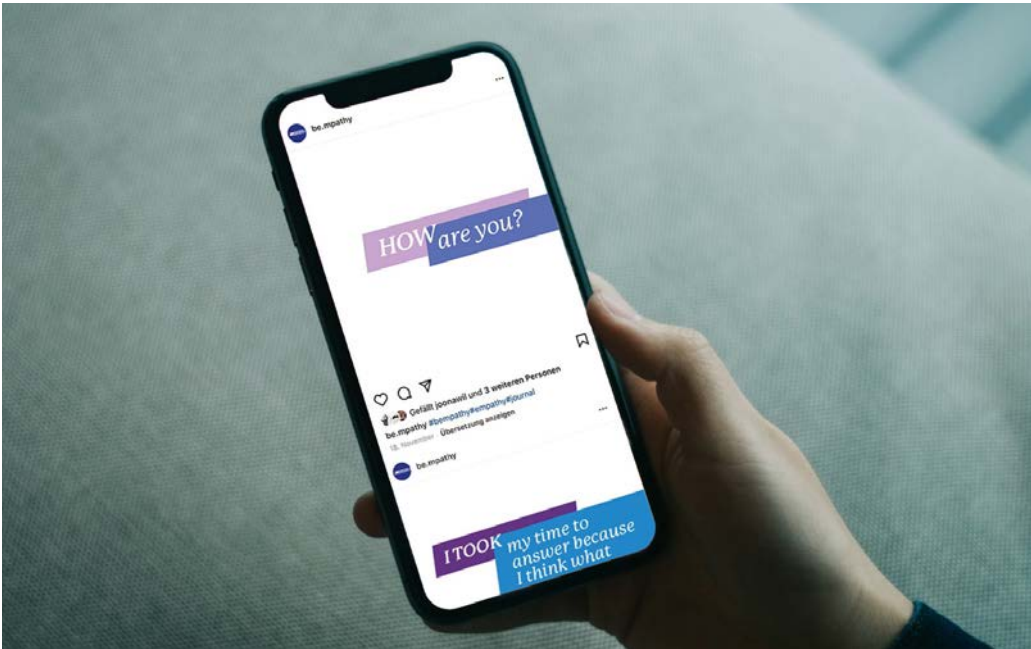
<https://www.instagram.com/be.mpathy/?r=nametag>

STEP1 OF THE *beEmpathy* MANIFESTO

In the beginning of my design process I explored the topic of empathy with curiosity and honest interest. I wanted to learn about different perceptions and definitions to gain a multifaceted understanding of it. By approaching empathy with an open mind rather than relying on previous experiences, I could discover new shapes and connections. Engaging with different stories both theoretically and practically allowed me to actively listen to different stories as well as to receive real and direct feedback. I not only saw the far reaching entanglements of empathy, but also found specific access points to move my process further.

4 “Curriculum”, theinternationalpreschool.se, accessed March 9, 2021, <https://theinternationalpreschool.se/curriculum>.

5 “Curriculum”, theinternationalpreschool.se.



<p>HOW are you?</p>	<p>I CAN understand you very well.</p>	<p>BE proud of yourself.</p>	<p>I AM here for you if you want to talk.</p>
<p>I KNOW it's hard.</p>	<p>MY IDEA is just an offer. Not more, not less.</p>	<p>HOW can I help you?</p>	<p>ONLY if you want to.</p>
<p>JUST because I disagree, it doesn't mean that I don't like you.</p>	<p>YOU ARE allowed to feel that way.</p>	<p>OF COURSE it is okay if you need some time for yourself.</p>	<p>WHAT do you think?</p>
<p>I'M so happy for you.</p>	<p>HAVE a good day!</p>	<p>MAYBE you should sleep over that.</p>	<p>I TOOK my time to answer because I think what you told me, is so important.</p>
<p>I WOULD like to support you.</p>	<p>DON'T neglect your strenghts just because someone else does things differently than you do.</p>	<p>I HOPE you get better soon.</p>	<p>THANK YOU for getting in touch.</p>
<p>YOU DON'T have to deal with everything by yourself.</p>	<p>GOOD to see you!</p>	<p>I THINK you are very strong.</p>	<p>YOU ARE very talented. Remember that the next time you are doubting yourself.</p>

5.2 OBSERVATION: Experiencing others' emotions



I MAKE AN EFFORT TO UNDERSTAND THE USER'S STATE OF BEING AFFECTIVELY. I ABSORB HUMAN BEHAVIOR MULTI-SENSORY AND AM MINDFUL TOWARDS INTUITIVE ACTIONS. I OBSERVE RELATIONSHIPS FROM A HOLISTIC POINT OF VIEW AND UNCOVER INSIGHTS.

5.2.1 "The Empathy Spectrum"

**"Empathic understanding goes beyond knowledge: when empathising you do not judge, you 'relate to [the user] and understand the situations and why certain experiences are meaningful to these people', a relation that involves an emotional connection."⁶
(Merlijn Kouprie and Froukje Sleeswijk Visser)**

To understand different ways of the expression of empathy, I wanted to pay attention to non-verbal traits, too. Inspired by Jane Fulton Suri's book "Thoughtless acts? Observations on intuitive design" I looked at empathy less analytically but rather emotionally. Therefore I conducted a photographic journal of empathic actions in my environment. I captured traces of human-to-human interaction, human-to-object interaction, human-to-nature interaction, and nature-to-nature interaction. Not only during my photo walks but also when looking at the pictures afterwards, I found several expressions of (non-) empathetic behavior and unexpected connections. To invite others into my findings, I designed and wrote the book "The Empathy Spectrum". The book holds carefully selected pictures of the project that illustrate different levels of empathy and shows them in ways that are meant to encourage readers to make their own interpretations. By looking at the pictures and taking their reflections with them in their daily lives, they will discover even more forms of the "The Empathy Spectrum".

⁶ Kouprie, Sleeswijk Visser, "A framework for empathy in design", after Katja Battarbee, "Co-experience: understanding user experience in social interaction" (PhD diss., University of Art and Design Helsinki, 2004), 438.

**“The aim of empathic design studies is not to seek solutions for recognized problems, but rather to look for design opportunities as well as develop a holistic understanding of the users. Design empathy is not only information and facts but also inspiration and food for ideas.”⁷
(Tuuli Mattelmäki)**

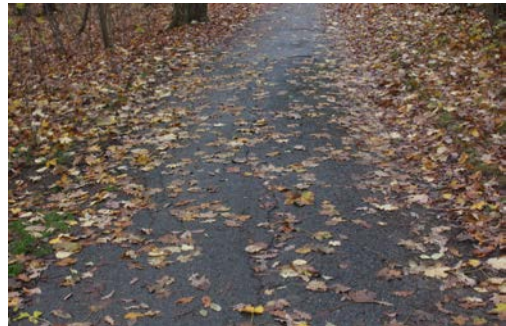
Through the intuitive observations, I was able to develop a new understanding of empathy which invigorated my design process. “Empathy is nothing one either has or hasn’t, but a human trait that one has to care about. (...) With apathy and indifference on the far left end and empathy and interest on the far right end”⁸, I began to see empathy as a spectrum. “The Empathy Spectrum is not only the core insight I gained during this practical work but it also informed my design research to never stop asking “What is really going on?”. And in turn “How can (my) design encourage people to develop an intrinsic interest in carefully moving towards the right end of the spectrum?”⁹ I elaborated my experiences more detailed in the following text “The Empathy Spectrum: What is really going on?” which can also be found in the book “The Empathy Spectrum”.



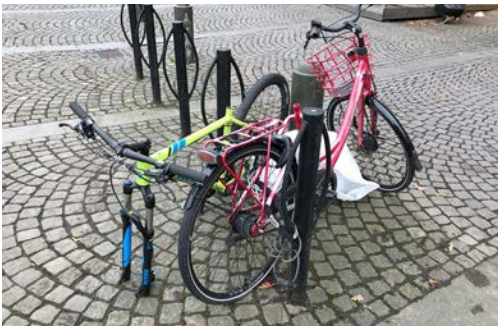
7 Tuuli Mattelmäki, “Probes: Studying Experiences for design empathy”, in *Empathic Design*, ed. Koskinen, Mattelmäki, Batterbee, 119-120.

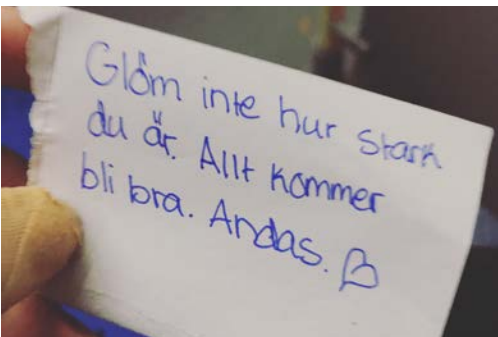
8 Judith Sievers, *The Empathy Spectrum: What is really going on?*, 2021, 1-2.

9 Sievers, *The Empathy Spectrum*, 1-2.









THE EMPATHY SPECTRUM - WHAT IS REALLY GOING ON?

Designing with empathy

In my work as a communication designer, I not only see empathy as the desired outcome but also as the driving spirit of my design process. Inspired by describing empathy as 'to care about', I started to think about what moves people to care for someone or something. Designer and psychologist Jane Fulton Suri has not only been a great inspiration during my theoretical research about empathy but also in formulating design aims and methods. The book "Thoughtless acts? Observations on intuitive design" that she published together with IDEO, encouraged me to look at empathy less analytically but rather emotionally. Since empathy is both about cognitive and affective empathy this seemed to be a fruitful way to move on. I have mainly been working with Empathic Design as it focuses on the emotions behind everyday life actions. Intuitive Design uses the same starting point. Hence, looking at unconscious behavior of others inspired me to consciously look for (missing) empathy that would reveal insights for my project.

Emotions behind human behavior

I consider taking photos as a great medium to sharpen my view as a designer as well as a documentation method that allows me to capture temporary moments that reflect moods and can exemplarily represent similar situations. Therefore, I decided to observe my direct environment through the lens of my camera. I took several photography walks in Gothenburg, Sweden. Even though I had been to most of the places many times before, due to my new intuitive design approach I was able to see them from a different perspective - I was able to be empathetic with what was going on around me. I developed awareness of the holistic context patched together of individual actions and diversity. We often only realize happenings when something goes wrong or different from usual. But I deliberately paid attention to positive and negative examples of empathy as well as to the grey areas in between.





What do you see in this picture? A street corner in autumn? A row of parked cars on the left and a yellow house in the back? What about the fallen leaves? Are they supposed to cover the pavement? Or the car? Why did no one sweep them away? What are the motivations behind and what are the possible consequences? In being empathetic, I observed these details and tried to connect to them. But I never judged them. Because, what is there that you don't see? Could you tell that behind the fence on the right is a funeral? Another place full of emotions and full of empathy in all its shapes. On the left, I spotted the rabbit soft toy that someone carefully placed on a junction box. What made the person care about the toy? Or did the person actually care about the owner? Before I took a picture of the situation I let an elderly man pass. He was mumbling unfriendly words to me and seemed to be upset. Did he feel bothered by me? Or by the leaves that haven't been swiped away? The street corner is not just a street corner. It is a place full of interactions that are not always visible. Empathy helped me to see, hear, and feel some of them.

While I was taking pictures, I constantly discovered new angles and focus points. The photographic journal allowed me to discover details and traits of history that I hadn't realized before. I found new relationships and marks of human behavior - all motivated by feelings. Thereby I could broaden my understanding of human-centered design. It became more and more clear that empathy is not only important in human interactions but also in interactions with objects, animals, and nature. Empathy is all around us.

I found multiple positive examples of lived empathy. Which makes me question what makes people care about this skill and motivates me to work on designs that highlight the human capacity to do so. On the other hand, those positive examples also made it very obvious where empathy was desperately missing or even purposefully impeded or destroyed. A lot of what happens in

public, is tried to be held together by different measures that aim to guarantee smooth interactions. A very prominent example is signs, ranging from traffic signs to stickers and handwritten notes. Simple icons, numbers, and short messages aim to guide, warn and inform people. They are meant to be as easy and fast to understand as possible. They work well in many cases. But what if they are rather threatening than supporting? What if they are dirty or unlighted? What if they became unreadable because stickers had been posted all over them? What if those signs are not as universal as their designers think? What if people have different capacities of seeing, reading and recognising? My observations made me think about “What is really going on here?”. Did someone really want to make a traffic sign unreadable? Or was one rather in need of a space to let out one’s feelings?

Many of the human-initiated situations I documented show an urge for emotional expression. People who are looking for other people or objects, people who want to publish their opinions, their frustration, their hopes, and desires. I found several lost belongings that had been carefully placed for their owners to find them again. I saw letters that promised beautiful apartments, finder’s rewards, and community activities. Cans that had been arranged for bottle scavengers, a gully cover that had been sprayed in neon pink to ask people to watch out for this pitfall, candles in front of house doors to light up the dark, a stranger’s note that says: “Don’t forget how strong you are. Everything is going to be alright. Breathe.” They are all signs of interest, care, and empathy. But I also found carelessly thrown away trash and cigarette stubs, damaged trees, schools covered in vandalic graffiti, racist stickers, and nasty doggy bags. These pictures show another level of empathy that rather indicates careless behavior, indifference, and apathy.

The Empathy Spectrum

This is when I realized what the skill empathy actually means: Empathy is nothing one either has or hasn’t, but a human trait that one has to care about. What motivates people to interact with themselves and their environment in kind and respectful ways? Why seem some people more interested in developing themselves further and in building sustainable relationships than others? Considering that every human being naturally thrives for self-actualization this appeared to be quite controversial. So what moves people to be empathetic? Before we thrive for self-actualization, we have to make sure that other basic needs are met. What if we feel like our needs aren’t responded to by people who care about us? We might wreak our emotions in inappropriate places. Even against nature. But what nature has ahead of us humans is that it always thrives for biodiversity and mutual co-existing. Not only when I was taking the pictures but also when I organised them digitally and arranged them next to each other, the idea of seeing empathy as a spectrum became more and more steady. With apathy and indifference on the far left end and empathy and interest on the far right end. All pictures, all behavior, lies within the spectrum. The question is “Where is it in the spectrum of empathy?” and even more importantly “Why is it there?”.

Through my photographic project, I highlighted “needs and problems worth solving”¹ as well as self-initiated solutions by people who tried to make a difference. I discovered patterns and reoccurring acts that lead me to a new understanding of empathy. Through my sensitive and curious approach, I found several examples of ‘thoughtless acts’ that might - from how I see them now - not be as thoughtless as one might expect. I rather see them as traits of people’s emotions that have remained unrecognized because of insufficient empathy. Or, on the other end of the spectrum, as manifestations of the idea that care and respect are a choice. A choice that enables various possibilities for human interaction and different levels of empathy within the spectrum.

Designing with the spectrum

My journey of intuitive observation has helped me “to become more sensitive to sociocultural habits and the meanings conveyed by particular design attributes. (...) Observation of naturalistic behavior helps (...) to sense and respond to people’s subjective emotional experiences. Observation reveals what is happening, but it takes interpretation and speculation to understand why. (...) Interpretation and speculation inevitably take us a step beyond the purely objective to a subjective level, where we draw on empathy.”² Hence, not only my observations but especially reflecting upon my experiences and the pictures, allowed me to engage with “The Empathy Spectrum” in my own design process. “The Empathy Spectrum” is not only the core insight I gained during this practical work but it also informed my design research to never stop asking “What is really going on?”. And in turn “How can (my) design encourage people to develop an intrinsic interest in carefully moving towards the right end of the spectrum?”.

¹ Jane Fulton Suri + IDEO, *thoughtless acts? observations on intuitive design* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2005), 167.

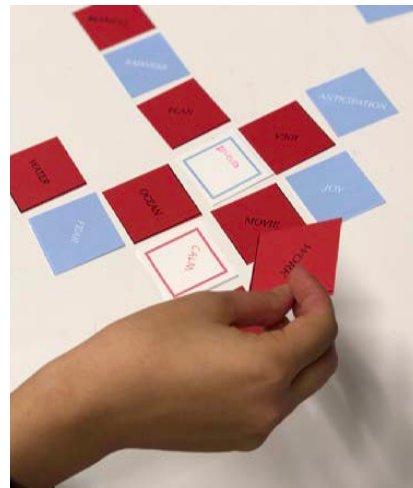
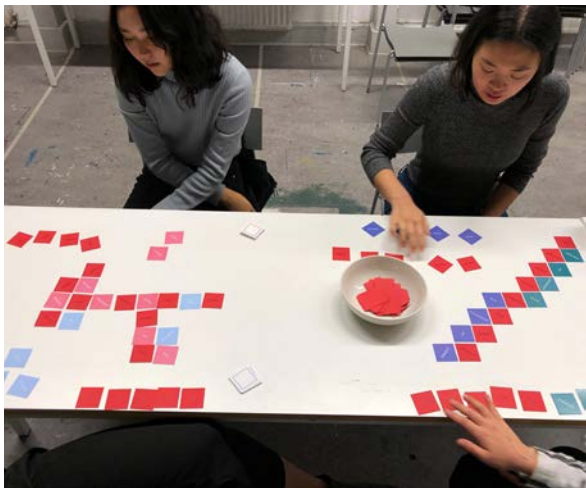
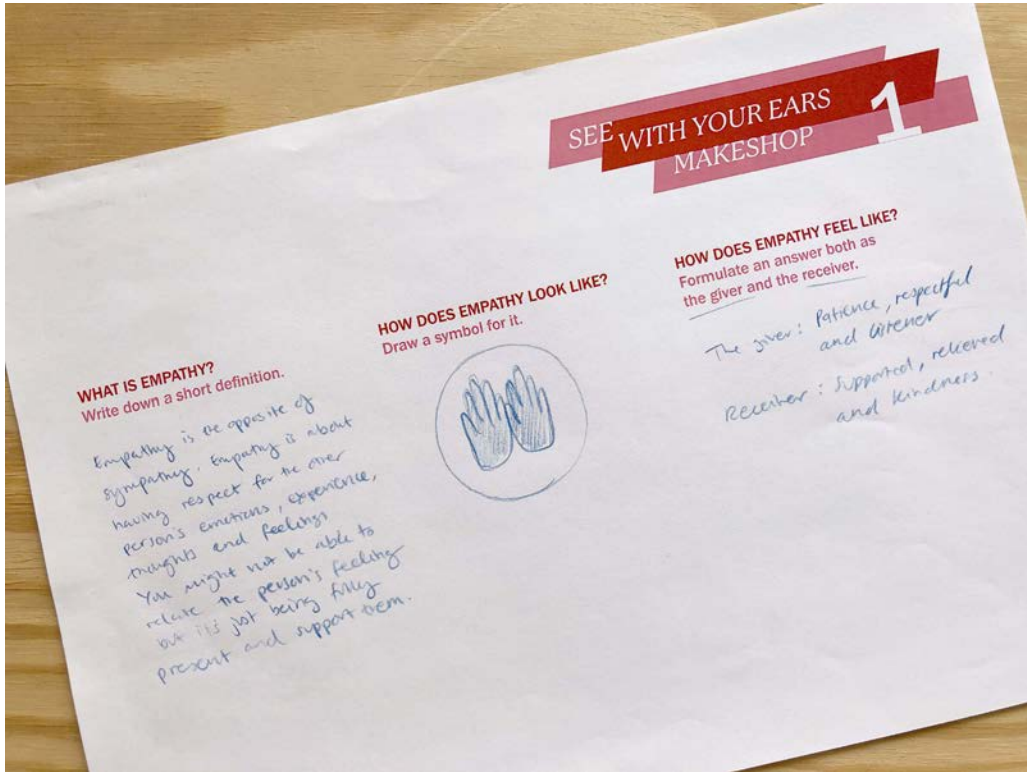
² Fulton Suri + IDEO, *thoughtless acts?*, 172-173.

5.2.2 “See with your ears” workshop

During my photo walks, I noticed that many parts of our social life are guided and structured by signs. Simple icons, like traffic signs, aim to guarantee smooth interactions. Driven by the question “How does empathy look like?” I wanted to give the theoretical concept of empathy a more tangible, visual form. Being consciously confronted with all those signs, I came to the understanding that using an already existing visual language but putting it into a new context, will help people to engage with its unknown part more easily. As explained in “The Toolbox Project” the same is true for human behavior. I figured that working with already existing human strengths, allows innovation to come to people more naturally and sustainably. In succession, I designed the workshop “See with your ears”. It is based on a domino game that asks the participants to connect words with their arising emotions. The game appeared to be a great conversation starter and helped the participants to get to know each other. They reported that they felt good to be confronted with their own emotions in such a playful way. The game created a safe environment where they felt comfortable sharing their thoughts and feelings. Furthermore, the workshop was an inspiring exercise to dare to be wrong or vulnerable. A detailed description and evaluation of the “See with your ears” workshop can be found below.

STEP2 OF THE *beEmpathy* MANIFESTO

In step 2 of my design research I tried to understand the underlying emotions of human behavior. My photographic journal enabled me to explore them from a holistic point of view and helped me to visualise empathy's various levels. “The Empathy Spectrum” gave me important insights about the necessity of willingness and care when it comes to developing empathy further. Through the “See with your ears” workshop and its implemented game I could experience how emotional awareness can bring people together. Both projects helped me to understand empathy's affective part and prepared me for step 3.



SEE WITH YOUR EARS - EMOTIONS AS CONVERSATION STARTER

The workshop

To the workshop I invited four design students who all have a different cultural background. I started the workshop with a warm-up task to introduce the topic of empathy. For this I had prepared sheets of paper with the following three questions: “What is empathy? Write down a short definition.”, “How does empathy look like? Find and draw a symbol for it.”, and “How does empathy look like? Both as the receiver and the giver?”. First, I asked them to answer the questions individually. After some time, the participants felt ready to share their ideas. This opened up a conversation about empathy and the participants’ understandings of it.

Afterwards, I introduced the actual workshop. The workshop is divided into three parts. Throughout all parts the participants are asked to play a card game I designed. The game is played in pairs and consists of three decks of cards. The main card deck (‘word cards’) consists of cards with different single words on them, such as for example “home”, “sports”, “freedom”, and “death”. Some of them are ‘tangible words’ that are meant to arise clear images. Others are ‘intangible words’ that are open for interpretation. During the first part the participants are asked to each draw five ‘word cards’ and to place them in front of them. Additionally, they each receive a second deck of cards (‘emotion cards’) which consists of seven cards with the basic human emotions on them (joy, trust, fear, anger, disgust, anticipation, sadness, and surprise). The participants should then place a ‘word card’ in the middle of the table and connect it with an ‘emotion card’. Thereby they always question themselves “What do I feel when I read the word ...?” to then select the matching ‘emotion card’. Furthermore, they should explain their motivation behind and pay attention to each others’ actions. The second player can then decide to either connect two of his cards to the ‘emotion card’ or the ‘word card’. Thus, the game works similar to a common domino game but players are allowed to place their cards on all four sides as long as they connect them in ways that make sense to them. Automatically, the cards spread out on the table and develop an individual pattern. There is no right or wrong, only the participants’ individual perceptions are important.

After they have both placed all ‘emotion cards’, the second part is introduced. They continue as before but instead of only using the pre-made ‘emotion cards’, the players are now asked to also create their own ‘emotion cards’. For this they receive a deck of blank cards and a pen. The second part of the game is all about being specific about one’s feelings and finding names for them. Again, the participants are asked to communicate their choices and pay attention to what the other one is doing.

This is especially important for the last round that starts after everyone has placed ten ‘emotion cards’. The third part of the game is played just like the second part - with both the pre-made and the individual ‘emotion cards’. Only now the players are asked to place cards for their partners

instead of for themselves. Hence, this part is all about practicing empathy and trying to feel like if one was the other. Again, the game ends when both players have placed ten 'emotion cards'.

After all three parts of the game were played, I introduced a final discussion round. I was especially interested in the participants' experiences during the game. E.g. I wanted to know if it was difficult to find names for their emotions and if they could relate to their partners. Lastly, we looked at the initial paper sheets again and discussed if the participants still agree with their definitions of empathy.

Evaluation

In the beginning, I realized that I actively have to ask the participants to play the game slowly. They needed to be reminded that the game is not about winning (placing all cards as fast as possible) but about paying attention to oneself and to one's partner. Once they understood that, the game went on all naturally. A safe atmosphere developed that encouraged the participants to talk about their emotions, thoughts, and experiences freely. Questions like "Why do you feel like that?" and "Why do I feel like this?" arose. The participants reported that it was easier to place positive emotions than to place rather negative emotions. Two players were long done with the positive emotions but had difficulties expressing the negative ones. Interestingly, the pattern of the cards that had emerged during the game looked very differently throughout the teams. The teams had started to place cards in different ways (e.g. only placing one card at the time) because those alternatives felt more naturally to them. I was very pleased to see that they had adapted the games mechanics to their individual needs. Furthermore, the participants realized cultural differences. Different words arose different feelings for participants with diverse backgrounds.

During the second round, the participants were glad about having the opportunity to choose between the pre-made and the individual 'emotion cards'. Sometimes it was easier for them to rely on the pre-made cards, sometimes they wanted to be more specific. During the whole game, very interesting conversations came up. Participants constantly asked about their moves and wanted to get to know more about each other. Especially in the last round, they very often asked "How do you feel about ...?", "Tell me about how you feel about ...?" etc. The participants told me that they really appreciated this possibility. They all knew each other before and agreed that their friendship positively influenced them to feel safe enough to open up about their emotions. But due to the conversation opener character of the game, they could imagine that it also works with participants who don't know each other. Furthermore, the participants agreed that it was good to only have a restricted amount of emotions. Otherwise, it would have been a bit difficult to stay focused.

I expected the third round to be the most challenging one. But the participants reflected that they enjoyed this part the most since it offered even more opportunities to interact with each other. Overall they felt understood and empathetically responded to. When they weren't sure about which card to place, they just asked each other and imagined different situations together.

In the end, the participants asked me to keep better control of the time, meaning to include more breaks and to shorten the game, e.g. by combining the first and the second part. They liked the introduction round and thought it was inspiring to discuss different definitions of empathy. Also, they enjoyed the conclusive talk to summarise everyone's experiences. But they only needed a question sheet for the introduction, during the final discussion they preferred talking rather freely. They asked me to use illustrations instead of words or perhaps even 3D objects. I considered this idea but came to the decision that I want to enable the participants to imagine their own images when they read the words. This is crucial for me as the game is all about emotional awareness and reflection. The participants reported that they liked being confronted with their feelings in such a playful way. The game created a safe place and thereby allowed them to reflect upon and to name their emotions. Furthermore, they felt encouraged to listen to each other's stories, to get to know each other, and to start diverse conversations. They felt like they had good control about the discussions and experienced the workshop as a very effective exercise to dare being wrong or vulnerable.

In summary, I had to improve the time slots in order to make sure the workshop is not too tiring. I am very happy with how the workshop and the included game turned out. The feedback I received exceeded my expectations and motivated me to include the game in my final project, the "beEmpathy workshop".

5.3 CONNECTION: Changing perspective and gaining understanding



I SEE THE USER AS AN EXPERT OF THEIR OWN EXPERIENCES. I TAKE ON THE USER'S PERSPECTIVE AND FEEL AS IF I WERE THE USER MYSELF. I RECOGNIZE MY OWN EMOTIONAL REACTIONS AND FIND MEANING IN THEM. I RELATE WITH THE USER THROUGH A COGNITIVE CONNECTION.

5.3.1 “How are you?” Survey

“[E]mpathic design relies on purposeful rather than statistical sampling in selecting people for user studies.”¹ (Ilpo Koskinen)

To also gain an understanding of empathy's cognitive part, I simultaneously ran the online survey “How are you?”. I designed the survey both as a questionnaire about people's understanding of empathy but also as a tool for self-reflection. The 45 questions were in some way a workshop in themselves. Starting by asking about their well-being, I set the participants in the mood to further explore their emotions. Then I incorporated the mechanics of “See with your ears” by asking what people feel when reading different words. Afterwards, I was interested in their experiences when it comes to talking to others about their emotional well-being. I asked the participants to finish several sentences related to different communication issues, e.g. “When I don't feel good I ...” or “A friend is someone who ...”. Then, I was particularly interested in their knowledge about the interference of empathy, creativity, intercultural competence, and emotional intelligence and their individual motivations for developing any of these skills further. Lastly, I provided three example situations of people expressing their feelings and experiences. The participants were asked to react to these situations with empathy. Afterwards, I wanted them to indicate how difficult it was to be empathetic with that person. For the first example, I chose a situation I reckoned most of the participants can relate to. For the second situation, I chose a situation I assumed people will be surprised by but can still express empathy relatively easily. For the third example, I chose a situation that would probably be more challenging and not as easy to relate to. In so doing I wanted to find out if people can be empathetic with someone even if they cannot relate to their experiences. The survey was ended by asking the participants about their well-being

again to encourage them to reflect upon thoughts and feelings the questions and tasks might have arisen.

“However, empathic design does not stop with inspiration. It also produces understanding of the user by building an interpretation of the data.”² (Ilpo Koskinen)

Interpreting the received quantitative data helped me to formulate more specific project aims: I realized that I had to make people aware of the several individual and collective benefits of empathy. Especially, I needed to raise awareness for emotional literacy as a fundamental condition of empathy. Furthermore, false definitions of empathy should be abolished and people needed to be made aware of the fact that empathy is a skill that can be learned. Many participants indicated thoughtful definitions of empathy but when they were asked to be empathetic in the example situations, they expressed that empathy in theory is not the same as in practice. This meant for my project to bridge that gap by motivating children to improve their empathy ability. Thereby it is especially important to keep a good balance between too little and too much empathy. The concept of self-empathy needed to be made more popular. Combining tasks with reflective questions turned out to be a good method for practising empathy and emotional intelligence in a safe and authentic way. A detailed evaluation of the “How are you?” survey can be found below.

² Ilpo Koskinen, “Empathic Design in methodic terms”, in *Empathic Design*, ed. Koskinen, Mattelmäki, Batterbee, 62.

EVALUATION: “HOW ARE YOU?” SURVEY - CLOSING THE GAP BETWEEN EMPATHY IN THEORY AND EMPATHY IN PRACTICE

I created the online survey “How are you?” to figure out how much society knows about empathy. At the same time, it was meant to motivate the participants to reflect upon their own empathy skills. 57 people took part. Overall, there is a lot of knowledge about empathy when it comes to comforting or caring for others. All of the respondents describe themselves as empathetic. They also consider creativity and emotional intelligence as important abilities that they want to improve. Whereas there is a slightly less interest in improving empathy and intercultural interest. The survey shows that many don’t know about the positive interference of all four skills. Meaning, they aren’t aware of the positive influences empathy can have on oneself. In addition, surprisingly many people think empathy is a skill you either have naturally or you don’t. Many don’t know that empathy is a skill that can be learned just as any other skill. Nevertheless, everyone considers empathy as essential in social interactions. Some are concerned about the personal effort one has to make to express empathy and that it can be emotionally draining. What I take from this survey is that many have a good understanding of the definition of empathy. Some answers were a bit superficial, others were very thoughtful and sensitive. Many regard empathy as highly important but several either lack motivation or the knowledge to improve it. I also see a gap between the high quality definitions of empathy and the reactions in the three example situations. It was easy for the respondents to relate to and be empathetic with the situation (person A) that proceeded calmly and happily. In the second situation (person B), many didn’t expect person B to feel sad about something that they themselves think positively about. But through sensitive questions they could understand person B’s feelings and consoled her. In the third situation (person C) they also tried to understand person C’s differing opinion in the first place. But when person C got angry, many described that it was difficult to be empathetic. Almost all of them agreed to his wish to talk about something else instead. So, even though people indicated that in order to be empathetic you do not have to share someone else’s opinions, it isn’t implemented that easily. (And these situations were only online examples.) From the feedback I received in the last question, I can tell that some think it was tiring to spend time working with that topic. But almost everyone agreed that the survey inspired them to reflect upon their own empathy skills and made them thoughtful in regard to how they will see and use it in the future. This motivates me to keep working on the idea of putting empathy in the focus of education in order to learn more about its several positive effects.

What the survey tells me in short:

- Make people aware of the several individual and collective benefits of empathy
- Especially, raise awareness of the necessity of emotional intelligence
- Abolish false definitions of empathy
- Bridge the gap between empathy in theory and empathy in practice
- Make people aware of the fact that empathy can be learned
- Motivate people to actively improve their empathy skills
- Show people how to keep a good balance between too little and too much empathy

5.3.2 Exchange with experts

After I gained knowledge about the common understanding of empathy, I wanted to include experts' insights to support my findings. Hence, I reached out to different people working with children and design such as curators and pedagogues, and asked them about the role of empathy in their work. I not only talked to people in different professions but also from different countries to take advantage of various insights and approaches. Thereby I have build connections that illustrate interdependent relationships for both the interviewees and myself - I could expand my 'empathic horizon'.

“Every individual has his or her own unique experiences and these define his or her empathic horizon. The term 'empathic horizon' (...) is used to indicate the limits on a designer's individual ability to empathise beyond certain characteristics of his or her group, such as nationality, background, age, gender, culture, experience and education. (...) The empathic horizon of designers can change over time and be extended by training and experience.”¹

Through my interviews and questionnaires I could deepen my knowledge about practicing empathy with children. At the same time, I had the impression that my design research sparked new thoughts and ideas on the side of the experts, too.

5.3.2.1 A primary school based on emotional awareness

I conducted an interview with Leal Stone, birth parenting sexuality educator and founder of “Woodline Primary” in Melbourne, Australia. The interview provided me with several exiting insights about how a school curriculum that is based on emotional awareness can enhance children's lives and how, thereby, a place of lived empathy can grow. Leal is the creator and director of Woodline Primary School whose curriculum values emotional well-being and emotional development just as much as learning.² The curriculum provides an alternative to other Australian schools that still foreground measurable knowledge achievement.

1 Kouprie, Sleswijk Visser, “A framework for empathy in design”, 439 after Deana McDonagh-Philp, Howard Denton, “Using focus groups to support the designer in the evaluation of existing products: a case study.” *The Design Journal*, 2, no. 2 (1999): 20–31.

2 Leal Stone, “Woodline Primary School”, lealstone.com.au, accessed April 7, 2021, <https://lealstone.com.au/projects/woodline-primary-school/>.

„At Woodline, our aim is to enrich our students’ lives with skills that will support them to recognise what’s important: their understanding and value of themselves. What is important to us is our students’ social and emotional wellbeing; children knowing that all parts of their being are welcomed and supported. The ultimate goal being that children are able to feel this within themselves. They know who they are and that their value in the world is not reliant on grades or approval or colouring in the lines.”³

The school established seven key competencies that it aims to foster among the children: emotional intelligence, growth mindset, critical thinking, self-expression, value and acceptance, and self-actualisation.⁴ In the interview with Leal we talked about the role empathy plays thereby. According to Leal it is emotional intelligence and empathy that enable education in the first place. Because those two build human connections. I also learned about the importance of responsible role models who show the children how to be empathetic with each other. When a child experiences care and compassion from an adult it will learn to adopt those capacities. In Leal’s opinion, already very young children have the ability to be empathetic. But when growing into adulthood, they learn to repress their feelings and to establish self-protection measures that hinder them from further developing emotional literacy and empathy. Once again I realised how essential it is to recall these capacities and teach children how to use them. Leal claims that empathy is needed to create a safe space that allows people to be vulnerable. When it comes to applying empathy in school, she explains that it is deciding how you communicate with the children. It is about encountering them as humans and not as children that need to be told what to do. Tone of voice, eye contact, and active listening are just some crucial elements. Woodline Primary School established special rituals around emotional awareness. Amongst others, they created a tool that encourages children to silently indicate how they are feeling today. During the day, the teachers can react to that and support the children in dealing with their emotions. Through holding up space for the pupils’ feelings the school also creates a safe learning space where everyone feels welcome and respected. In order to support children both in their individual and collective development, this insight was especially important for me when developing the “beEmpathy workshop”. Instead of preaching empathy and emotional literacy, it is significantly more valuable to create authentic practice situations. Allowing children to be their true selves enables inclusion and appreciation of diversity. To connect with the students it is furthermore important to respond to their needs and interests. Thereby a topic gains personal relevance and an intrinsic motivation to learn more about it is evoked. Open-endedness allows for individual interpretation that will make children feel proud of their achievements. Through practice students and teachers can learn to solve even challenging situations with empathy. When reflecting

³ “Who we are”, woodlineprimary.com.au, accessed April 7, 2021, <https://woodlineprimary.com.au/about-us>.

⁴ “Who we are”, woodlineprimary.com.au.

upon our interview, I realised that Woodline Primary School is actually practicing what I describe in the “beEmpathy framework”. Leal repeatedly pointed out the importance of listening to each other actively, of noticing non-verbal communication, of emotional awareness, and of compassionate behavior. I see the curriculum as an inspiring example of how my project intentions can work in real life. In turn, Leal sees great potential in creative projects to establish empathy and emotional intelligence. She describes creativity as a valuable method to get in touch with our bodies and emotions. The full interview with Leal Stone can be found attached.

5.3.2.2 A design research led exhibition about empathy and narratives

Susan Letourneau, design researcher at the New York Science Center (NYSCI), told me about the powerful impact design research can have. As well as how children can be supported in their development through empathetic exhibitions that are based on play and experimentation. NYSCI works with the educational curriculum STEM which is “based on the idea of educating students in four specific disciplines – science, technology, engineering and mathematics – in an interdisciplinary and applied approach. Rather than teach the four disciplines as separate and discrete subjects, STEM integrates them into a cohesive learning paradigm based on real-world applications.”⁵ Together with the museums philosophy “Design, Make, Play”, NYSCI creates exhibitions that allows children and youth to solve real world problems by tinkering with different questions and materials. Based on the visitor’s own experiences, the museum provides a learner-centered context that allows to explore individual ideas.

Susan was part of a three years project that investigated “how to integrate narrative elements to evoke empathy in engineering design activities promises to support the design of more inclusive learning spaces that invite girls to engage more readily in engineering activities”.⁶ Girls are often underrepresented in engineering. At the same time, research has shown that children, and especially girls, are more engaged in solving engineering tasks when they can relate to them through personal or social relevance. The project not only addressed this gender gap but also explored how narratives can evoke empathy. Perspective taking and defining user’s needs are crucial parts of an engineering process. Hence, empathy is an effective skill that contributes to its success. Narratives can both provide the necessary context and opportunities to practice empathy.⁷

5 Elaine J. Hom, “What is STEM education?”, [livescience.com](https://www.livescience.com/43296-what-is-stem-education.html), accessed April 5, 2020, <https://www.livescience.com/43296-what-is-stem-education.html>.

6 Kylie Pepler, Anna Keune, & Maggie Dahn, 2020, “AISL NYSCI Summative Evaluation Report, Designing for Narrative and Cultivating Empathy in Museum-Based Settings: Supporting Girls’ Engagement in Engineering Practices”, The Creativity Labs University of California, Irvine, 5.

7 Susan M. Letourneau, Dorothy Bennet, “Using Narratives to Evoke Empathy and Support Girls’ Engagement in

Susan and her team designed various exhibition elements targeted to girls between seven and 14 years old. The visitors were asked to solve design problems such as helping grandparents, building an air-powered vehicle or developing an earth-quake protection. Different materials, settings, and characters were used to support the exhibition tasks. Through observations and interviews, Susan and her team collected and analysed data about how narratives can evoke empathy and how empathy can make a difference in engaging girls in engineering tasks. “Qualitative analyses suggest that empathy can be cultivated through purposeful activity frame choices like asking learners to design something to help a familiar character (...) and by including descriptions of relatable problems (...) to support girls’ engagement in engineering challenges.”⁸ This insight was very helpful for designing my own empathy workshop as it made me realise how important it is to keep the different tasks relevant to the children. By working with current events or personal stories, children can relate to a task more easily.

“The value of light-touch, open-ended narratives in this study shows that changes to existing activities do not need to be elaborate to have a meaningful and measurable impact on girls’ engagement. Providing visual representations of end users and their problems, allowing children to choose whom to help and how, and using the narrative frame to scaffold each step of the design process were effective in evoking empathy and engaging learners in considering the users of their designs. These are strategies that could be implemented in a variety of education settings, but are particularly needed in formal classrooms (...).”⁹

I figured that working with already existing materials is not at all less effective but rather encourages perspective taking and problem solving activities. Rethinking objects is both a sustainable and creative way to foster empathy. Furthermore, I consider the “beEmpathy framework” as an effective tool to provide the structure that is needed to evoke empathy. Together with purposefully designed material that allows for individual interpretation, children will be supported in conducting different workshop activities and in practising empathy. When it comes to testing and conducting the workshop, I consider Susan’s input about design research based documentation methods as very helpful. She suggested field-notes as a valuable tool that allows the design researcher to focus on one or more children and to observe their behaviour. Afterwards, the participants can be asked about their experiences in short interviews. Structuring the notes and even preparing a checklist of certain behaviour allows to document typical and desired learning

Engineering.” *Connected Science Learning* 3, no. 3 (2020), <https://www.nsta.org/connected-science-learning/connected-science-learning-july-september-2020/using-narratives-evoke>.

8 Pepler et al. “AISL NYSCI Summative Evaluation Report”, 44.

9 Letourneau, Bennet, “Using Narratives to Evoke Empathy and Support Girls’ Engagement in Engineering”, <https://www.nsta.org/connected-science-learning/connected-science-learning-july-september-2020/using-narratives-evoke>.

outcomes. Whereas an open-ended approach leaves space for unexpected happenings that the designer has not considered before.

Overall, I was especially inspired by Susan's approach to create more inclusive learning experiences by using empathy in her work as a design-researcher. Hearing about her projects, acknowledged my methodology of using aspects of Inclusive Design to support the field of Empathic Design. NYSCI is located in Corona, Queens, New York, which is one of the most ethnically diverse counties of the United States.¹⁰ In order to create more inclusive learning experiences, Susan said in the interview: "You really need to, as best as you can, imagine what other people might be thinking or feeling, how they might be approaching the situation, and how it might look or feel to them." Hearing, seeing, and feeling with someone else is the core of empathy. Hearing about how NYSCI is considering empathy and social-emotional learning as crucial elements to engage visitors in STEM, illustrates even more areas that benefit from this skill. The full interview with Susan Letourneau can be found attached.

5.3.2.3 Insights into empathetic professions

"The own ability for empathy is a basic requirement for working with children. Fostering children's ability for empathy is a crucial aim of working with children." (Christine Kummer)

In addition to the interviews, I created questionnaires about how people work with children and empathy. Christine Kummer, employee of the children and youth museum in Munich, Germany, gave me more insights into creating empathetic exhibitions. She describes empathy as a basic requirement for exhibition design since it is all about taking on the visitors' perspectives and building visible relationships. In role-modeling empathy to children she wants to foster their self-esteem and help them to gain emotional awareness. Here she also sees an important connection to creativity as being open-minded and being in constant exchange with oneself and the environment are characteristics to both empathy and creativity. The children's museum Munich wants children to be able to explore the exhibitions independently to equip them with important traits such as relational thinking and motivation to change. Thereby, it uses playful and clear concepts and designs.

¹⁰ Susan M. Letourneau, Changchia James Liu, Kaitlin Donnelly, Delia Meza, Stephen Uzzo, Katherine McMillan Culp, "Museum Makers: Family Explorations of data science through making and exhibit design", *Curator The Museum Journal* 63, no.1 (2020): 134.

**“Empathy is the basic condition for all our actions and for the interaction with the children.”
(Nicole)**

Nicole and Wally from the after school care center in Scharnitz, Austria, see empathy as the foundation for the interaction with children. By being role models for the children they create an inclusive space that is based on emotional and cognitive understanding. Amongst others, they use teamwork activities and creative exercises to practice empathy and emotional intelligence. It is especially important to them to make the children feel seen, heard, and cared for. E.g. in conflict situations they do not judge them but rather listen to both parties equally. Thereby they aim to establish a safe space that makes the children feel good and included.

“My work wouldn’t be possible without empathy.” (Wally)

Summarised, I learned that it is important to act as a role model when working with children. In order to teach children empathy, one has to behave empathetically oneself. Creating a safe place that encourages children to express their emotions is equally important as listening to them and reacting appropriately to their feelings. Children should also be encouraged to explore empathy by themselves and to interact with each other with respect and understanding. Thereby, they should be allowed to make mistakes and to discover relationships. Empathy is not only crucial in social interactions but also for inclusion, intercultural competence, and creativity. All respondents agree that without empathy their work would be less enjoyable, in some cases even impossible. In general, it seems best to integrate empathy as naturally as possible in social interactions. Both in daily situations and in a museum context, empathetic ways of being and communicating with each other enable children to develop sensitivity and interest. Through that, they feel motivated to learn and invest. All respondents consider creative projects as a valuable method to foster empathy.

5.3.2.4 Hearing the children

Since children are my main target audience whose needs I aim to meet, I wanted to make sure that they are heard and respected in my design process. Times of change are especially challenging for children. Yet it is extremely important to include them in the design process since they will be the ones engaging with the outcome. “Their contributions will be one of our greatest resources in designing where to go next.”¹¹ Being aware of the responsibility that a design must also be able to work for itself, without the designer, “[m]oments of change are

the ideal time to focus on inclusion.”¹² Unfortunately, due to the current Covid-19 restrictions I was not able to interact with school classes directly. In preparation for the “beEmpathy workshop”, I therefore developed a questionnaire for students about how they like to learn. The answers helped me to define the scope and the conduction of my final project. I learned that the workshop should last at least five days but should also have the potential to be spread out over different days or weeks. The tasks should mainly be based on teamwork, be playful, explorative, and participatory. It is important to establish a safe and trustful atmosphere where the students feel comfortable to share their thoughts without being judged. Many students experience mistakes as failure but would rather like to receive help in encountering them as positive learning experiences. It is important to both give the children enough time to work on a task and to include sufficient breaks. Pupils are willing to do some smaller homework in order to enlarge upon a topic. One of the most crucial aims should be to make enough time to listen to and to talk about the students’ individual and collective well-being. They should furthermore be encouraged to keep doing that after the workshop. Teachers and students need to gain awareness about interacting with each other in friendly and respectful ways. The workshop is successful when the students feel happiness, joy, and proud. The questionnaire can be found attached.

5.3.2.5 Hearing the teachers

“It’s like giving a carpenter only the wood but no tools for his work. He has the material, the basis, but he won’t be able to build proper furniture without the right grinding machine. It’s the same for children and their empathy skills. The basis is there but the tools to really act empathetically have to be learned first. The school is a crucial place for that.” (Isabella)

In order to make sure that the workshop is integrable in the schools’ curriculum and to meet the teachers’ needs, I interviewed three teachers. Especially I was interested in how a workshop can support them in introducing students to empathy. Isabella and Sophie both work at a primary school close to Munich, Germany, whereas Mira works at a middle school in Gothenburg, Sweden. They all consider empathy as highly important in their work. Since the school life is full of social interactions, empathy, tolerance, and understanding are crucial. Children should learn about empathy’s value as early on as possible. Isabella and Sophie think it is possible to introduce that topic already in the first grade. Sophie points out that it is important to make sure that the children can relate to it with their own experiences. In Mira’s opinion the children should be a little bit older. She could imagine to run a workshop with students that are at least ten years old

¹² Holmes, *Mismatch*, 89.

because in that age children develop a special interest for themselves and others. For Mira, emotional awareness and the communication of feelings are particularly important parts of empathy. All three teachers could imagine to conduct a workshop over several hours and weeks. Different interdisciplinary and periodical teaching units could build a ritual that allows them to explore empathy and its related topics in depth. Often they lack the time to develop those exercises by themselves. But since they all see a responsibility to teach children about empathy, they would appreciate support in form of a workshop that provides both online and physical material. The workshop tasks should be playful, interactive, and explorative. Furthermore they should inspire interesting conversations and reflections. It is crucial that the exercises are explained clearly and follow a red thread. Sophie can imagine to run the workshop by herself, Isabella would like to have a training and instructions in advance, and Mira would like to support someone else running the workshop.

The interviews showed me that a workshop about empathy would be highly welcomed by teachers. Since they try to communicate empathy and emotional awareness to their students on a daily basis, they appreciate material that supports them in so doing. They also think that a workshop should be conducted over several days or even weeks. Both an online platform and a physical toolbox should be developed. The exercises should be easily integrable in the school curriculum and allow for individual adaption. They should be playful, interactive, and inspiring. I realised that it is not possible to universally say how old children should be for such a workshop. Therefore, I decided to rather leave it to the teachers to choose and refine elements that they think are adequate for their students. This openness is also important for the timeframe of the workshop as well as for its preparation in advance. I want to make sure that teachers get sufficient support, e.g. through an online network with others or direct communication with me.

STEP3 OF THE *beEmpathy* MANIFESTO

Reaching out and talking to people 'in the field' has been very rewarding throughout the whole process. Through online communication such as video calls, I found a way to include first-hand experiences in my design work despite the Covid-19 social distance restrictions. Hearing others' stories and seeing their perspectives enabled me to counterbalance my own perceptions as well as the theoretical work with real life conditions. Constantly looking for related design projects, evoking my own educational experiences, and carefully evaluating my design experiments, equipped me with a growing understanding of how to fulfill my aim to contribute to the Swedish school curriculum by establishing empathy and emotional literacy among students.

5.4 COMPASSION: Meeting needs and providing positive change - The *beEmpathy* workshop as my empathetic design outcome



I TAKE ON MY OWN PERSPECTIVE AGAIN AND ACKNOWLEDGE THE SITUATION OBJECTIVELY. I THRIVE FOR MAKING A POSITIVE CHANGE OF THE USER'S SITUATION. I CARE ABOUT MEETING THE USER'S NEEDS WITH AWARENESS AND COMPASSION. I CONDUCT A DESIGN PROCESS THAT IS INFORMED BY THE USER'S PERSPECTIVE AND COMPLEMENTED WITH MY OWN QUALITIES AS A DESIGNER. IF NEEDED, I CONDUCT THE PREVIOUS STEPS AGAIN.

5.4.1 Specific objectives and basic considerations

“If experience is understood as a situated and creative process, it is unique for each person, group and community, and it has to be studied with methods that acknowledge these qualities.”¹ (Ilpo Koskinen)

Together, my design research and my design experiments, enabled me to develop the “beEmpathy workshop”. The workshop consists of different tasks and activities that students can conduct together with their teachers. Based on the “beEmpathy framework”, it provides a playful, explorative, and participatory set of exercises that allows to practice each step carefully. The tasks will eventually lead into a small exhibition that serves as a medium to show the children what they are capable of and to spread the importance of empathy and emotional literacy to as many other school classes as possible. With “beEmpathy” children can practice empathy from different perspectives and gain understanding and agency in social interactions. “beEmpathy” is a sustainable investment in individual and collective well-being.

“A culture of mutual respect, caring, and sensitivity is one that helps to promote prosocial attitudes and behaviors, including acceptance of and respect for differences. (...) The tone that is set in the school establishes expectations for standards of interpersonal relationships among the students beyond school walls as well. Formal presentations and discussions of

¹ Koskinen, “Empathic Design in methodic terms”, in *Empathic Design*, ed. Koskinen, Mattelmäki, Batterbee, 59.

tolerance must be connected to a larger culture of understanding and empathy in individual classrooms and within the entire school community.”² (Jonathan Cohen)

My design process led me to the understanding that in order to fulfill the requirement of the Swedish school curriculum to establish and practice empathy as a fundamental aim, teachers and children need to be supported in practicing it. I consider the “beEmpathy framework” as an effective tool to help children understand what empathy is. The workshop format allowed me to design different exercises that are adapted for its informed practice. At the same time, the workshop format allows school classes to explore empathy with awareness and the needed structure. “beEmpathy” provides flexibility which makes empathy individually relevant and easily integrable into the daily school life. Besides those characteristics, it was especially important to me to consider fundamental Empathic Design requirements such as to make the workshop “visual and tactile, inspiration-enhancing, deliberately cheap and low tech, playful, [and] tested in reality.”³ With the workshop, I designed an empathic experience that allows children to practice empathy and to develop emotional literacy. Thus, I want to foster inclusive interactions that support children in their identity development in a community based on mutual care and respect. The workshop aims to create a safe atmosphere where children can share their emotions and thoughts. “beEmpathy” serves as an interactive conversation starter with the intention to make a long-lasting positive change in the children’s (school) lives.

I based all tasks on either existing pedagogic knowledge, in particular on Social-Emotional Learning and Brown’s and Riess’s definitions of empathy, or on my own design research as described before. Nevertheless, I consider the “beEmpathy workshop” first of all as a concept that is ready to be tested in reality. Due to the current Covid-19 pandemic I have not been able to test the workshop so far. But for its future development this is the next step I am going to execute as soon as it is possible again.

5.4.2. Structure and functionality

The “beEmpathy workshop” is conducted in five steps. I want students and teachers to explore each step of the “beEmpathy framework” individually and with sufficient time. Each step of the workshop is dedicated to one of the four steps of the framework, in consecutive order.

² Jonathan Cohen, *Educating minds and hearts: Social emotional learning and the passage into adolescence* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1999): 160.

³ Mattelmäki, Vaajakallio, Koskinen, “What happen to Empathic Design?”, 68.

The workshop steps begin with a morning circle that aims to establish emotional awareness. Moreover, it is used to establish a common start and to introduce the topic of the day. Afterwards different tasks are being conducted. When designing and structuring the tasks, I paid special attention to that they alternate between moved and rather still exercises to allow the children to experience empathy in multifaceted ways while staying focused. Also, in between the tasks classes should take sufficient breaks. Each step ends with a reflection round. This supports the class to summarise their experiences, to talk about different perceptions, and to close the day together. The last step is about reviewing and reflecting upon the previous steps and the produced outcomes. Students will display their material and create a small exhibition. They are asked to look at each others' work again, to rethink different tasks, and to recognise important elements. Thereby, they will not only realise what they are already capable of but also how they can and want to practice empathy in the future. Furthermore, the last step provides an opportunity to invite other classes and to share the idea of "beEmpathy". The students are asked to document their outcomes with photos and upload them on the "beEmpathy" website.

Even if the workshop is designed for five consecutive steps, the tasks can also be conducted individually. According to the school's needs and circumstances, the steps can be spread out over several weeks and not all tasks have to be done in the recommended order. On the website one can also find a proposal for a three-steps and a one-step workshop. It is even possible to just conduct single exercises. First of all, I see the "beEmpathy workshop" as a pool of exercises from where teachers and students can choose elements that are integrable in their school days. I purposefully designed all tasks in open-ended ways so that they can be adjusted to the latest needs of a school class. This flexibility makes sure that the workshop is individually adaptable and that it stays relevant.

Almost all tasks come with specific material. They are accompanied by copy templates that not only explain the exercise but also provide a medium to work with. All templates have regular DIN formats and are designed to be printed out easily. This aspect was especially important since I wanted the workshop to be accessible for everyone. By providing the material online, students and teachers can simply download and print out the material which makes the workshop low price and easy to manage.

5.4.3 The name

“beEmpathy” stems from my “be.mpathy” journal. It points out what empathy means: to be with each other. As this is the main message I want to deliver, I decided to keep using that name. It is not only meaningful but also catchy and therefore easy to remember. I only adjusted the spelling so that it would be easier to write.

The logo for beEmpathy, featuring the word "be" in a bold, lowercase, yellow font and "Empathy" in a bold, lowercase, blue font. The "E" in "Empathy" is slightly larger and more prominent.

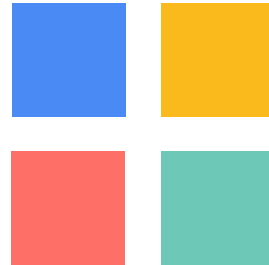
5.4.4 The logo

The logo is inspired by a prism since I see a prism as a great metaphor for taking different perspectives and including multiple individual aspects that eventually form a new community. The prism helps to visualise the concept of empathy. I based the logo on the “be-Empathy framework”. Four differently coloured shapes represent the four steps of the framework. Together they build the “beEmpathy” logo. When designing the logo, it was crucial for me that it is meaningful and recognisable. Through its simplicity it can be used for different purposes and in different sizes. Its four shapes can furthermore be used individually. Thereby the logo opens up multifunctional ways of interpreting it to create other designs that together form a coherent corporate identity. The prism is complemented with the name “beEmpathy”. Through the spacial offset of “be” and “empathy” the readability is improved. Also, it adds another unique design element that I used for headlines and different text snippets.



5.4.5 Typeface and colours

Not only when designing the logo but also when choosing a typeface and colours, it was essential for me to keep everything positive and inclusive. I wanted the different design elements to be appealing to children and youth without indicating binaries. The colours represent empathy's diverse benefits. They are easily distinguishable from each other and can be both used together and individually.



For the typeface, I equally prioritised readability and uniqueness. “PT Sans Pro” comes in many different variations which allowed me to use it not only for the logo but also for all copy texts. Especially when set in italics, the workshop’s joyful character is empathised. The elegantly curved strokes add a special memorability to the design.

PT Sans Pro Regular
PT Sans Pro Regular Italic
PT Sans Pro Bold
PT Sans Pro Bold Italic

5.4.6 Layout

It was important for me to find a cohesive and smart layout. The design should support “beEmpathy’s” playful and positive character. At the same time I wanted to keep the design simple and create clear lines and hierarchies. The different elements are consistently structured and designed in harmony. I combined colours and typeface with sufficient white space. Thereby the material provides space for individual contributions since I want students and teachers to turn the provided material into their own creations.

5.4.7 Texts

The tasks are described simply and clearly. I chose to use a rather colloquial style of writing to emphasise the playful and open-ended character of “beEmpathy”. I directly speak to the children and encourage them to contribute their own thoughts and perceptions. Some exercises provide short introductions that explain the underlying concept. Furthermore, all tasks come with a summarising explanation that helps to get a first understanding of them and allows teachers to select and structure different tasks for their classes.

5.4.8 The toolbox

The toolbox serves as a physical collection of all tasks. Almost all exercises come with a copy template that makes the implementation of the workshop even easier. The clear arrangement of the material supports the structure of the workshop. Additionally to the copy templates, the toolbox comes with some extra material that distinguishes it from the online material. Posters, stickers, and post-its support the workshop. A game version of “See with yours ears” aims to be played by students also outside the workshop setting. Playing cards for “interplayConstruction” and “window and mirror” facilitate the tasks and add to a positive user experience. Currently, I see the toolkit as a medium to present the “beEmpathy workshop” to schools. In the future, it is conceivable that schools can purchase it. For that, I could imagine to include extra material such as note books that replace the “myJournal” copy template or prisms that can be individually designed by the students.

5.4.9 The website

The website serves as a medium to share the “beEmpathy workshop”. It is an online platform that provides all tasks and their material for free and ready to be printed out. The website informs the user about the importance of empathy and the idea behind “beEmpathy”. It advises teachers and children how to use the workshop. The “beEmpathy framework” is explained and presented in a way that allows classes to always refer back to it during the exercises. All tasks and their material are provided in the order of the workshop structure and each comes with a short introduction. I want to use the website to share “beEmpathy” to as many classes as possible. Therefore, the website also contains a user forum where teachers and students can engage with each other and chat about their experiences. Since the workshop directly asks its participants to share their outcomes and to reach out to others, this feature is especially important. Furthermore, users have the option to send feedback or wishes directly to me. Through the website, I also found a way to communicate my theoretical findings. An integrated blog enables me to publish my texts and thoughts. Overall, the website allows my project to come to live and to be seen, heard, and responded to. I want to create a growing network of “beEmpathy” users who contribute to the project with their own ideas and experiences. By building a community, the tasks can be tested in reality, refined and complemented.

<https://siewersjudith.wixsite.com/beempathy>

STEP4 OF THE *beEmpathy* MANIFESTO

In the last step of my design process, I used the previously gained insights and complemented them with my own perspective. I objectively evaluated my findings and used them to develop a design solution that meets my aim to establish empathy and emotional literacy among school children. With empathy I have developed a workshop that is based on understanding and compassion. “beEmpathy” thrives for making a positive change in the way children relate to themselves and others.

All task descriptions can be found below as well as on the website:

<https://sieversjudith.wixsite.com/beempathy>

THE WORKSHOP ELEMENTS - A POOL OF EXERCISES

STEP 1

Morningcircle 1: Who are you? How are you? (drawing forms)

“Sitting facing each other in a trustworthy space at the beginning of the day, students engage in and build effective communication skills, including empathic listening.”¹ (Jonathan Cohen)

Morning circles are a common tool to inclusively start the day together. The setting of sitting in a circle makes sure that everyone is being seen and heard. Within the “beEmpathy” framework the morning circles also serve the purpose to carefully establish emotional literacy. During circle time each student is asked: “How are you?” By repeating this task regularly the students will feel more and more comfortable to talk about their emotional well-being. They practice to identify their feelings. Furthermore they get to know about different courses of action. The students will realise that they have the ability to react both to their own and to others’ emotions.

Important:

It is important to establish some common rules that create a safe space where the students feel comfortable talking about their well-being. What do your students need? E.g. no judgement, no laughing or ranting at others.

“morningcircle1” starts the workshop with a creative and welcoming task. Each student is asked to answer the questions: “Who are you?” and “How are you today?”. Instead of words, the students draw individual shapes to answer the questions. Each student draws two shapes on the poster that express their personality and their well-being. Afterwards the students add their names. They don’t have to explain their drawings. Only if they want to they can tell something about it. In any case, the other students shouldn’t comment the drawings. In the end, the class will have created a colourful poster that represents both their individual and their common identity.

personaStories

Personas are used in design to establish an empathetic understanding of the users you are designing for. They are fictional characters designers create based on research and observation. Personas help to understand people’s experiences, behaviours, needs, and values.² The task “personaStories” asks students to discuss a topic that is currently relevant to them, e.g. the Covid-19 pandemic. The topics can be chosen according to the school’s curriculum, happenings in the

¹ Cohen, *Educating minds and hearts*, 96.

² “What are personas?”, interaction-design.org, accessed April 12, 2021, <https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/topics/personas#:~:text=Personas%20are%20fictional%20characters%2C%20which,%2C%20experiences%2C%20behaviors%20and%20goals>.

class, future events, or anything else that feels currently important to them. Different questions provide a starting point for a discussion that will help the students to engage with and better understand the topic. Based on the discussions, the students are asked to create a persona. Supported by the “beEmpathy framework”, they will explore the persona’s story. Eventually, the persona will represent the students’ experiences. “personaStories” helps them to express their thoughts and feelings and encourages a creative and informed dispute.

empathyMap

Empathy maps are used in design to build empathy for the users you are designing for. To be able to take on the user’s perspective, designers try to think, feel and behave as if they were the user themselves. Empathy maps are a valuable tool to sum up your user engagement experiences.³ This “empathyMap” is based on the “beEmpathy framework”. In four steps, the students can gain deeper insights in what someone else is saying, doing, feeling, and needing. The “empathyMap” can be used any time to establish empathy, e.g. in conflict situations. Though, creating the “empathyMap” together with the “personaStories” can be especially helpful to gain an even deeper understanding of a situation and to illustrate the student’s common experiences.

Together with the “empathyMap” comes a reflection to further evaluate which new understandings the students could gain by using empathy.

beEmpathy framework

The “beEmpathy framework” provides an adaptive foundation for empathy. The circular framework explains the empathy skill in four steps: “I hear you”, “I see you”, “I feel you”, and “I am with you”. Step 4 both demonstrates the main aim of empathy and also allows to start with step 1 again. All steps are narrowed down to their core and explained with a headline, a guiding question, and a short definition. Empathy is about gaining both an emotional and a cognitive connection with another person. By following the framework one will be supported in so doing. Every step can be practiced on its own to improve the different parts of the empathy skill. The “beEmpathy framework” should be discussed and regularly repeated. The posters can be hung up in the classroom. They allow the students to always refer back to them when working on different tasks. Through practicing the steps, over time they will merge into an intuitive flow. Empathy can have different shapes but one has to be willing to be personally engaged and to develop an

³ “Empathy Map - Why and how to use it”, [interaction-design.org](https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/article/empathy-map-why-and-how-to-use-it), accessed April 12, 2021, <https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/article/empathy-map-why-and-how-to-use-it>.

attitude of mutual care and respect. The “beEmpathy framework” builds the foundation for an internalised skill that will eventually inspire social interactions all naturally.

“Through observation, we become informed, and through empathy, the human connection, we are inspired to imagine new and better possibilities for people.”⁴ (Jane Fulton Suri)

multiculturalCircles

This task is rooted in the educational curriculum of Social-Emotional Learning. We often perceive others as being different from us. To live peacefully in a society of growing mobility and migration, it is crucial to see differences as part of an enriching diversity. An effective way to do so is to start thinking that we ourselves are different, too.⁵ What makes us multicultural? To which groups in society do we belong? How are they related? What do they have in common? This task allows students to look at themselves from a different perspective. By identifying different parts of their personality they can find answers to the question “Who am I?” which will not only lead to a better understanding of themselves but also of others.

The circles symbolise different groups the students identify with. E.g. a student can be a big sister at home, a part of a swim team, and a loyal friend. Maybe someone is an attentive listener whereas someone else is a convincing speaker. The first step is to fill out their own “multiculturalCircle” (“I’m Multicultural”). Afterwards they fill out a “multiculturalCircle” for one of their classmates (“You’re Multicultural”). In the end, they discuss both circles together. Thereby, they can develop awareness for different perceptions and realise that diversity doesn’t have to be an obstacle but can rather be an enrichment.

myJournal & Check-Up

“The final aim is to activate the users to notice and think about their experiences. While having the material kit to document their life, people become attentive of their experiences and routines. When people are asked to verbalize their experiences they become more aware of them.”⁶ (Tuuli Mattelmäki)

4 Jane Fulton Suri “Empathic design: Informed and inspired by other people’s experience”, in *Empathic Design*, ed. Koskinen, Mattelmäki, Batterbee, 54.

5 Cohen, *Educating minds and hearts*, 151-153.

6 Tuuli Mattelmäki, “Probes: Studying experiences to design empathy” in *Empathic Design*, ed. Koskinen, Mattelmäki, Batterbee, 123.

In order to encourage students to reflect upon the different steps of “beEmpathy”, they are asked to keep the “myJournal” during the workshop. Every day they should pay special attention to one of the steps and document their experiences with giving and receiving empathy. Furthermore, “myJournal” aims to establish emotional awareness in their free time. The children should document their feelings and their behavioural responses. The journals should be introduced during the first day of working with “beEmpathy”. From time to time, students should be reminded of working with their journals. In the end of the workshop, a final reflection round should be conducted to talk about their experiences. “morningcircle5” can be used for that.

Note:

“The act of taking pictures and seeing the familiar environment through the camera lens stimulates the user to take a purposeful look and reflect on the assignments.”⁷ (Tuuli Mattelmäki)

Additionally to “myJournal”, students can also be asked to take pictures of empathetic situations. By observing their environment through the lens of their (smartphone) cameras, they can sharpen their perceptions and discover new perspectives of empathy. Based on the idea of “The Empathy Spectrum”, the students can develop their own empathy spectrums. The pictures can be discussed together in class and will thereby turn into storytelling facilitators. “The Empathy Spectrum” posters can be used to pin down their positions. The “beEmpathy framework” can be used to discuss which of the four steps the pictures show.

STEP2

morningcircle 2: How are you? How are you really? (basicEmotions & emotionWheel)

During „morningcircle2” the students say briefly how they are feeling today. Thereby they should try to use the eight basic emotions. In a second step, they can then try to be more specific and find a more distinct emotion. “morningcircle2” is a great opportunity to introduce the “basicEmotions” and the “emotionWheel”. It is helpful for the students to refer to them while answering the two questions “How are you?” and “How are you really?”.

⁷ Mattelmäki, “Probes: Studying experiences to design empathy” in *Empathic Design*, ed. Koskinen, Mattelmäki, Batterbee, 124.

basicEmotions

This poster shows an overview of the eight basic emotions: joy, sadness, acceptance, disgust, fear, anger, surprise, and anticipation. Each emotion comes with a short explanation. The poster can be used together with the “emotionWheel” and the task “emotionalAwareness”. Furthermore, it provides a base for further discussions. How would the students describe those emotions? What do they experience when feeling one of those emotions? The poster can be hang up in the class-room as a visual reminder that helps to identify upcoming emotions.

emotionWheel

**“The more you experience in life and come to realise that all human beings share comparable emotions, the greater is your empathic capacity for all mankind, not just those closest to you.”⁸
(Helen Riess)**

A human can experience around 3400 distinct emotions. To understand and manage all of them can, without doubt, be very overwhelming. Therefore it helps to develop emotional literacy for the eight basic emotions that are the ground for all other emotions: joy, sadness, fear, anticipation, trust, surprise, disgust, and anger. Being able to recognise and label them allows us to figure out how to manage our emotions and to be more precise about what we are actually feeling.

The “emotionWheel” provides visual support for that. Emotions that are on opposite sites of the wheel are also opposites of each other: joy and sadness, acceptance and disgust, fear and anger, surprise and anticipation. Emotions that are placed next to each other can have similar effects, e.g. fear and surprise. When moving towards the outside of the circle, the emotion becomes less intense. Hence on the inside, where the colours are strongly saturated, the emotions are most intense. Basic emotions can also appear in combination. E.g. when joy and trust are felt together, one experiences love.⁹

The “emotionWheel” can be used to introduce the eight “basicEmotions” and to support the exercise “emotionalAwareness”.

⁸ Riess, *The Empathy Effect*, 15.

⁹ Karimova Hokuma, “The Emotion Wheel: What is is and how to use it”, positivepsychology.org, accessed April 12, 2021, <https://positivepsychology.com/emotion-wheel/>.

emotionalAwareness

After introducing the “emotionWheel”, this task can be used to develop a better understanding of the eight basic emotions. We often experience emotions, as well as their triggers and their caused reactions, subconsciously. By deconstructing example situations, “emotionalAwareness” can help students to gain insights into their emotions and to build a support structure for future emotional experiences. Every emotion arises because of a trigger. Noticing what makes us feel a certain emotion, is the first step towards understanding and managing it. The next step is to distinguish between our cognitive and emotional reaction. To then be able to see what either caused our behavioural reaction or to pause and think about our behavioural reactions first. Lastly, we can ask ourselves why we react in certain ways to fully reflect upon the emotional experience. Originally, basic emotions are activated to evoke different survival behaviours.¹⁰ In this task, the students are asked to find their own examples to understand their individual emotional responses.

For example:

If we experience some kind of threat (trigger situation) we realise “this is dangerous” (cognitive reaction). Which makes us feel fear (emotional reaction). Consequently, we might choose to escape out of the situation and run away (behavioural reaction). When we then think about why all of this happened, we realise that our basic emotion “fear” was activated in order to secure our own safety (function).

emotionMap

Emotion maps can be seen as an in-depth investigation into the emotional aspects of the “empathy Map”. Stemming from the field of Geo-Participation, emotion maps are used to gain an empathic understanding of how people are feeling at different places. To then be able to make community based decisions and improvements.¹¹ The classroom is one of the places where students spend most of their time. Hence, it is extremely important that they feel safe and welcome there. The “emotionMap” helps to map out positive and negative feelings students are experiencing in their classroom. Through that, spots that make them feel uncomfortable can be revealed and eventually improved.

¹⁰ Hokuma, “The Emotion Wheel: What is it and how to use it”, [positivepsychology.org](https://positivepsychology.org/emotion-wheel/), accessed April 12, 2021, <https://positivepsychology.org/emotion-wheel/>.

¹¹ Jiri Pánek, “Emotional Mapping and Emotional Maps as Tools for Community Based Decision-Making”, (presentation, 27th International Cartographic Conference, Rio de Janeiro, 2015).

Together with the “empathy Map” comes a reflection to further evaluate which new understandings the students could gain and to prepare the tasks “changeMaker” and “classroomRecreation”.

changeMaker

This task is rooted in the educational curriculum of Social-Emotional Learning. “changeMaker” is an inclusive tool that allows all participants to express their thoughts. It makes sure that all opinions are being heard and responded to without judgement. Within the framework of the “beEmpathy” workshop, “changeMaker” is used to collect ideas for a classroom recreation. “beEmpathy” wants to make a long-lasting positive impact for the students. After conducting the “emotionMap”, this task represents a valuable transition into improving the classroom atmosphere. Every student who wants to change something in the room, gets a “changeMaker” sheet. The student is asked to write down what should be changed. If they already have an idea of how to change it, this can be written down, too. Then the paper sheet is passed on to their neighbour. If they have another idea of how to change that issue, they can add that. Otherwise they can vote for one of the previous ideas. Or they just pass on the paper to the next classmate. This continues until it either gets back to the student who raised the issue or until five ideas have been collected. In the latter case, it should be made sure that all students get a chance to vote on the ideas. Afterwards the “classroomRecreation” takes place.

classroomRecreation

After conducting the task “changeMaker”, those ideas that received most of the votes will be implemented. All students help together to recreate the classroom. Thereby they will practice their empathy ability. Understanding, teamwork, and problem solving skills are needed to conduct the exercise peacefully.

Note:

After the new setting has been tested for a few days, the students should get the possibility to reflect about the changes. Does the new setting meet their needs better? The “emotionMap” can be used again to check if the new setting actually improved the students well-being in class.

selfEmpathy

“Self-neglect over time blunts the ability to perceive or respond to the needs of other people because it diminishes the resources we have available for an empathic response. You have to help yourself before you can help others.”¹² (Helen Riess)

Understanding the concept of empathy also means to acknowledge that empathy is not only something we give to others. But we also need to learn how to receive empathy and how to be empathetic to ourselves. In order to ‘be with someone else’, we first have to help ourselves. The “beEmpathy framework” can also be used for practicing self-empathy. For this task, every student should bring an object from home that they connect with (self-) empathy. Sitting in a circle, each student shows their object and explains why they connect it with (self-) empathy. Thereby the students should connect their stories to the “beEmpathy framework”. Which of the four steps is especially expressed through the object? After the students shared their stories they put their object in the middle of the circle. In the end, the class will have created a multifaceted collection of empathy.

The following questions can inform a discussion about self-empathy:

How do you interpret self-empathy?

How can you apply the “beEmpathy framework” to yourself?

How do you take care of yourself?

What can you do/need to feel ready to give someone else empathy?

How does it feel to receive empathy?

Is receiving empathy part of self-empathy?

Note:

“selfEmpathy” is a great opportunity to also conduct the “breathingExercise”. It helps the students to calm down and to recognise their emotions.

breathingExercise

Our own breath is one of the most powerful tools we have to calm down and to connect to ourselves. This meditation breathing exercise helps to become aware of emotions. It is about realising and getting to know one’s feelings. Thereby the students get more familiar with their emotions and learn to be with them. Emotional Intelligence is developed.

¹² Riess, *The Empathy Effect*, 193.

Note:

In the beginning it can be helpful to focus on rather positive emotions. Since the exercise focuses on becoming aware of one's emotions (and not on e.g. regulating them), it can be easier to introduce this exercise with feelings that aren't too overwhelming.¹³

STEP 3

morningcircle3: How are you? How do you feel?

During “morningcircle3” the students not only tell their class how they are feeling today but also try to connect to each others' responses. One student starts by telling how and why they are feeling a certain way today. The other students try to relate to the story by asking themselves “How do I experience that feeling?” or “When did I experience that feeling lately?”. Whoever can connect to the previous story goes next until it was every student's turn.

For example:

Student A says: “I feel tired and a bit unmotivated. I think that's because I didn't sleep well last night.” Student B answers: “I know how that feels. I didn't sleep well either. But actually, I also feel a bit angry because the reason I couldn't sleep is that my brother was listening to loud music.” Student C continues: “I'm sorry that you didn't sleep well. I actually have a lot of energy. I am curious what we will do today. Maybe I can support you in a teamwork exercise?”

interplayConstruction

This task is all about creative problem solving, non-verbal communication, and teamwork. Empathy can seem like a rather abstract concept. “interplayConstruction” wants to change that by encouraging the students to find their own visualisations of empathy. How does empathy look like? Is it smooth or edgy? Is it still or moving? Is it loud or silent? Students are asked to repurpose materials they already have in their classroom. What could that string be used for? What if I cut this cardboard into small pieces? What if I turn that chair upside down? The students are teamed up in groups that each builds a construction. During the game they are not allowed to talk to each other. In order to include all group members equally, they have to find other forms of communication - they have to be empathetic with each other.

¹³ Positive Psychology Program B.V., 2019, “Emotional Intelligence Exercises”, positive psychology.org, accessed April 12, 2021, <https://positivepsychology.com/wp-content/uploads/3-Emotional-Intelligence-Exercises-1.pdf>.

Note:

“interplayConstruction” can be complemented with a second construction task. For that, every student gets a construction card that explains their individual task. They will either receive the task to build a construction that represents empathy or to build a construction that represents the opposite of empathy. The students are not allowed to talk about their tasks with each other. Again, they work in teams. But this time even more problem solving skills are needed. If you want to play with this second task, it is recommended to conduct the exercise “beApathy” before.

beApathy

What is the opposite of empathy? Is it indifference, “a lack of interest in someone or something”?¹⁴ Or apathy, a “behaviour that shows no interest or energy and shows that someone is unwilling to take action, especially over something important”?¹⁵ How do the students think about the opposite of empathy? This task can be introduced by collecting personal experiences where the students were missing empathy. Afterwards “beApathy” can be discussed. “beApathy” is an ironic guideline for how to apathetic. Different definitions of empathy have been deliberately turned around in an attempt to break up the concept of empathy. By explaining what empathy isn’t, its actual traits become clear. It is best to read out the steps slowly and one after the other. Afterwards the students can share their thoughts in groups. Thereby it is important to always make a connection to what empathy actually means. E.g. if apathy means to “judge as much as you possibly can”, what does that consequently say about empathy? The students should formulate and write down their ideas of empathy. Those first definitions can be used again for the task “empathyAgreement”.

empathyMisses

Sometimes it can be hard to distinguish between an empathetic and an un-empathetic reaction. Even in the best attempt to give empathy, it can happen that we say or do something that turns out to be not as empathetic as it was intended to be. Psychologist and empathy researcher Brené Brown collected the seven most common empathy misses. Based on her definitions, this task provides example situations that raise awareness for reactions that are often considered as empathetic but are actually misinterpretations of empathy. Each empathy miss is explained with a short communication between two friends.

¹⁴ “indifference”, dictionary.cambridge.org, accessed April 12, 2021, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/indifference>.

¹⁵ “apathy”, dictionary.cambridge.org.

Every communication comes with a second paper sheet that provides an empathetic alternative for the communication. The sentences and alternatives should be dealt out among the students. One after the other, the students read their sentences out loud. The students with the alternatives try to recognise the misses and read out their sentences accordingly. All misses should be given enough time to reflect upon. If needed, they should be repeated and discussed. The students can also try to find other example communications.

These questions can inform a discussion:

Why was empathy missed here?

How does it feel to receive an empathy miss? (Friend A)

How could an empathic response look like instead? (Friend B)

Do you remember a similar situation?

Knowing what you know now, what would you do differently?

window and mirror

This task is rooted in the educational curriculum of Social-Emotional Learning. It is both about self-empathy and the question if it is necessary to relate to someone's story in order to give empathy. In the spectrum of empathy, there exist numerous ways of being empathetic. The "window and mirror" photos show some of them. The students are asked to look at the pictures and discuss the provided questions. If they can relate to the picture it is a "mirror picture" as it reflects something that they have experienced similarly. If they can't relate to the picture it is a "window picture" as it opens up a new perspective.¹⁶ After they decided if it is a mirror or a window picture, they place it within "The Empathy Spectrum". For this task "The Empathy Spectrum" poster should be placed on tables or hung up on a classroom wall. All pictures can be found on the "beEmpathy" website. The teacher can also show them with the help of a projector. The students write the title of the picture on a post-it and stick the post it somewhere between the ends of the spectrum. Otherwise you can directly place the picture cards on the poster. How much empathy does the picture show? Why do you place it there?

Important:

The task is not about relating to as many pictures as possible. It can rather be about realising that we neither can't nor should be empathetic with everyone at all times.¹⁷

¹⁶ Cohen, *Educating minds and hearts*, 143-144.

¹⁷ Riess, *The Empathy Effect*, 37.

Tip: Watching the news together

The task “window and mirror” can be combined with watching or reading the news together. Seeing what is going on in the world can sometimes be confusing, frightening, or overwhelming. Not being able to relate to e.g. terrible happenings, doesn’t mean that someone isn’t empathetic. It rather means that one of the basic emotions has been activated to protect our own well-being.

Note:

Also the “empathyMap” can be used combined with watching the news. The students are asked to focus on one person. Afterwards they fill out the “empathyMap”.

The Empathy Spectrum

Empathy is nothing someone either has or hasn’t. It is a skill that, through practice, can be improved over time. Therefore, empathy can have different shapes and expressions. “The Empathy Spectrum” symbolises this understanding of empathy. In some situations we experience a lack of empathy, in others we feel just fine with the given or received amount of empathy, and sometimes we can even give too much of it. How much empathy is needed depends on the situation. How much empathy can be given depends on one’s individual capacities. “The Empathy Spectrum” is both a conversation starter and a visualisation tool for other tasks, e.g. “window and mirror” and “beEmpathy?”.

Students can discuss questions like:

What is at the ends of the spectrum?

What are the grey areas in between?

How could the different levels of empathy be described?

How do you know how much empathy is needed?

Looking at a certain situation, where in the spectrum does it belong?

STEP4

morningcircle4: How are you? How can I be with you? (coCreation)

“morningcircle4” is about reacting to each others’ stories. This task combines “morningcircle1” and “morningcircle3”. Each student answers the question “How are you today?”. The students briefly tell the others how they are feeling. Then they draw a shape on the poster that represents their well-being. The next student tries to react to that with empathy. They also tell the

others how they are and find a shape that visualises their well-being. But instead of drawing it just anywhere on the poster, they should think about where to place it to positively interact with another shape. The students should ask each other “What do you need?” to react empathetically.

For example:

Student A is having a bad day. Student B is feeling good and energised. Student B can either draw his shape next to student A’s shape to show student A that he wants to cheer her up. Or student B places it further away in respect that student A may not want company today.

Note:

If a student doesn’t feel like they can meet another student’s need, that’s fine. Empathy, in particular self-empathy, is about knowing one’s own capabilities.

See with your ears

Sometimes it can be difficult to identify our emotions. Talking about them can be even more challenging. Critical thinking and knowing how to define emotions, supports one’s emotional awareness. Especially when interacting with others, self-reflection and self-awareness are essential to understand one’s behaviour.¹⁸ Emotional awareness does not just come naturally but has to be learned.¹⁹ “See with your ears” supports this process in a playful way. The game encourages students to notice their own emotions, to label them, and to communicate them. Thereby their emotional dictionary expands and emotional awareness is practiced. Simultaneously, the students are also asked to pay attention to each other’s emotions. Thereby they practice empathy and empathetic communication.

Note:

The game is best played slowly. It is not about winning but about the evoking conversations.

beEmpathy?

What is empathy? There doesn’t exist only one answer to this question. During the previously conducted exercises the students have worked with different perceptions of empathy. Based on these experiences, “beEmpathy” encourages the students to put these perceptions into words. In the “How are you?” survey people were asked about their definitions of empathy. Some of

¹⁸ Ninivaggi, *Making sense of emotions*, 51.

¹⁹ Ninivaggi, *Making sense of emotions*, 218.

their answers have been collected for this task. The students are asked to discuss the different definitions. Do they agree? Can they discover new aspects of empathy? As always when it comes to different perspectives, there is no right or wrong. “beEmpathy?” enables an inspiring dispute about empathy and its multifaceted perspectives. It fosters perspective taking and intercultural competence.

Note:

“beEmpathy?” can be combined with “The Empathy Spectrum”. Where in the spectrum do the definitions belong? After reading the definitions out loud, the class can discuss where in the spectrum they want to place it.

empathyAgreement

To sum up the workshop or previously conducted tasks, a common “empathyAgreement” can be created. Based on “beEmpathy?”, “window and mirror” or “empathyMisses”, the students might already have collected different definitions of empathy. They can now be used to formulate a common understanding of empathy. But also without previously formulated definitions, the students can reflect upon their perceptions of empathy. It is recommended to give the students some time to take notes first. Afterwards they can share their ideas with the class. The class discusses the different proposals and decides on one definition they can all agree with. After writing this definition on the “empathyAgreement” poster, they try to find examples for how that theoretical definition can look like in practice. E.g. a common interpretation of empathy is to step in someone else’s shoes. But this isn’t to be taken literally. Instead, someone tries to take some-one else’s perspective by imagining what it feels like to be in their situation. In so doing, they can for example ask the other person “How do you feel about that?” or listen carefully when they tell their story. In the end of the task, everyone can sign the agreement and the poster can be hung up in the classroom. It serves as a visual reminder of their common willingness to keep practicing empathy in the future.

“Rules that have been generated in a democratic way with substantial student input and that are based on the student’s own hopes and dreams (...) have special meaning for adolescents.”²⁰ (Jonathan Cohen)

²⁰ Cohen, *Educating minds and hearts*, 96-97.

STEPS

morningcircle5: How have you been? (myJournal reflection)

During “morningcircle5” the students are asked to briefly tell how they are doing today. They can freely choose how they want to do that. Afterwards each student reflects upon their experiences with “myJournal”. If they want, they can share their writings. The journal reflection aims to collect feedback about how the journal has helped the children to experience the difference between giving and receiving empathy, to practice the four steps of the “beEmpathy” framework, and to establish emotional awareness. Step5 of the journal provides questions that can inform a discussion. The students should be given some time to reflect upon their experiences silently first. Afterwards they share them with each other. Also, they should share some of the empathetic sentences they have documented during the week. They can either cut them out or write them on a post-it. The sentences will be collected on the “comfortCase” poster.

comfortCase

The “comfortCase” is a poster that shows empathetic sentences the students documented in their journals. Those sentences that the students liked best and that they want to share with their classmates will be cut out or written on post-its. They will be placed on the poster which will then be hung up in the classroom. “comfortCase” can both be an inspiration for the “empathy Agreement” or stand on its own as a support tool the students can refer to in situations that require empathy. At any time they can add new sentences to it. If someone in class is being empathetic and someone else notices it, they can document it on the poster, too. Thereby the students become aware of their own empathy skills.

finalisingExhibition

The students view their processed material again. If some of the material has been temporarily stored, they take it out again. Is something missing? All material should be finalised and brought together. Then the students think about how to display their material. Everything that has been worked on should be presented. The classroom should be seen as an exhibition space. Everything the students have done is important and worth showing. It is useful to provide tools like strings, fabric or tape. Constructions can be displayed on tables. Do you have a podium? Or a canvas stand for the posters? Also, think about if you want to add something like tags or headlines. Imagine someone who hasn't been part of the workshop comes to visit the exhibition.

How do you guide them through it? Don't hesitate to show your work. Be proud of what you have produced and try to find the best way that shows your effort behind.

exploringExhibition

Would you like to invite someone to the exhibition? For example a neighboring class? Please do. You can use the "beEmpathy" postcards or create your own invitations. But even if you don't have other visitors, explore the exhibition as if you were a visitor yourself. Move through the space and look at the material again. What do you think about the different tasks? The students should get post-its and use them to write down short reflections and notes. Whatever comes to their mind when reviewing the material should be written down. The post-its can be used later to create the "empathyCollage".

empathy Collage

"To develop empathy is an individual act, but by discussing it in a team, the discussion serves as a trigger for others to make more connections, which will lead to increased understanding."²¹ (Merlijn Kouprie and Froukje Sleeswijk Visser)

This task serves as a medium to gather different summarising thoughts and experiences about empathy and emotional literacy. After conducting the "beEmpathy" workshop the collage is a creative method to reflect upon the tasks and to create a common moodboard that not only summarises the students' experiences so far but also starts a new way of empathetic interaction in the future. The notes the students took during "exploringExhibition" can be used as a base for the collage. But also other material should be included. Are there some left-over pieces from the "interplayConstruction" task? What else can you find to materialise your thoughts? All students should contribute to the collage. Afterwards the collage will represent their community that is made out of complex and multicultural individuals. If you also developed an "empathyAgreement", the collage can be seen as a complementation of it. Both posters can be hung up together.

documentingExhibition

After exploring the exhibition and after creating the final "empathyCollage", don't forget to document the workshop. The class should take pictures of their displayed material or even make a short

21 Kouprie, Sleeswijk Visser, "A framework for empathy in design", 439.

film. Afterwards the students upload some of the pictures on the “beEmpathy” website. Thereby they can share their experiences and inspire other classes to take part in “beEmpathy”, too.

buildingRelationships: postcards

“As we look around the world today, we see less empathy than we would like.”²² (Helen Riess)

Let’s change that! After you conducted the “beEmpathy workshop” or some of its tasks, share your experiences with others. How about inviting another class of your school? How about reaching out to another school? The postcards provide an easy possibility of communicating the importance of empathy and to spread the idea of “beEmpathy”.

removingExhibition

The last step is to remove the exhibition again. Together the students decide which of the material they want to keep. Also, how and where do they want to store it? Some of the posters could be shown on the walls, some of the installations might need to be reconstructed again. Finding a good balance between what to keep in the classroom and what to take home, is important. Even though the workshop is finished, empathy isn’t. Even though it is not that visible anymore, empathy is still there and should still be practiced. How do you want to consider this?

reflectionRounds

“Having an emotional response (affective) to another’s emotional state and being able to reflect on that by perspective taking (cognitive) seems to be the core mechanism of empathy.”²³ (Koupric and Sleejsvik Visser)

In order to enhance the learning effect of a task, students should have the chance to talk about their experiences afterwards. By evaluating what they have been doing they can think about the task from another perspective. Instead of being an active participant they take on the role of an observer. Through talking about what has been most important to them, they will form an individual learning outcome. The students will be able to make their own connections and to build opinions and values. There is a special reflection guide for each step that takes up the matching exercises. “empathyRipples” serves both as a reflection guide for step5 when the whole workshop has been done and as a reflection guide when only some of the tasks have been conducted.

²² Riess, *The Empathy Effect*, 137.

²³ Koupric, Sleejsvik Visser, “A framework for empathy in design”, 442.

6 CONCLUSION: PRACTICING EMPATHY

6.1 Summarizing intentions

“Empathy is at the heart of design. Without the understanding of what others see, feel, and experience, design is a pointless task.”¹ (Tim Brown)

Studying the social, intercultural, and psychological relevance of empathy, engaging with and contributing to the field of Empathic Design, complementing my process with Inclusive Design methods as well as with characteristics of intuitive and pluriversal design, and orienting myself by the education curriculum of Social-Emotional Learning, equipped me with knowledge and understanding. Which enabled me to develop both an empathic design concept and a materialised project. The “beEmpathy framework” provides a fundamental understanding of empathy. With the framework I hope to establish a new perspective on empathy and a tool that makes it adaptive and practical in daily interactions. The “beEmpathy manifesto” bridges this understanding to the field of Empathic Design. With the manifesto I want to support designers in their processes by fostering the understanding that empathy in design is not defined by a certain set of methods but by an attitude. My process has shown that by always referring back to its four steps, empathy can be the driving spirit towards meeting user needs. I want to show that empathy is a skill that both can and should be invested in. With the “beEmpathy workshop” I provide a possibility to do so. It encourages teachers and students to practice empathy playfully and participatory. It aims to put empathy in the focus and to make a long-lasting impact on their daily school lives. Thereby, “beEmpathy” supports children’s individual and collective well-being.

6.2 Possibilities and limitations

In “Achieving empathy with users: The effects of different sources of information” the authors discuss the results of their previously initiated study “which explores the influence of different sources of information on design sessions aiming for product concepts for children with autism.”² The results indicate that “direct contact brings empathy with users to design teams and positively influences the quality of the product concepts they produce.”³ During my design process, I realised that direct contact with the users is indeed needed and quite rightly one of the main characteristics of Empathic Design. But I also learned that if the circumstances do not allow that contact to happen on-site, directly does not implement physically. In fact, by creatively establi-

1 Tim Brown quoted in Quentin Parizot, “Your Empathy Toolbox: Ensuring you design a product your users will need”, [blog.prototypr.io](https://blog.prototypr.io/your-empathy-toolbox-ensuring-you-design-a-product-your-users-will-need-c3233c944c3), accessed March 9, 2021, <https://blog.prototypr.io/your-empathy-toolbox-ensuring-you-design-a-product-your-users-will-need-c3233c944c3>.

2 Helma van Rijn, Froukje Sleswijk Visser, Pieter Jan Stappers, Aslı Deniz Özakar, “Achieving empathy with users: The effects of different sources of information”, *CoDesign* 7, no. 2, (2011): 65, DOI: 10.1080/15710882.2011.609889.

3 van Rijn et al., “Achieving empathy with users”, 65.

shing new context-sensitive methods, an empathetic engagement with the user is still possible. I have argued for Empathic Design as a mindset and an intrinsic approach rather than a fixed set of methods. From this perspective, Empathic Design is possible even when the world experiences a global pandemic. Consequently, this opens up new possibilities and even more contexts for Empathic Design to take place. Although the Dutch study indicates that direct contact might be best in order to achieve empathic design solutions, it also acknowledges that it is just not always feasible. For example, it “is also the scenario for most academic projects, which suggests the need to find a way to bring designers similar benefits to those provided by direct contact.”⁴ I consider “beEmpathy” as an important step towards establishing and acknowledging empathy. Hence, both my research and my project opens up new possibilities to further explore empathy also in other contexts such as e.g. design education.

To further develop “beEmpathy”, the next essential step it to test the different workshop elements in real life. Now other people and their experiences are needed. This empirical feedback is crucial to fully meet the needs of students and teachers. By engaging with different school classes, I want to extend the website and grow a network of different empathetic experiences. Throughout the project I have also seen potential for “beEmpathy” to be used by adults. Many of the exercises can equally support grown-ups in reflecting about and improving their empathy skills. Furthermore, I see huge potential in elaborating “The Empathy Spectrum”. Using the spectrum to visualise various levels of empathy can provide insights into the concept of care which will potentially contribute to the understanding of empathy.

In conclusion, with “beEmpathy” I developed a design project that mediates empathy and emotional literacy among school children and, by that, fosters creativity, intercultural competence, and complex identities. With my design research, I worked towards establishing a fundamental understanding of empathy that cannot only be applied in everyday life but also in design. I aim to make a point for allowing Empathic Design to be what it is: empathic.

“I hope that we will continue to explore ways to get beyond our own cultures, experiences, rituals, mental models and cognitive structures.”⁵ (Jane Fulton Suri)

I AGREE TO PRACTICE EMPATHY.

⁴ Carolina Leyva, “Empathy in Design” (Master diss., University of Cincinnati, 2013): 31-32.

⁵ Fulton Suri “Empathic design: Informed and inspired by other people’s experience”, in *Empathic Design*, ed. Koskinen, Mattelmäki, Batterbee, 57.

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8.1 ESSAY: INTERCULTURAL EMPATHY - THE POSITIVE INTER-FERENCE OF INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCIES AND CREATIVITY AMONG CROSS-CULTURAL CHILDREN

1 Introduction: Living in a multicultural world

Due to phenomena like globalisation, migration, and digitalisation we are living in a complex world of increasing cultural diversity. People with different value systems constantly interact with each other. Thereby they face both challenges and opportunities. Problems like discrimination, exclusion, and segregation can arise. At the same time, enrichments like the modification of one's identity, the improvement of creativity, and the reduction of stereotypical thinking, are possible.¹ I myself experience intercultural interaction every day, both online and offline. Especially at my workplace, The International Preschool Gothenburg, my day is characterised by diversity since both the staff and the children have multicultural backgrounds. The preschool uses play and exploration for "providing the children with the necessary tools to become more open-minded, accepting and understanding global citizens".² It is equally important that the teachers help the children in their identity development. The preschool is a safe space that aims to embrace everyone's individuality.³ Cross-cultural children not only have to deal with the adjustment to different lifestyles but also with several more challenges of growing up and being in an especially vulnerable position. To support positive experiences, social inclusion and careful education are necessary.⁴ In this essay, I am going to illustrate the relationship between multiculturalism, empathy, and creativity with a focus on cross-cultural children. I argue for creative projects as a valuable way to foster empathy in social and especially in multicultural interactions. In addition, I am going to use the Polish study "The Creativity Compass" and the Norwegian art project "Kaleidoscope" to emphasize the importance of intercultural empathy as an overall framework for interactions of diversity.

2 Cross-cultural children

"Children and young people with cross-cultural backgrounds are significantly influenced by multiple cultures during their upbringing. They face the ambivalence and challenges of regularly dealing with multiple cultural frames of reference, norms and expectations, and often experience particular identity changes."⁵ (Hildegunn Schuff)

1 Trond Solhaug, Audrey Osler, "Intercultural empathy among Norwegian students: an inclusive citizenship perspective", *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 22, no.1 (2018): 89-110, DOI: 10.1080/13603116.2017.1357768.

2 "Curriculum", theinternationalpreschool.se, accessed March 9, 2021, <https://theinternationalpreschool.se/curriculum>.

3 "Curriculum", theinternationalpreschool.se, accessed March 9, 2021, <https://theinternationalpreschool.se/curriculum>.

4 Hildegunn Schuff, "Supporting Identity Development in Cross-Cultural Children and Young People: Resources, Vulnerability, Creativity. *FLEKS Scandinavian Journal of Intercultural Theory and Practice* 3, no. 1 (2018): 6.

5 Schuff, "Supporting Identity Development in Cross-Cultural Children and Young People", 2.

A cross-cultural child is a child that has lived in or interacted with at least two cultural environments for a significant amount of time. This comes with special experiences, opportunities, and challenges that make them even more vulnerable. Immigrant children, and especially refugees, suffer statistically more often from physical or mental health problems. Not only the migration itself and the experiences that motivated it can be traumatic but also the adjustment to a new life style that can differ tremendously from one's own. Getting used to another value system often comes with a lack of regularity, expectations, and unpredictability. Thereby a child often has to re-identify itself. The task of fitting in is no longer only a central part of their up-growing but also of their everyday life in a different culture. Because of that, it is important that they are well supported. For example, the way how the majority population welcomes them and their families decides if they feel integrated or discriminated. With inclusion and support, cross-cultural children are able to develop special competencies such as language skills, being open-minded, and flexibility and adaption skills.⁶

Cross-cultural children can develop special forms of identity. The question Where are you from? can be difficult to answer. If a child decides to reply without acknowledging its complexity, it chooses a 'Pure Identity'. This happens especially when the child is afraid of marginalization. Instead, if a child identifies itself with all its inherited cultures, it can develop a 'Hyphenated Identity'. It also has the opportunity to build a new identity that is based on its multiple inherited cultures but differs from any of them. Furthermore, a cross-cultural child can adjust its identity depending on the situation it is in. Being in school with pupils of the main population, the child can identify with them. Being at home with its parents, the child can equally identify with them. This form is called 'Flexible Identity'. Similar to the 'Hyphenated Identity' is the 'Multicultural Identity' which means that a child identifies with two or more cultures and feels strongly connected to all of them. Lastly, the child can also accept the fact that its identity is multifaceted and decide to identify with this complexity rather than limiting itself to only one culture. Overall, it has been proven that complex forms of identity are supporting cross-cultural children's mental health better than singular forms. If flexible identities are not allowed, the cross-cultural child can suffer from inner conflicts and a feeling of alienation. This phenomenon is described as 'Encapsulated Marginality'. Its opposite 'Constructive Marginality' allows the child to experiment and to bring in its multicultural background. Unfortunately, complex identities are often not acknowledged.⁷ In the following I am going to illustrate how cross-cultural children can be supported through creativity and through empathic and inclusive citizenship.

6 Schuff, "Supporting Identity Development in Cross-Cultural Children and Young People", 3-18.

7 Schuff, "Supporting Identity Development in Cross-Cultural Children and Young People", 7-8.

3 The interference of multiculturalism and creativity

“One should not underestimate the importance of intercultural competence for real and inclusive citizenship, particularly in the current global and European climate. Differences in intercultural competences may have consequences for our ability to identify with, recognise and enable solidarity across differences.”⁸ (Trond Solhaug and Audrey Osler)

So far it has been explained that living in a multicultural world can come with challenges such as identity issues and intergroup conflicts. To prevent that, this essay aims to focus on the advantages of living in a multicultural world. Especially important is the link between multicultural experiences and creativity. Intercultural competence is “[...] the ability to function effectively in interactions with people from different countries, accompanied by appreciation and acceptance of the difference between them.”⁹ It has been proven that multicultural experiences lead to better skills in creative thinking and higher cognitive flexibility. This is because adjusting to another culture challenges inherited value systems and forces someone to explore new social routines.¹⁰

“Cultural conflict is a situation in which disagreements exist between culturally, ethnically, or racially identifiable groups due to different conduct norms for the same situation. (...) Central to cultural conflicts are thus disagreements about culturally shaped core values.”¹¹

Core values shape our worldview. If someone feels threatened in his essential beliefs, conflicts can arise in interactions with others. Regularly experiencing different cultures supports divergent thinking as one gets used to dealing with differences and even takes advantage of them. Divergent thinking is one of the main aspects of creativity and describes the ability to develop several ideas and solutions to a problem. Especially when negotiating two controversial cultures and reflecting upon their values, assumptions are reduced and conflicts can be solved. Related to creativity is ‘Integrative Complexity’ which describes the capacity to combine competing perspectives. The more often someone finds itself in challenging multicultural situations, the better he will become in finding complex solutions.¹²

8 Solhaug, Osler, “Intercultural empathy among Norwegian students”, 103.

9 Alvino E. Fantini, “A central concern: Developing intercultural competence”. *SIT Occasional Papers Series 1* (2000): 125-142 in Agata Groyecka, Aleksandra Gajda, Dorota M. Jankowska, Piotr Sorokowski, Maciej Karwowski. 2020. “On the benefits of thinking creatively: Why does creativity training strengthen intercultural sensitivity among children”. *Elsevier Ltd. Thinking Skills and Creativity 37* (2000): 2. DOI: 10.1016/j.tsc.2020.100693.

10 Pinar Çelik, Martin Storme, Boris Forthmann, Boris. “A new perspective on the link between multiculturalism and creativity: The relationship between core value diversity and divergent thinking”. *Learning and Individual Differences 52* (2016): 188-196. DOI: 10.1016/j.lindif.2016.02.002.

11 Çelik et al., “A new perspective on the link between multiculturalism and creativity”, 189.

12 Çelik et al., “A new perspective on the link between multiculturalism and creativity”, 188-189.

In 2016, a survey looked into the correlation of multiculturalism and creativity. 350 people with multicultural backgrounds were given a questionnaire about their personal experiences of conflicts where they felt that their core values have neither been understood nor appreciated. To assess their subjective perceptions, a value diversity scale was used. Value diversity was especially affected among participants who had experienced high levels of value conflict.¹³ “However, both value diversity (...) and value conflict (...) were positively related to having a multinational (i.e. immigrant) background.”¹⁴

Divergent thinking was tested with three creativity tasks: “Participants had to list as many ideas as they could about how to use a brick, a newspaper and paperclip creatively, in two minutes per task. Each task was scored in terms of fluency and uniqueness.”¹⁵ The survey showed a strong correlation between value conflict and fluency especially among those with high levels of value diversity. Moreover, a strong interaction effect was found between value diversity and uniqueness among those with high levels of value conflict.¹⁶ “Together, these results suggest that, not only, is the effect of value diversity on divergent thinking conditional on the level of value conflict, the reverse is also true.”¹⁷ The study confirms that creativity skills like fluency, uniqueness, and divergent thinking are supported by value diversity, especially when individuals experience relatively high levels of value conflict. The more challenges one faces in negotiating his own core values and the more often one observes similar situations with other people, the more one benefits from value diversity and the stronger is one’s ability of divergent thinking. The survey emphasises the advantages of multicultural experiences by showing that diversity in core values comes with several benefits not despite one has to face challenges but just because of that.¹⁸

4 The interference of creativity and empathy

Creativity is not only positively linked to multiculturalism, but also to empathy.¹⁹ Divergent thinking has been demonstrated as one of its main aspects. By explaining the two other creativity aspects ‘openness to experience’ and ‘perspective taking’ the connection to empathy is shown.

13 Çelik et al., “A new perspective on the link between multiculturalism and creativity”, 190-194.

14 Çelik et al., “A new perspective on the link between multiculturalism and creativity”, 192.

15 Çelik et al., “A new perspective on the link between multiculturalism and creativity”, 190.

16 Çelik et al., “A new perspective on the link between multiculturalism and creativity”, 190-194.

17 Çelik et al., “A new perspective on the link between multiculturalism and creativity”, 193.

18 Çelik et al., “A new perspective on the link between multiculturalism and creativity”, 190-194.

19 Agata Groyecka, “Will Becoming More Creative Make us More Tolerant?”, *Creativity, Theories – Research – Applications* 5, no. 2 (2018): 170-176. DOI: 10.1515/ctra-2018-0015.

Discrimination is often based on stereotypical thinking. Stereotypes can lead to serious problems, they can intensify intergroup conflict and exclude minority groups that can then, for example, suffer from physical and mental health problems.²⁰ But “through enhancing creativity, stereotyping can be reduced which can translate to the further improvement of intergroup relations.”²¹ Divergent thinking, also called ‘cognitive flexibility’, describes the ability to solve problems from various perspectives. The more distinct this ability is, the smaller are “the differences in strengths of associations”²² which then results in less stereotypical thinking. Another measure of creativity is ‘openness to experience’. Being open-minded is the base for tolerance and a sense of equality. The more open-minded someone is, the more he enjoys intergroup contact. This also works the other way around: The less open-minded someone is, the higher he scores in measures of prejudices.²³ “In a situation requiring team work, building upon someone else’s insights instead of questioning them, or forcing one’s own opinions upon them, creates a space of tolerance, exploration and playfulness.”²⁴ Building upon someone else’s insights is described as ‘perspective taking’ and does as well decrease stereotypes as it elevates creativity and leads to a positive shift in attitude.²⁵

Dr. Brené Brown, American psychologist and pioneer in this field, describes empathy as a “skill that can bring people together and make people feel included”.²⁶ ‘Perspective taking’ is the first step in her definition of empathy. Which means to “see and feel the world through the eyes of the other”.²⁷ Followed by ‘staying out of judgement’ while actively listening to the other person. The third key step it to ‘recognise emotions’. Thereby one acknowledges the interlocutor’s emotions and tries to understand them by being in touch with one’s own feelings. The last step is ‘communication’ and means the expression of that understanding and the validation of the recognised emotions. “When we give others empathy we allow them to feel, to be fully heard, and accepted. We also encourage compassion, authenticity and intimacy to flourish in our relationships.”²⁸ Empathy is essential in multiple every-day actions. It enables us to work collaboratively and to solve conflicts. Thereby, a feeling of safety and friendships are built.

20 Groyecka, “Will Becoming More Creative Make us More Tolerant?”, 170-171.

21 Groyecka, “Will Becoming More Creative Make us More Tolerant?”, 170.

22 Groyecka, “Will Becoming More Creative Make us More Tolerant?”, 171.

23 Groyecka, “Will Becoming More Creative Make us More Tolerant?”, 170-173.

24 Groyecka, “Will Becoming More Creative Make us More Tolerant?”, 172.

25 Groyecka, “Will Becoming More Creative Make us More Tolerant?”, 172.

26 “Dr. Brené Brown: Empathy vs. Sympathy”, twentyonetoys.com, accessed October 28, 2020, <https://twentyonetoys.com/blogs/teaching-empathy/brene-brown-empathy-vs-sympathy>.

27 Melli O'Brien, “How to have more empathy: Learn the four attributes of empathy from Brené Brown”, mrsmindfulness.com, accessed February 2, 2021, <https://mrsmindfulness.com/four-attributes-of-empathy-brene-brown/>.

28 O'Brien, “How to have more empathy.”

Empathy not only helps to identify needs and to learn how to negotiate them but it also enhances creativity.²⁹ Hence empathy and creativity are strongly connected and improve each other. Both skills foster tolerance and reduce stereotypical thinking. In the context of cross-cultural children, this interference especially supports the improvement of mental health and of identity development.³⁰

5 “The Creativity Compass”: Intercultural sensitivity among children

“The Creativity Compass” is

“an intervention program dedicated to 6 - 12-year-old children, which integrates intercultural education with creativity-enhancing tasks. (...) The program’s aims were to (1) stimulate participant’s creative abilities and attitudes, and simultaneously (2) teach the students about cultural diversity and encourage development of intercultural sensitivity, cultural self-awareness, and desire to explore other cultures.”³¹

The Polish program shows the connection between creativity and intercultural sensitivity among children. In particular, it proves that intercultural sensitivity positively influences flexibility and originality. The reverse is also true: High flexibility and originality predict high intercultural sensitivity. “Increasing intercultural empathy is one of the important factors contributing to the reduction of prejudices and stereotypes.”³² “The Creativity Compass” can be seen as an encouragement to strengthen intercultural competencies and to reduce stereotypes with creativity programs. Social interactions benefit from empathy. Interventions that improve this ability offer not only possibilities for multicultural contexts but for any kind of diversity.³³

6 Intercultural empathy: Enhancing social inclusion

“As the society pluralises, perceived cultural differences are present in ever more encounters, which generates new experiences and calls for understanding and sorting out similarities and differences.”³⁴ (Trond Solhaug and Audrey Osler)

29 Jodi Clarke, “Cognitive vs. Emotional Empathy”, [verywellmind.com](https://www.verywellmind.com/cognitive-and-emotional-empathy-4582389), accessed 28 October 28, 2020, <https://www.verywellmind.com/cognitive-and-emotional-empathy-4582389>.

30 Groyecka et al., “On the benefits of thinking creatively”, 1-7.

31 Groyecka et al., “On the benefits of thinking creatively”, 3.

32 Groyecka et al., “On the benefits of thinking creatively”, 7.

33 Groyecka et al., “On the benefits of thinking creatively”, 1-7.

34 Solhaug, Osler, “Intercultural empathy among Norwegian students”, 92.

An intercultural society is a society of “multiple groups with different cultures”.³⁵ In intercultural relations, individuals decide about the perception of a culture as similar or different from another. In all human interactions “empathy is important for well-being and feelings of inclusion (e.g. schools)”.³⁶ Intercultural empathy is, as well as empathy, about taking the perspective of someone else, both cognitive and emotional. In particular: “Intercultural empathy increases perceived concern about the culture of other people, spark attitude changes towards groups experiencing oppression and challenge distinctions between the ‘citizen and the other.’”³⁷ In this context, four empirical dimensions of empathy have been defined. The first is ‘feelings and expression of empathy’ which is about “one’s willingness to act upon perceived discrimination and injustice”.³⁸ Secondly, ‘empathetic awareness’ describes “subjective indifferences to perceived unequal treatment”.³⁹ The third dimension is ‘acceptance of cultural difference’ and describes the acknowledgment of diversity rather than universal norms. And the fourth aspect is ‘empathetic perspective-taking’ which has been previously explained. A lack of empathy can lead to intergroup aggression and social dominance. Instead, social relationships that are based on empathy lead to inclusive communities.⁴⁰

In 2018, a Norwegian study looked into intercultural empathy and how schools can develop intergroup empathy to practice social inclusion. 1006 students from two upper secondary schools and three lower secondary schools answered a questionnaire.⁴¹ Inclusiveness is one of the most important aims at Norwegian schools. Therefore, the study applied the feminist theory of citizenship. Which is composed of justice, treating people fair and equally, recognition, the “intrinsic worth of all human beings, including their differences”⁴², self-determination, having agency about one’s own life, and solidarity which is based on understanding, knowledge, and on encountering each other positively. Together, those four aspects enable someone to identify himself with others. Thereby, the willingness to empathise with others is very important for participation and interaction.⁴³

For this essay, two of the research results are especially noticeable: Information on culture and diversity supports intercultural empathy. And the social background of the students does not affect the ability of intercultural empathy but participation does: “Students’ information and

35 Solhaug, Osler, "Intercultural empathy among Norwegian students", 92.

36 Solhaug, Osler, "Intercultural empathy among Norwegian students", 92.

37 Solhaug, Osler, "Intercultural empathy among Norwegian students", 90.

38 Solhaug, Osler, "Intercultural empathy among Norwegian students", 92.

39 Solhaug, Osler, "Intercultural empathy among Norwegian students", 92.

40 Solhaug, Osler, "Intercultural empathy among Norwegian students", 90-92.

41 Solhaug, Osler, "Intercultural empathy among Norwegian students", 89.

42 Solhaug, Osler, "Intercultural empathy among Norwegian students", 91.

43 Solhaug, Osler, "Intercultural empathy among Norwegian students", 91-92.

understanding of cultural diversity is an important predictor of intercultural empathy, thus creating opportunities for schools to support inclusive citizenship.⁴⁴ Protection and participation rights build a framework for inclusive citizenship, including all aspects of the feminist theory of citizenship. Experiencing differences can lead to conflict but this is unavoidable and should rather be seen as an opportunity for open discussions, learning, and practicing a 'universality of difference'. It is important to raise awareness, to develop practices, and to have democratic dialogues. The way teachers behave and their attitudes towards diversity are essential in achieving inclusive citizenship, acceptance, and respect. It is crucial that the students get proper help.⁴⁵ Especially cross-cultural children need the teachers' support as they "may have recognisable experiences stemming from their social positions, oppression mechanisms, and feelings of being different from the dominating group or the majority".⁴⁶

7 "Kaleidoscope": Cultural diversity in participatory programs

"Kaleidoscope" is a case study of participatory work that supports the development of cross-cultural identities. The project demonstrates the potential of creative and multicultural interventions to build empathic and inclusive communities. Kaleidoscope was founded in 2004 in Bergen, Norway, and is a multicultural music project for children and youth. Children with different cultural backgrounds perform songs and dances with professional help of choreographers and musicians. Due to its big success, "Kaleidoscope" takes now place annually in many Norwegian towns.⁴⁷

The project puts the participants and their strengths and contributions in the foreground. Focusing on what supports human health instead of focusing on what impairs it, is called 'salutogenesis'. Cultural meaningfulness, identity development, and health can be seen as part of salutogenesis.⁴⁸ The project emphasises that creative interventions have the potential to foster cultural health:

"If people who are normally identified with their minority status are given other arenas, met with other expectations, or given the opportunity to play out other self-aspects - then these other aspects can be activated and strengthened, and possibilities open up for a positive and broadly anchored identity development."⁴⁹

44 Solhaug, Osler, "Intercultural empathy among Norwegian students", 104.

45 Solhaug, Osler, "Intercultural empathy among Norwegian students", 93-102.

46 Solhaug, Osler, "Intercultural empathy among Norwegian students", 102.

47 Schuff, "Supporting Identity Development in Cross-Cultural Children and Young People", 2-22.

48 Schuff, "Supporting Identity Development in Cross-Cultural Children and Young People", 6.

49 Schuff, "Supporting Identity Development in Cross-Cultural Children and Young People", 4-5.

In 2004, almost 100 young people took part in the project. Some of them were originally from Norway but most of them had a cross-cultural background. "Kaleidoscope's" mission is to create an artistic place where diversity and different cultures are appreciated and can equally enrich each other. The cross-cultural children are encountered with care and respect to enable them to actively influence the happenings of the project. This was mainly achieved by ongoing conversations with the participants, the teachers and other organisers involved. "Particular attention has been paid to communicating in linguistically and culturally sensitive ways (...)."50 The diverse contributions of the children were essential to creating not only a unique performance but also to express their cultural backgrounds and their complex identities. Because "Kaleidoscope" was arranged within a high quality framework, the participants felt valued. Not only were the children supported by professional musicians but also the performances took place in important cultural institutions. To create a trustful atmosphere and a place where the children felt safe and supported, the teachers worked both intentionally and participatory, e.g. through warm-up activities and multilingual birthday songs. These methods worked very well and helped the children to become more confident throughout the project and to develop the courage to make their voices heard. Because everyone was working towards the same aim, the final performance, a supportive community, and friendships were developed. Thereby, cultural diversity was of great value and constantly appreciated rather than seen as an obstacle. Children curiously compared their past experiences with each other and the project leaders reacted with the same interest and respect. Togetherness, pride, and shared excitement for the commonly achieved successes were obvious, especially during the final performance. Also, media and local newspapers reported about "Kaleidoscope" which made the children feel even more acknowledged for their cross-cultural backgrounds. The project can be described as an embodiment of both sameness and difference.⁵¹ "The Kaleidoscope philosophy emphasizes the participants' common humanity, as well as more specific commonalities (...)."52 Their complex identities were expressed through the different dances and songs the children were contributing. Performing them together as a new whole symbolised community. By establishing a common group identity, integration was achieved and stereotypes were reduced.⁵³ "Contradictions that are otherwise often a challenge become a resource in this particular setting. Flexible and integrated intercultural identity strategies allow these apparent contradictions to exist in participants' self-interpretations."⁵⁴

As described in the beginning, cross-cultural children are often vulnerable. Kaleidoscope paid special attention to that by being very sensitive with any kind of reduction and stereotyping.

50 Schuff, "Supporting Identity Development in Cross-Cultural Children and Young People", 9.

51 Schuff, "Supporting Identity Development in Cross-Cultural Children and Young People", 2-22.

52 Schuff, "Supporting Identity Development in Cross-Cultural Children and Young People", 16.

53 Schuff, "Supporting Identity Development in Cross-Cultural Children and Young People", 14-16.

54 Schuff, "Supporting Identity Development in Cross-Cultural Children and Young People", 17.

Instead of asking “Where are you from?” the project leaders specified their question and asked for example “From which country is your mother?”. By being highly empathic they supported the children in their development.⁵⁵ Furthermore, Kaleidoscope is characterised by a high level of creativity, both in its working methods and its goal. Since cross-cultural children shift between different cultures and identities, the project carefully adjusted to that. At the beginning of the project, some overall rules were established. They included treating each other respectfully, being positive, and to pay attention to everyone’s contributions which were constantly emphasized as equally important. Through that, the participants really got to know each other and the project leaders could initiate shifts between different cultural traditions. Not only did the children present traditional songs and dances from their cultural backgrounds, but they also created new songs and dances which allowed even more creativity and self-expression. Overall, Kaleidoscope shows that creative activities positively influence one’s mental health and are therefore a meaningful form of protection.⁵⁶

8 Conclusion: Creative projects as a way to establish intercultural empathy

“The positive link between multicultural experiences and creative thinking is well-established.”⁵⁷ Multicultural experiences create opportunities to take different perspectives into account and to develop flexibility. Both of these abilities are main characteristics of creativity. Creativity is defined by ‘divergent thinking’, ‘openness to experience’, and ‘perspective taking’ and has several positive consequences such as identity development and better mental health. Especially important in the context of cross-cultural children is the enhancing effect of inclusion and empathy. Reducing stereotypes increases creativity and the valuing of human-rights. The “Creativity Compass” has demonstrated the connection between intercultural competencies and creativity: The more intercultural competencies a child has, the more creative it is.⁵⁸ “Kaleidoscope” has shown the link between intercultural competencies and intercultural empathy. As well as the potential of creativity to foster cultural health.⁵⁹

This essay particularly argued for empathy as the common ground for intercultural competence and creativity. To build communities and relationships of care and inclusion, empathy needs to be further established. Therefore, perspective taking activities that promote ‘thinking outside the box’ should be done since they have the potential to elevate creativity and to trigger a positive

55 Schuff, “Supporting Identity Development in Cross-Cultural Children and Young People”, 13-14.

56 Schuff, “Supporting Identity Development in Cross-Cultural Children and Young People”, 2-22.

57 Groyecka et al., “On the benefits of thinking creatively”, 1.

58 Groyecka et al., “On the benefits of thinking creatively”, 1-7.

59 Schuff, “Supporting Identity Development in Cross-Cultural Children and Young People”, 2-22.

shift in attitude.⁶⁰ Acknowledging diversity is in my opinion equally important. As the Norwegian study by Solhaug and Osler has shown, “the politics of difference require an ‘ethos of pluralization’; in other words, to avoid exclusive identities and politics, one must recognise others’ rights to be different and promote reflective solidarity as a ‘universalism of difference.’”⁶¹ Workshops and interventions that offer support for situations of diversity and help to develop intercultural sensitivity, are needed. Because “possessing a certain cognitive experience and knowledge of diversity is vital to feel and express empathy in diverse interpersonal relations”⁶² citizens, and especially cross-cultural children, should be carefully supported in developing this understanding. Creative initiatives build an important contribution to the establishment of societies of mutual care and respect. Empathy and intercultural competence are crucial for an inclusive future. “Cultural and interpersonal sensitivity, as well as openness to complexity, will be key factors for successfully handling these relational and identity processes in a fruitful and ethically sound manner.”⁶³ By exploring the positive interference of intercultural competencies and creativity among cross-cultural children, empathy has been brought out as both a means and a desirable aim in any kind of social interaction. This essay encourages to apply the described approaches purposefully and with an open mind.

60 Groyecka, “Will Becoming More Creative Make us More Tolerant?”, 172.

61 Solhaug, Osler, “Intercultural empathy among Norwegian students”, 91-92.

62 Solhaug, Osler, “Intercultural empathy among Norwegian students”, 93.

63 Schuff, “Supporting Identity Development in Cross-Cultural Children and Young People”, 18.

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8.2 “HOW ARE YOU?” SURVEY EVALUATION

Q1 FIRST OF ALL: How are you?

59,6% of the respondents answered “fine”. Almost half of them (26%) answered with “fine, but...”. 15,8% related their negative feelings to Covid-19 and 15,8% answered in more nuanced ways that I summarized either under “okay” or “not good”. 19,3% even said “thank you” for being asked “How are you?” in an online survey.

Q2 WARM-UP 1: What do you feel reading the word ... HOME?

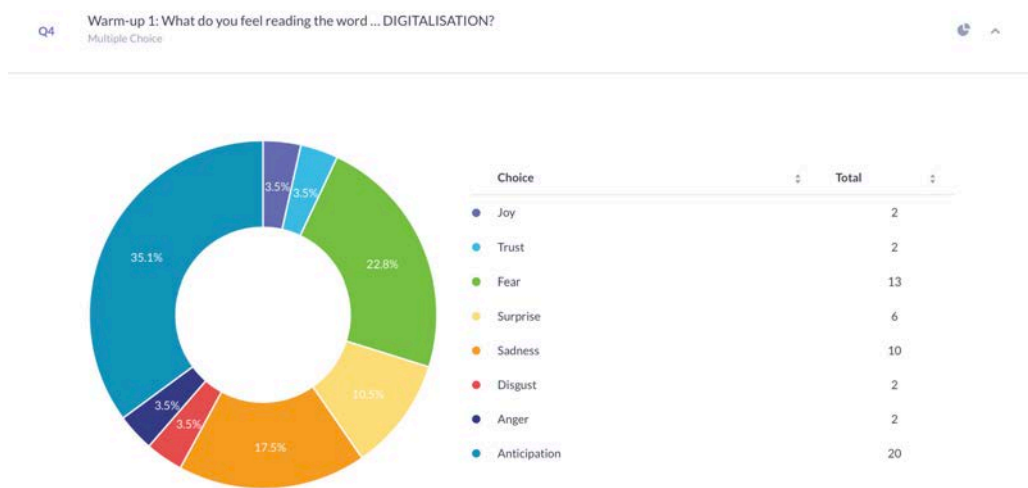
98,3% of the people connect the word HOME with positive emotions (“joy”, “trust”).

Q3 WARM-UP 1: What do you feel reading the word ... NIGHT?

Six of the eight basic emotions have been chosen. Most popular are the answers “joy”, “anticipation”, and “trust” which are all positive.

Q4 WARM-UP 1: What do you feel reading the word ... DIGITALISATION?

All basic emotions have been chosen, showing that the word DIGITALISATION arises diverse feelings. Most popular are the answers “anticipation” and “fear” which are two quite contrasting emotions.



Q5 WARM-UP 2: What do you feel reading the word ... BIRTHDAY? Please name an emotion.

71,9% answered with positive feelings (“joy/happiness”, “anticipation/excitement”, “gratitude”, “comfort/love”).

Q6 WARM-UP 2: What do you feel reading the word ... POLITICS? Please name an emotion.

73,6% answered with negative feelings (“depression/frustration”, “anxiety/overpowering”, “anger/annoyance”, “boredom”, “conflict/confusion”). Overall the expressed emotions are very diverse.

Q7 WARM-UP 2: What do you feel reading the word ... CLOTHES? Please name an emotion.

70,2% answered with positive feelings (“comfort/confidence”, “joy/fun”, “anticipation/inspiration”, “responsibility”). 14% expressed feelings showing “indifference”.

Comparing all three words, one can see that some words like HOME arise strong emotions that are similar for most of the people. Whereas other words like DIGITALISATION and CLOTHES arise diverse feelings. People used both the eight basic emotions to describe their feelings as well as more nuanced feelings.

Q8 PART 1: HOW ARE YOU? How often do you get asked that question with a real interest in your well-being?

Almost half of the respondents are being asked how they are with a real interest in their well-being only “sometimes”. Not even 10% of the people chose “most of the times”.

Q9 PART 1: HOW ARE YOU? How often do you answer that question honestly?

50,8% of the respondents “rarely” or only “sometimes” answer honestly to the question “How are you?”. Hence, every second time, people do not answer accordingly to their actual state of well-being.

Q10 PART 1: HOW ARE YOU? What do you need to answer that question honestly?

Most important to answer honestly to the question “How are you” are “real interest” and “a safe environment”. “Appropriate reactions”, “no judgement”, and “awareness of one’s own emotions” are also rated very high. Whereas 92,4% agree that an honest answer doesn’t depend on positive feelings.

Q11 PART 2: YOU MATTER What is a safe environment for you?

Most of the people said that familiarity, one's home as well as being with friends or family, is what contributes to experiencing a safe environment. As well as feeling trust and being met without expectations and without being judged. Instead, respect, love, and interest are present. Many also highlighted the importance of being able to express their true feelings.

"A safe environment to me doesn't rely on a place but on how people make me feel."

"Where I can be myself with people that care."

"Where I can be my true self."

"Knowing that people respect your emotions."

"People who know how to deal with other people's emotions and who are (to some extent) able to comfort someone."

"People who are careful and reflect upon their behavior."

"Where I am not rejected for being different."

Q12 PART 2: YOU MATTER What is a good conversation for you?

Mutual sharing and contributing to the conversation is most important to the respondents. As well as honesty and trust, described as a feeling of respect and no judgement. Almost equally important is understanding/listening and real interest/authenticity. Some answered that a good conversation is thoughtful and goes smoothly. As well as inspiring, calm, and supporting/caring. For many it is furthermore important that there are no time restrictions.

"A good conversation goes beyond verbal communication."

"Both persons have the space to show themselves vulnerable."

"Where listening is more important than having an answer."

"When people value other people's opinions."

"Both parties listen with the purpose to understand and answer with clarity and thoughtfulness."

"When the darkest and weakest moments, thoughts, and memories are shared without fear."

"A good conversation is when you openly talk about good and bad stuff happening in your life."

"When you are not afraid of sharing your real feelings because you know you won't be judged."

"One that, even though the other doesn't understand me nor shares my opinions, is trying their best to be in my position."

"When you don't have to think about what you are going to say."

"A conversation with mutual respect and interest in the other person's feelings."

Q13 PART 2: YOU MATTER A friend is someone who ...?

Loyalty, respect, and trust are the most important traits of a friend. Very often people answered that a friend is someone “I can be with”, “who is there for me”, and who expresses love and care. For many it is furthermore important that a friend “cheers you up” and supports/encourages you. Some also mentioned that a friend is someone with whom you have something in common and who is honest. For many those characteristics are more important than being physically close to each other.

“Will stand by your side no matter what happens. Someone who understands you and your problems and would never judge you for them.”

“Respects your emotions and boundaries”

“Who doesn’t want to change me.”

“I can be with.”

“Brings joy to your life.”

“Loves and respects me for who I truly am”

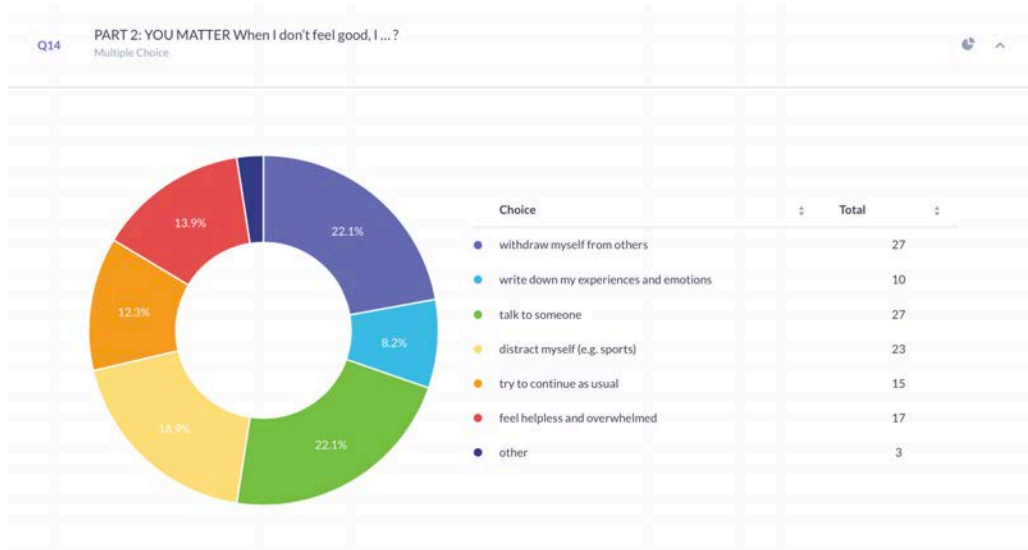
“Has my best interest at heart and tries to support me when it’s needed.”

“You give your time to.”

“Is loyal, kind, and someone you can talk to.”

“Is there for you even when he is not.”

Q14 PART 2: YOU MATTER When I don’t feel good, I ...?



The most popular answers “I withdraw myself from others” (22,1%) and “I talk to someone” (22,1%) did not only reach exactly the same percentage but are also the most contrasting ones. Only 10% consciously face their feelings by writing them down. 31,2% do not face their feelings bei either distracting themselves or trying to continue as usual. 17% even feel helpless and overwhelmed.

Q15 PART 2: YOU MATTER When I don't feel good, I ...? (In case you selected “other”, please motivate your answer.)

Answers given by people who selected “other” are: lashing out to others, journaling/reflecting, crying and acknowledging the negative feelings, relaxing and thinking positive.

“I can lash out to others because it's easier to be angry than to be sad.”

“Reaching out to others is always the last thing that comes to my mind.”

“When I don't feel good I try to reflect why. Finding the reason for my bad mental situation helps most of the time to get out of the vicious circle of sadness.”

Q16 PART 3: ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE What do you think how important is empathy in daily life interactions?

No one considers empathy as unimportant or doesn't know what it means. 96,5% of the people consider empathy as either “absolutely essential” (59,6%) or “important” (“36,8%).

Q17 PART 3: ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE Please describe what empathy means.

People answered that empathy is about “feeling with someone and to act accordingly”, to take and respect other perspectives than your own as well as to communicate that you are trying to take the other's perspective. To listen and to be open and present, to understand emotions, and to relate and connect with others. Some warned that being too empathetic can be overwhelming and that it is important to also have empathy for yourself and your own needs (e.g. saying “no”). Other described traits of empathy include care, acceptance, an open heart, kindness and love, patience, equality, compassion, responsibility for others and for nature, support and not being egoistic. Some describe empathy as the opposite of sympathy.

“I sit with them and their emotions. I see them. I ask how they are and leave space for them to answer.”

“Treating them like you would want to be treated when you feel like they are feeling now.”

“Listening. With your full heart. To everyone. Also if you don't have the same opinion.”

“All channels of communication are open to receive.”

“Make people feel safe, seen, heard and okay with themselves.”

“Being able to take someone else's perspective, to feel with another person.”

*"Being sensitive to what is going on."
"Trying to understand the emotions and behavior of others by imagining oneself in their situation."
"Empathy is the ability to read and understand someone's feelings without them saying it out loud."
"Allowing yourself and others to express how they feel and being able to understand or accept it."
"I can only think of empathy as pity and sympathy as good"
"Being a kind and loving human being"
"Giving everyone the benefit of the doubt."
"Being able to imagine how it might be to walk in someone else's shoes."
"Someone who cares about my feelings."
"Someone who can relate to what I am feeling."
"Feeling for others."
"Responsibility for me, others, and the environment."
"Offer help when it's not needed."*

Q18 PART 3: ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE What else do you know about empathy?

People answered that empathy has many positive effects. It is essential for communication and necessary both on an individual and a global scale. It is important in order to build connections and relationships. Some say empathy has a healing potential whereas others acknowledge that it takes energy and can be emotionally exhausting. It requires emotional intelligence and awareness helps to identify how much empathy is needed. Others see a lack of empathy in the (business) world and that it should be practiced more. Some describe cultural differences. A significant number of people think it is a skill that can't be learned and that many people just do not have empathy. Some answered with "I don't know".

*"It's heavily undervalued."
"I learned to be empathetic."
"Some people don't care to be empathetic. But only empathetic people can become my friends."
"It is essential in a diverse world."
"It takes too much energy to be empathetic."
"I sometimes have too much of it."
"It's essential for communicating."
"Empathy is a skill that requires emotional intelligence."
"Not much."
"It's necessary on an individual scale but also global. Between groups, countries, identities."
"It's not something you can learn to have."
"Unfortunately there aren't enough empathetic people."
"For some people it's really hard to be empathetic because it needs openness to other points of view."
"Some people don't have it."*

*“Nice people have empathy.”
“Empathy is what makes us human.”*

Q19 PART 4: CONNECTIONS Would you describe yourself as an empathetic person?

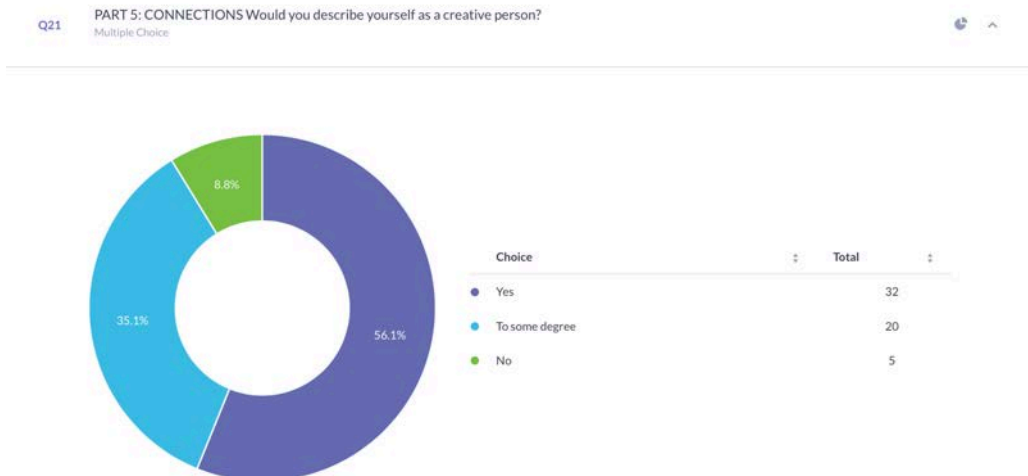
Everyone considers themselves as “to some degree” empathetic. 77,2% even think they have sufficient empathy skills.

Q20 PART 4: CONNECTIONS Would you like to become more empathetic?

Even though most of the respondents consider themselves as empathetic, 63,2% would still like to improve their skills.

Q21 PART 4: CONNECTIONS Would you describe yourself as a creative person?

91,7% consider themselves as “to some degree” creative which is quite close to the 100% of the people who described themselves as “to some degree” empathetic.



Q22 PART 4: CONNECTIONS Would you like to become more creative?

91,2% would like to become more creative. Hence, becoming more creative is rated 28% higher than becoming more empathetic.

Q 23 PART 4: CONNECTIONS Would you describe yourself as an emotionally intelligent person?

64,9% of the respondents consider themselves as emotionally intelligent. Earlier, 77,2% of the people described themselves as empathetic. Hence, 17,3% aren't aware of the equal importance of emotional intelligence when expressing empathy.

Q24 PART 4: CONNECTIONS Would you like to become more emotionally intelligent?

86% of the respondents would like to become more emotionally intelligent. Creativity is also rated higher than emotional intelligence.

Q25 PART 4: CONNECTIONS Would you describe yourself as a person that feels comfortable in intercultural interactions?

98,2% consider themselves as being "to some degree" comfortable in intercultural interactions. Compared to the other skills; empathy, creativity, and emotional intelligence; significantly more people didn't choose "yes". In other words, only roughly half of the respondents (52,6%) feel sufficiently comfortable in intercultural interactions.

Q26 PART 4: CONNECTIONS Would you like to feel more comfortable in intercultural interactions?

The majority (89,5%) would like to feel more comfortable in intercultural interactions. Comparing all four skills; empathy, creativity, emotional intelligence, and intercultural competence; creativity is the ability that most people want to improve. Whereas empathy is the ability that most people think they have already developed the most as well as the one that the least people want to improve. But since the majority wants to improve all four skills the results show that people aren't aware of the positive interference of all four abilities.

Q27 PART 5: FULL CIRCLE Person A tells you that being at home with her family makes her happy. Thinking about empathy: How could you continue the conversation?

Q28 PART 6: FULL CIRCLE Person A tells you that the word HOME makes her feel safe (trust). Thinking about empathy: What could you say to her?

Q29 PART 6: FULL CIRCLE Person A starts smiling and tells you about the last time she saw her family. How does that make you feel?

Q30 PART 6: FULL CIRCLE Thinking about empathy: What could you do to deal with the situation?

Summary of the questions 27-30: Overall, people share person A's happiness and express their interest in her home and family. They continue with a positive conversation.

Q31 PART 6: FULL CIRCLE Could you relate to person A and her story?

The majority (96,5%) of the people could relate to person A and her story.

Q32 PART 6: FULL CIRCLE Was it easy for you to feel with person A and be empathic?

Exactly the same percentage of people answered that it was easy to feel with person A and to be empathetic (96,5%).

Q33 PART 6: FULL CIRCLE Person B tells you that the word BIRTHDAY makes her feel sad. Thinking about empathy: What could you say to her?

Q34 PART 6: FULL CIRCLE Person B tells you that she won't be able to celebrate her birthday with all of her friends because of the current Covid-19 crisis. Thinking about empathy: How could you continue the conversation?

Q35 PART 6: FULL CIRCLE Person B tells you that she misses her friends and starts crying. How does that make you feel?

Q36 PART 6: FULL CIRCLE Thinking about empathy: What could you do to deal with the situation?

Summary of the questions 34-36: People ask person B why she feels sad about her birthday and patiently try to understand her feelings better. At first, some are a bit surprised that she feels sad about birthdays. But then they can relate to her and share her sadness. They try to cheer her up or offer alternative ways of how she could spend her birthday. They communicate their understanding and offer her comfort and hugs. Some also give advice and make plans.

Q37 PART 6: FULL CIRCLE Could you relate to person B and her story?

The majority (91,2%) of the people could relate to person B and her story.

Q38 PART 6: FULL CIRCLE Was it easy for you to feel with person B and be empathic?

The majority of the respondents answered that it was easy to feel with person B and be empathic (94,7%). Meaning that 41,2% of the people who couldn't relate to person B and her story, still found it easy to express empathy to her.

Q39 PART 6: FULL CIRCLE Person C tells you that the word POLITICS makes him feel bored. Thinking about empathy: What could you say to him?

Q40 PART 6: FULL CIRCLE Person C tells you that he doesn't read the news regularly. Thinking about empathy: How could you continue the conversation?

Summary of the questions 39 and 40: People ask why person C feels bored about politics and raise more detailed questions. They express their understanding and are also curious about alternative ways person C informs himself about what is happening in the world.

Q41 PART 6: FULL CIRCLE Person C gets angry and wants to talk about something else. How does that make you feel?

The expressed feelings are: anger, frustration, confusion, respect, insecurity, disappointment and surprise. Overall, people feel uncomfortable and torn between tolerance and acceptance.

Q42 PART 6: FULL CIRCLE Thinking about empathy: What could you do to deal with the situation?

The respondents suggested calming down the situation by changing the topic to something with less negative triggers. Others would explain their feelings and try to understand person C's reaction. They accept his behavior and ask him what he likes instead.

Q43 PART 6: FULL CIRCLE Could you relate to person C and her story?

57,9% could relate to person C and his story. The amount of people who couldn't relate is significantly higher than with person A and B.

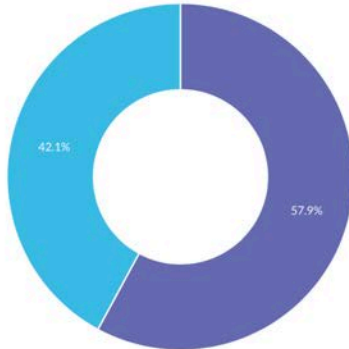
Q44 PART 6: FULL CIRCLE Was it easy for you to feel with person C and be empathic?

Almost half of the respondents (47,4%) find it hard to be empathetic with person C.

Comparing all three example situations, it becomes clear that it is easier to be empathetic the more you can relate to a person.

Q43

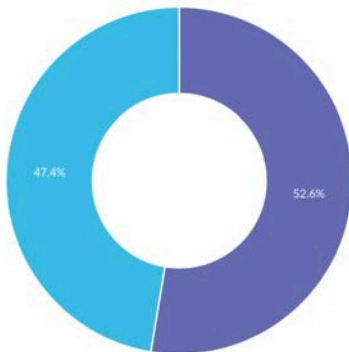
PART 6: FULL CIRCLE Could you relate to person C and his story?
Multiple Choice



Choice	Total
Yes	33
No	24

Q44

PART 6: FULL CIRCLE Was it easy for you to feel with person C and be empathic?
Multiple Choice



Choice	Total
Yes	30
No	27

Q45 FINAL QUESTION: How do you feel now?

Almost the same amount of people answered “fine” in the beginning (40,4%) and in the end (41,1%). But whereas in the beginning people indicated rather negative feelings instead, now 32,2% indicated other positive feelings of being “thoughtful/inspired/curious”. 5,1% even said that they feel better than before now.

8.3 INTERVIEW WITH LEAL STONE, WOODLINE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Who are you and what do you work with?

My name is Leal Stone. I call myself a birth parenting sexuality educator. I work with parents from when they are first pregnant all the way through to having their babies, to the parenting phase, and then I work with teenagers around sexuality. My main focus is really on helping families to create harmony and to have beautiful connections in their family. But I am also the co-creator of Woodline Primary School. So that has been my main job in the last two years, building a school based on emotional awareness.

You also say that you want to give children a voice, is that right?

100 percent! Our school system here in Australia is, not so different to many other places of the world, very outdated and is still very much about children should all fit into this one size and is very much a strong behaviorism paradigm. Which is that children are good or bad and if you do something wrong you are going to get punished and if you don't do your homework you are going to get in trouble. It's not about relating to the actual child, it's not about connecting to them emotionally, it's not about connecting with the essence of how they learn. It's still very much like this is what children should do and you have to get along and do it. For me, building Woodline is really about creating the environment where I wish my children could have gone to school in, where I wish I could have gone to school, and what the future needs: creating a different way to help children thrive in the world.

Would you say that your curriculum is actually a real exception from the standard in Australia?

In Australia you have to use either the state curriculum or you use the countries' curriculum or you choose something like the Montessori curriculum or Rudolf Steiner curriculum. We are working with the Australian curriculum which means we need to deliver content on certain different requirements. But the way you deliver the curriculum is up to you. So we are using a play-based learning approach with many other elements that come into it. It is up to us how we want to deliver the curriculum. And because our school is really based on that emotional connection with the children, we are folding into a curriculum as well, learnings around how to be an emotional intelligent human. And that comes from the way our teachers, we don't call them teachers we call them guards, so how our guards respond to the children, how we look at witnessed behavior that's off track, how we teach and learn. We don't call criticism, we just go "tell me about what is going on there", and how we help children learn and understand what they're learning and the impact of this on the world. But also around how they learn best and what that means to them. So it's by giving them a provocation. For example, we start school next week and our first provocation to the whole school is on connection. It's all about "What does connection mean?", "What does it mean to us?", "What does it mean to each other as friends?", "What does it mean

to family?”, “What does it mean to the Earth?”, “What does it mean to the environment?”, “What does it mean to the animals?”. We follow the children’s lead around what connection is about and then we fold in all on humaricy and literacy into this provocation of connection, and all learning comes from there. So we follow the children on some level of what they believe and what they want to learn, with a kind of loose structure but we are following where their inquisitive nature takes them.

I’ve been working with empathy so far and emotional intelligence is very important for that, too. Now you mentioned this is the base for your education and that both skills enable education. So, do you also think empathy and emotional intelligene are very important?

Absolutely! When I look at something like empathy, empathy comes from when we have connection to ourselves and also connection to others. **When a child is lacking empathy, it’s usually because they’re disconnected and when they are just disassociated. When they’ve got too many feelings going on within them, when they don’t have safe adults to process and connect with, then often they lack the empathy to take that out into the world. So children learn empathy by being modeled to them.** When a parent responds to a child with compassion, understanding, and gentleness, also with boundaries and let in limits, but when it’s done without powering over a child, then that all comes through a place of empathetic connection. Therefore, when a parent or an adult is responding to a child that way, the child then learns what that feels like and then they’re able to then take that out into the world.

Maybe it already answers the second question which is “How do you define empathy in your work?”

For me, it’s the ability to feel how somebody else may be feeling. It’s the ability to have your heart open and be connected to another human. To have an experience like “that must feel really challenging for you” or to offer them understanding, compassion, and love by being able to put yourself in their shoes on some level. **I think kids from really, really little age, have the ability to have empathy, without doubt. If they’ve been shown what that feels and looks fine.**

So having role models is super important, isn’t it?

100 percent! I think that children can actually have it but it is so much easier for children to, what I often say, feel it in their bones if they have been shown a model. If they, from a very young age, have being responded to with empathy and compassion then it becomes in nature to be able to do that to others.

Is that also why you call your teachers guards and not teachers?

Yes, we wanted to find a word that was more about guarding children to find the truth of who they are. My vision in building the school was that I wanted children, by the time they leave, to have such a strong sense of themselves and to know their uniqueness is what makes them exceptional, and know how they learn best and what their strengths are. We don't teach that, we just guard them to find their way of being in the world. Through all my work with parents, what I have found is that if children don't have the safety to express all their feelings and emotions they may learn to shut aspects of that down and they may become a version of themselves which is all about gaining approval, getting love, being attached or knowing that it's safe for them to be in the worlds, because that person's going to approve with me. That often denies the truth of who they really are. **When we bring this empathetic, compassionate acceptance to children, or all humans, we are giving them permission to be the truth of who they are.**

Children and also adults have learned to repress their emotions and maybe also have learnt measures of self-protection to repress their emotions, haven't they?

Absolutely, and for adults it is about survival. When we are little, we figure out with whoever is our caregiver or our parent whether it's safe to express who we really are. The majority learns that's not okay because parents are not okay with crying or raging or anger, all those feelings. We learned to either repress it, which means we shut it down, or we feel so powerless it comes out in aggression. Therefore, most adults have got a lot of repressed feelings inside because they learned, or their imprint was, that it wasn't safe to express who they were. And then, without even knowing it, they just pass on the same thing to the children and the pattern just keeps recycling and recycling. When an adult goes "Hey, that didn't feel good" or "I need to look at my work and change it" then we have the opportunity to change that image and create more emotional intelligence in the family.

So when we look at the third question "How important is empathy in your work?" is to allow emotions a possible answer?

Yes, absolutely, it is! Empathy is everything in this work because it is all about creating safety. For me, empathy is about safety and if we don't feel safe in our interactions with others we are not going to feel vulnerable enough to express and process what we need to do. It's really all about safety, it's completely about emotional safety. That is, for me, why empathy is so,so important.

When you say empathy is everything, do you mean in your work or in general in life?

I think in everything. For me it's everything. Because it's how we interact with our partners, our children. It's how we interact with colleagues, it's how we interact with people on the street. If we have so much stuff going on and somebody cuts us off in the car, we're automatically often

moved to a stress response. Or if we haven't dealt with feelings, we are going to move into anger or aggression. Whereas if we have tools to look after ourselves, if someone cuts us off in the car, we can have a reaction like "That's annoying but maybe they have to get somewhere quickly". We can have a better understanding and awareness for all humans.

I agree, it really matters in all interactions in everyday life. How do you apply the concept of empathy in a hands on way when working with children?

Particularly in our school, it is really about how we speak to children. The tone we use in our voice, how we connect with them. Getting down on their level, how we create emotionally. Whether that's I'm sitting where the child is at, if the child is a bit shut down then we come in really gently to connect with them, so that we can see what might be going on. If we see that they are moving a lot and that they are really uncomfortable in their bodies, we might be like "What you need to do?" "What is your need here to help you feel in balance?". So for us, the hands on way is very much about how we communicate and connect. Also, how we ask questions. It's often an invitation to do things not telling them to do stuff. It's giving them as much choice and autonomy as possible. As well as, that also comes in within that empathetic element, you see them as a human not a child that should be told what to do. Also elements within our curriculum, we teach a lot about emotions and feelings. We have a check-in every day with these beautiful flowers that have 1 to 5 on the pedals, and we have all these different emotions like "I'm angry today", "I'm tired", "I'm excited", "I'm nervous". When a child gets in and checks into school, they have to choose 1 or 2 of those and they put them on the number of how they are feeling. 5 is "I'm feeling really nervous", 1 is "there is something going on". So they get to check in, put it on the flower and if they want support or help from their guards, we have these little butterflies that they can stick on top of it which lets the guide know "I need something to check in with me". So the children are learning how to ask for help. They are learning, it's really safe emotionally to say how they are feeling. It comes with being responded to with empathy.

So you actually established some rituals around emotional intelligence?

Yes, all day, the whole school, through all that we do, it's all there!

And how do you communicate the role of empathy to the children?

Through the modeling of it. It's completely about the behavior of the guards and all the staff at our school. It's how everybody responds to the children, how they speak, the words we use. You are firstly modeling it, then it's folding it into the curriculum, it's using it. If children have disagreements, we do democratic problem solving which is about how we see things. "What's going on for you?" and "I want to see what's happening for you". Being able to model empathy

and compassion to the situation and creating a sense of calm to figure out how we can all get our needs met with whatever is going on.

Do you also explain to them what empathy actually is?

Yes, absolutely! The first year is all about feelings and emotions and how we feel. What it feels like when we see somebody who might be upset or when they are having a hard time, what does that feel like in your body? What kind of things do you want to say when you see all those kinds of elements? Again, it's folded into our curriculum as well.

Do you speak about your curriculum with the children? Are they aware of your guidelines?

They are aware of the values of our school. Which is all around being seen, being heard, and being the individual they are. But not so much about the curriculum because a lot of the curriculum is also guided by their interest. The emotional awareness is just folded in throughout the day. We talk about what we are doing but a lot of it is open-ended because we want to see where they want to go.

So you want to allow some flexibility to be able to react to different situations?

Absolutely, yes.

The next question is "Do you realize a connection between empathy and creativity?"

That's a really good question! I haven't seen it in action in the sense that I've been watching for it. But I do believe that there is a connection between both because we think about being creative, often it's about taking risks. And in order to take risks we need to feel safe. Therefore, I would find that when a child is in an empathetic environment where it's safe to take risks, it's safe to fail, safe to make mistakes, then the ability of "I don't have to get it right" is taken away. Then often creativity has a chance to blossom. I haven't necessarily looked through that lens to observe it but I would absolutely suggest that the more safe a child feels in its being in its environment, the more creativity is possible.

That's a very interesting answer! Another connection I saw is that you're able to take a different perspective and think outside the box. It has to do with problem solving. But I totally agree, it is about safety and taking risks as well. Do you also realize a connection between empathy and intercultural competence?

Yes, absolutely, because it's about understanding all humans. We're all living beings and creatures.

We have animals at the school, we have big veggie patches and gardens, the children get to work in the gardens and take care of them and the animals. It is about “What are their needs?,” “How can we help them?” which as well ties into empathy for all living things as well as the Earth. I absolutely think that there is a connection between both and our ability to be deeply accepting of all beings.

So the children also learn to take responsibility and to care for someone else?

Yes, absolutely!

How old are the children of your primary school?

They start from five and at the moment we’re standing with four grades. We call it five to nine, this year. And then the next year we’ll add another grade up, so it’ll be like five to ten and we’ll add a few grades up until they are twelve years of age.

Do you also have mixed classes or possibilities to mix the classes up?

Yes, at the moment we have compensated classes. So we have the preppers one, two, and three together. But we are not really looking at classes in ages. We do lots of cross age learning. It depends on where the child is at, the interest, where they are in their learning. Understanding that some children understand numbers really well, others are really about literacy. We don’t really identify as grades, it’s just about different learning groups and what children need in order to grow in their own unique way.

I think we already touched a bit upon the next question: Since empathy is a skill that can be learned, how do you teach empathy?

By modeling it, by talking about feelings and emotions, and looking for teachable moments. When there are altercations in the classroom or when somebody’s upset about something, there are those beautiful teachable moments, that we’re always going to stop whatever we are doing, to work with because that’s the foundation of our school.

Do you have some specific exercises that you like to do, just like for example the morning ritual that you already mentioned?

The kids come in and do their flowers and then we have a circle time. Everyone gets to speak, we’re checking around what’s on their mind, what’s going on for the day. We have circles a few times during the day. When we come back in from a morning break, we have a small circle again,

then after lunch time, and then the finish of the day. It is about keeping that ritual of connecting throughout the day. But we also have other kinds of learning activities that we do around awareness of the body and how we feel - that's part of our curriculum and teaching. Which is really about giving words and understanding to our motions and feelings and how we develop them from there.

This connection might also be relevant for the next question: "What is the opposite of empathy and what would be missed without it?"

For me, the opposite of empathy is disconnection. For me, it is a human who has probably got a lot of pain going on, that isn't safe to feel. When we don't want to feel, we disassociate or we disconnect from our feelings and emotions because they feel too big for us. When a person is not showing any empathy or compassion, for me, that's a person who's pretty closed and is a bit of a closed-heart. Usually, that comes from crying, something's happened to them, they have had to protect themselves, it hasn't been safe to feel. Often those people are found to have had trauma on some level, haven't had those attachment needs met when they were young. I feel deep compassion for humans like that since I know where they're at is because they have had to keep themselves safe. What they miss out on, is the beauty of connection and intimacy and all the magic that comes with that. But I also understand that as humans our fault is to protect ourselves. So many people never really got their needs met as a child. They have to learn how to survive and survival means disconnection.

So empathy is also about being open hearted?

Yes, for me it is completely!

What about indifference and a lack of interest?

For me, indifference is often about a disconnection. I often think about it as apathy, "I just don't want to go there because it could be too painful". I keep saying the same phrase again and again but it's so true: We constantly are protecting ourselves to keep us all safe. Often indifference and not caring is a protective mechanism. Because if I did care, what might happen? Will I get hurt? Will I get rejected? Would I fail? Would people laugh at what I do? It is a protective mechanism.

When you say protection mechanism, do you mean the giver or the receiver of empathy?

I think it is a protection mechanism for the person who is not giving empathy. When we've had hard things happen in our lives, so we have not got our needs met and we have all these hurt feelings, we either express them or we repress them and internalize them. Then we often go

about the world all “that felt really painful” and “that really hurt me” and “I don’t want to feel that again, so I’m never going to put myself in a situation where I have to feel it again”. So, “I’ll sit back and I’ll keep myself closed” and that’s what I call protection. We are protecting ourselves from feeling that hurt and that pain again because when we were younger we learned that it is not safe to feel those feelings. So I will refuse to feel them anymore, I just protect myself, so I don’t have to feel them.

Would you say that it is more difficult to give empathy than to receive it?

I think both are difficult because a lot of people who are in protection find it very hard to trust or to allow someone to offer them empathy and connection. Because their wall that says “it’s not safe to feel these things” is pretty strong. If they’ve had enough life experiences to say “I can’t trust other people”, then it can be very hard to allow that in. So I think it goes both ways.

How would you describe your role at Woodline Primary?

At the moment I’m calling myself the director of the school. I created the school, I wrote all the policies, our vision, and how it is to be. My role, and this sounds really ridiculous but it’s true, my role is to make sure that we hold the emotional awareness of wellbeing of our school. My role is to support all the guards to make sure they are getting their needs met, so they can meet the children where they’re at. My job in the school is also to be there to help kids with their feelings and emotions, physical feelings coming up. And also really to support the parents. Whatever might be going on for the child, if they are having a bit of issues, my job is to seek and help the parents, work through their stories with their children. So that the children can work through what they need to as well. My job is just the emotional holding of everybody really. Our school is not based on grades or data. Our school is based on the emotional well-being of the child.

That is really important and does not sound ridiculous at all! I also think you enable the grades and all the other things through an approach of being emotionally connected to the children.

Yes, that’s it! It’s been proven, when a child feels safe to learn then the possibility of their learning just goes like this. When they don’t feel safe in the classroom, when they feel failure, when they feel getting it wrong, their capacity for learning is so much smaller. If we want infinite possibilities of learning then we have to start with “How safe do they feel?”.

How do you create that safe space?

The safety is that they feel, from the guards and all staff at the school, that all of them is welcome. We don’t shame children for feelings and emotions, we hold space for them.

If they feel upset we see and get to know who they are as humans and we celebrate their uniqueness and we save them and say things like “What can you teach me?”, “What are you magic at?”. We build up who they are as the unique beings they are. So that they feel seen. **Because when we feel seen, we feel safe, and once we feel safe, we feel like everything is possible here.**

So it's more of an overall atmosphere that you try to establish than a specific situation?

It's the environment that is reinforced again and again and again. We welcome who you really are. You do not have to fit into a box to be approved of. We welcome your way of learning, the uniqueness of who you are. We celebrate the essence of your being. That's what we want children to feel. I know this from a lot of my parenting work that when a child feels seen in that way, then they feel at home in their body. **They feel free to be who they need to be. And I think that's the most important gift we can give children.**

Absolutely! The next question is “How important is inclusion within the framework?”. You just said that it is about allowing individualism and different identities?

It's part of the foundation of what we see who you are. Every human is unique. We're not meant to fit into this box of how we learn or how we should behave. Because we're all different unique humans. We've all got our own unique life story. It's about a deep acceptance of people's different ideas. Of how they view the world, of how they learn, and how they look, of everything. Everything! We celebrate the uniqueness of each human.

I read that you also work with intrinsic learning. Does that mean that you want the children to be motivated by themselves?

In a lot of mainstream schooling, at least here in Australia, it's like “if you finish this, you'll get that”. “That's what an A can be, if you do it well, then you'll get an A.” Or “if you finish all your work, we'll give you a lollipop.” It's all about some external motivation to finish the work instead of the child going “Oh my god, I want to learn more! And what about this? And what about this? And this?”. We want them to keep asking the question “And what about that bit? And this bit?”. So their intrinsic “I want to know more” is what fuels their learning and their passion for learning not because they're going to get something at the end of it.

How do you trigger that curiosity?

For us it's about really listening to what they love, what they are into, what they want to learn about. It's by giving them learning opportunities that excite them. It's not just “Sit down and

write something”, it’s “What can we build with our hands?”, “Where can we go and explore?”, “What could this look like?”. It’s giving them lots of different ways of learning. It’s about giving them permission to learn in the way that they learn. If some children are really passionate about something and the way they learn best is by talking about it, do they want to do a concert on what they’ve learned for the rest of the class? Do they want to create a beautiful artwork around it? Whatever it is that lights them up and how they learn information, how do we celebrate that to them? So that they feel seen and proud of what they are achieving and what they’re learning.

Now we’ve talked a lot about how it should be in the best case and how you want to approach children. What do you do when something doesn’t go that smoothly and when there are conflicts, for example?

Our philosophy is very much that there is always a reason for behavior. We have a saying: “Look behind the behavior”. Whatever’s going on whether it’s a conflict with the child, there’s a child saying “No, I don’t want to do that” whether there is resistance, then our first protocol is, “What’s the need that’s not being met for the child?”. Our job, if we can, is to be able to connect with them. And if we can’t, then we call one of our other staff members to come in, to have some one-on-one connection with the child to find out what’s going on. Is it because they are really tired? Is it because they’ve got big feelings because there’s a new baby at home? Is it because they feel a bit unsure around how to do writing? Do they feel scared and do they need some support and help around that? **There’s always a reason for why children are the way they are.** We do not believe for one second that children are ever naughty. Children are just out of balance. And when they’re out of balance, the question for the adult is “What can I do to support you to find your way back into balance?”. So, whenever a child doesn’t want to cooperate, doesn’t want to do something, has some big feelings about it, is getting into an argument - our job is to bring them calm and to ask those questions to say “Hey, what’s happening for you? We can help meet your needs so that you can feel centered again”. Children want to cooperate when they feel connected. When a child isn’t cooperating, then usually it’s because they’re feeling disconnected.

I see. But sometimes it can be difficult to be empathetic either because you can’t relate to the child or maybe because you’re too empathetic and it’s affecting you too much. What do you do then?

This is why the guards are really, really important. The staff at our school have to have a level of emotional intelligence to be able to know if they’re getting triggered by what’s happening with the child, if they are able to go “I’ve got some feelings going on”. That’s when they come and see me. They work through what’s being activated for them. Any parent will tell you, when you have had enough rest and you are not stressed it’s a lot easier to respond to children with empathy and compassion when they’re having a hard time. But when we are stretched and stressed it’s often harder. At our school, we have to take very good care about staff, about our guards. Because

if we don't, then they're not going to be able to uphold what we want for the children. If a guard does get upset, if they are getting angry, if they are feeling too activated around something, then they have to come to me so we can work through what's happening for them, so that they can inhold for the child. **It's like learning a new language, emotional intelligence is a whole new language. The more you practice it, the better you get at it.** The easier it is to you to hold a space that doesn't rattle you. But you need to practice doing it because we all have our own stories and traumas and we all get triggered with things. Unless you've done your work on where that comes from, it can be very hard to hold that space.

I also think it takes a lot of courage to allow yourself to be that vulnerable, to show your emotions, and to actually talk about them.

Yes, absolutely. My job at the school is to keep listening to the teachers. We talk about everything. We're all human and we all have stuff that's going to come up because we are in relationship, constantly. The job is to be willing to look at it and keep going. The guards and the people we have in our school, have to be really comfortable with feelings and emotions or this is not the right place for them to work at. Because that's what we're talking about all the time. We don't just teach it and expect the children to get it. You have to live it. Because children are so good at feeling whether you are comfortable with it or not. They read our bodies and if we haven't done the work and we're not comfortable with it, then they're not necessarily going to bring and share in the way that we ask them to.

Is there a specific age or time where it is best to teach empathy and emotional intelligence?

From the moment they are born. The way we respond to our babies, with touch, with gentle voices, we are telling them what we're about to do: "I'm going to pick you up now, darling" or "I'm changing your nappy". The way we listen to their tears, the way we meet their needs, sensitively listening to what's happening to them. It's from the moment they are born. And it continues and it changes as they get older. But it's right from the very beginning.

It's about being there for them as well being with them?

Yes. Babies have feelings as well. They cry because they might say "I'm hungry" or "It's too loud in here". Crying is a form of communication and to process feelings and emotions. If we will sit and listen to them with presence instead of trying to stop their feelings, then we're building that safety connection that the child feels in its essence. That it's safe for me to express how I feel right from the very beginning.

Do you have any experience with creative projects that support Woodline Primary? Or could you think of anything that could benefit it?

Like I was mentioning in the beginning, connection provocation is our first main project. It will be guarded by where the children are. One of the reasons why we are doing this, is because we have indigenous lands in Australia. We have some aboriginal elders who are going to be connected to our schools. One of the main projects is that we are going down to the creek river which is part of our property. One of the aboriginal elders, he's an artist, is going to paint a really big mural of the story of the land with the children. Which is about bringing back the essence of connection. The land in indigenous culture has different meanings, how it looks and how it communicates with each other. We're bringing it back into the land, into our heritage, the lands belong to the indigenous people, our impact on that. But that's just one thing that comes to mind. There will be many others as we go. Because we're very much about play based learning and are giving the children the opportunity to express themselves creatively, I think there will be many elements that will unfold over the time.

So you think that creative projects do benefit your work? And that they can help you to establish empathy?

Absolutely, yes. 100 percent! Because for me creativity gets us out of our thinking brain and gets us into our feeling body, emotions, and empathy. **If we want children to be in touch with how they are feeling, creativity is a beautiful way to get in touch with our bodies and how we are feeling. I think it's vitally important.**

*Isn't that a great end? That's super inspiring and motivating for me and my work.
Thank you so much!*

Yes, you're so welcome! I'm very passionate about what we're doing. The more that it can get out there in the world in whatever little way, I think is a very good thing. I think the world needs more schools and more awareness like this.

8.4 INTERVIEW WITH SUSAN LETOURNEAU, NEW YORK HALL OF SCIENCE

Who are you and where do you work?

My name is Suzy Letourneau and I am a senior research associate at the New York Hall of Science which is located in Corona, New York, which is in Queens. We are an interactive science centre, research families and school groups and educators with a lot of hands on science experiences. A lot of our approach is around making and design and play.

How would you describe your work as a design researcher?

In the research team at the Hall of Science we do a lot of different types of research projects. But the ones that I'm involved in are mostly design based research. That involves collaborating with educators or exhibit designers, the process of designing and a new exhibit or a new program, thinking about what are theoretical assumptions that are underlying the design and then using the iterative process that's creating and revising something to better understand how learning happens in that situation. So the goal is to both end up with a product that's usable in the museum and to build theoretical knowledge about how learning happens in that context. I worked on some programs around engineering design processes and how to support that in children and families. Also some slightly more content focused programs around data science and how to support families. I work with introducing data modeling, what data, and what the qualities are of a program that can support that kind of thinking for young children. The narrative project - that you originally got in touch with me about - which was about how to blend empathy and engineering, to see empathy as an integral part of the engineering design process rather than a separate process, in that project we were developing engineering activities that we could use in the museum and trying to infuse narratives that would evoke empathy and then seeing what effect that has on how children, particularly girls, were engaging with the engineering design. That's the kind of work that I'm involved in.

Is the process always connected to learning?

Yeah, we're usually connect to STEM learning but we do that pretty broadly. The way we think about STEM learning is not just about the content of what you're learning but about the underlying practices and processes that go into it. Which can be pretty wide reaching and include things like emotional processes and social interactions. So yes, we do ground everything that we do in our current understandings of how people learn but we see it as very multifaceted and process based rather than content based.

How would you describe a typical research process?

I think, at least for the design based research that I'm involved in, there's usually a couple of

phases. There's some background research to understand what's currently known about whatever the context is that we're going to be developing. For the narrative project that was understanding what is empathy, how researchers define it from a theoretical point of view, what's already been done in engineering education. It infuses real world context and social relevance and engineering problems, where there are blacks. And that informs the initial design of whatever it is that you are creating. It helps us conceptualize what our engineering activities with narratives might look like. Then we create a first prototype which is kind of our best guess based on the research that's out there, about what we think will evoke empathy, and then tested out with visitors. And then it's a process of gathering some data about how it's working, what kinds of thinking it's provoking, and then iteratively revising the design based on the findings. And also iteratively revising our theoretical understanding of how narratives and empathy are connected to each other. Most of the projects have that kind of cycle where you create a design based on what we know so far about how this kind of thing happens, test it with visitors, update the design of the product, and also update your framework for understanding how that happens and then do it again and again. Until you feel like you've got a pretty solid understanding of the situation and a solid design that works well in practice.

Super interesting! During my master thesis, I have been looking into how to work as a design researcher for the first time. So it was not only a process of developing a project about empathy but also a process about understanding how design research works. And I also think that testing, evaluating and reflecting upon it has been super important.

NYSCI is a little bit unique in that we have an internal research team that not a lot of museums do, but it really helps us with these design based projects because it means that the researchers can collaborate really closely with the designers and the people who are facilitating these experiences with visitors. It's really important to do that because what you want is for the questions that you're asking to be grounded in practice and in the reality of how, on the ground, people are interacting and learning with each other. Practitioners and educators just have a very different perspective in the area of expertise on what's important in people's experiences. So we try to not just approach it from a research perspective but also from practical and practice based perspectives.

So do you provide the context or the concept for the exhibition and then the design team develops an idea of how to mediate it?

Yeah, it could be that way or it could also start with a challenge that's recognized by practitioners. In this case, it was that some of the engineering activities were just kind of abstract and not appealing to people without any other context to them. That was sort of a problem that bubbled up from the designer's point of view. How can you make these engineering activities

more compelling to people? And then the research input was around ways of contextualizing and narratives coming up as a promising strategy that had some research behind it.

NYSCI's philosophy is "Design, Make, Play". Could you explain that?

Sure! "Design, Make, Play" is a reinvention of the museum's educational philosophy that happened about ten years ago. It's grounded in using real world experiences and curiosity to provide that compelling background. Things like interacting with materials and tools, solving problems that you see in the world, tinkering and playing with things and seeing what questions that evokes for you. It's very learner centered and based on tapping into people's prior experiences and putting them in the driver's seat to think about what questions and ideas they would like to explore. So we connect that to STEM learning by focusing on creating experiences that allow you to use the practices and processes of STEM to answer your own questions. That's at a basic level what it's all about. We have, we have a "maker space", we have an area called "design lab" that's all on engineering and design. In most of the content based exhibits that we have, we're thinking about how to give visitors more agency and more freedom, not just learn what the designers expect them to learn but to be able to explore in different directions in a more open ended way. So in aligning all of our content to this philosophy, it's requiring us to rethink what a typical museum exhibit might look like and how people will interact with it.

So the playful and explorative approach, is that how you approach projects but also how you want visitors of the museum to explore the exhibitions?

I would say so, yes. It's definitely how our visitors will approach the exhibits and I think in our own research we do often take a design based approach and really emphasize these hands-on opportunities for interactive materials and have that kind of fluency happening. I think, "Design, Make, Play" does have an element of iterative problem solving as a core value and idea. And I our research is very much the same way. We're taking a very iterative approach to prototyping, trying things out, tinkering around with ideas and seeing if they work. So that kind of ethos provides both the visitors' experience and our internal approach.

How old are the children that come to your museum?

We serve all ages from zero to adults. But most commonly the children who come to the museum are maybe ten and under. We do have some older kids and teenagers who come to the museum as well but I feel like our core audience is probably like the six to tens. We also have our pre-school area for seven and under.

Isn't it tricky to design for such a wide audience group?

Yes, it definitely is! Not just developmentally but also the different interests that people have and designing to support people's agency and asking their own questions and pursuing their own ideas when you have no idea what those exactly might be, is very challenging. I think often, at least in our research projects, we're defining that target age that we're focusing on. In the narrative project we were looking at seven to 14, which itself is a pretty wide range, but we were focusing on when we thought children would developmentally be able to empathize with others and take different perspectives. We narrowed it down there. But, on a practical level, even within those activities they have to be flexible enough that if a five or a six year old came into the museum and wanted to do it, there would be a way of adapting it to them. Often they are designed with a particular age group in mind but with some flexibility that they can adapt it on the site to other age groups.

I see. The STEM approach that you mentioned earlier, what is it exactly? How do you work with it?

This is a question that we've been thinking about a lot lately because, like I said, in redefining our educational philosophy we're also trying to update the museum as we go. So thinking about how we approach STEM learning, we had to update and change the tactics we're using to engage visitors with STEM from just like communicating information to them in a unidirectional way to trying to encourage a dialogue and using some STEM information to spark questions that they can go on to explore rather than reaching a predefined end point. So, to answer your question, we think about STEM learning as a way of thinking, a way of understanding the world that we want to engage people in as a process. Rather than approaching STEM learning as a set of facts that you need to memorize. It's not that we don't incorporate content at all, it's really that we're using content to spark questions or motivate exploration or suggest a problem that people can solve. Then it's kind of a jumping off point rather than a final destination.

Is it a quite popular education curriculum in the US?

In the next generation science standards, which are the standards that most US schools are using for science education now, they're also shifting towards processes and ways of thinking, like doing science rather than learning about science. It is a way of approaching STEM learning that's pretty pervasive. But I think, the way that most people learn science is a lot of memorization and a lot of just back to base learnings even still. The way that NYSCI is thinking about it is reframing it on a much deeper level and giving people a lot more control and agency and what it is that they're learning rather than saying this is what you're going to learn. And then we're going to create some hands-on or slightly open ended activities to get you to that end point which is often the way that school based learning happens.

That's what we are aiming for, that's the ideal. If we've done it right, that's what would happen. Visitors are learning something about either some scientific background where they can build on or they're tapping into their prior experiences so that they can extend them. And then they're also sharing their perspectives with the museum and there's some dialogue happening. That's definitely the ideal. But of course we're still working on that and figuring out the best strategies of doing that because it's a fairly new approach to create exhibits that do that effectively.

Yes, interesting! I'm currently designing a workshop for school classes and I'm also thinking about how to go into the classroom and introduce the workshop to the children. Because I don't want to say "now I want to teach you about empathy" or "now we're going to learn how to be empathetic". I really want it to be a co-learning experience. So they should teach me how they want to learn and be informed about that topic and I want to tell them what I know or what my experiences are.

It's interesting whether you're thinking about empathy as being the end goal of what you're trying to teach or what you're hoping people will learn or whether empathy is allowing some other kind of learning to happen. I think you would approach it slightly differently depending on what's more important to you or how you see empathy - as an end or as a means to an end.

Yeah, that's true. Empathy is one of the fundamental aims of the Swedish school curriculum. And I think it often happens during class but then the focus is on another subject and it just happens on the side. I want to put it in the focus. So maybe it's both? Maybe it's the means and the end.

That's really interesting! What ages of children are you working with?

*Around 12 to 17 year olds. So middle school children who already have some experience with that topic. **On the museum's website I read that you also work with social-emotional learning. Is that connected to the STEM curriculum or how do you work with that?***

I think different projects have taken different tracks on what aspects of social-emotional learning they might have emphasized or focused on. In the narrative project, of course, we were thinking about empathy. That was a social-emotional skill that we were using as the basis for what we were doing. Some other projects think about motivation or children's self-application and they might not think of empathy as much. Inside different projects they are digging into different topics around social-emotional learning but, across the board, the common theme for all of our work is that we see those kinds of social-emotional skills as part of STEM learning. They directly contribute to the kinds of STEM learning that we want to promote. So they're not a separate skill, they really feed into and make stronger the engineering practices or real world problem solving. It's really valuable to strengthen those social-emotional skills in order to foster the other aspects of learning that are happening. They're very much intertwined.

*I also talked to other people in other countries and asked them if they work with social-emotional learning or if they know about that concept. And quite a lot of them didn't know about it. **But would you say that in the context you work with, there is a general understanding of it? Is there awareness for the importance of it?***

I think so. In some ways it connects to things like executive skills and others serve higher order thinking. There is a general awareness that this is something that takes a long time to develop and that benefits from some scaffolding along the way for children and even for middle schoolers and teenagers and even adults. Empathy is still a skill that you can cultivate as an adult. They're skills that are very flexible and have a huge role in supporting all kinds of learning, not just STEM learning but any other kind of learning. I think there's a general awareness about that. And in terms of science education in general, too. Part of our mission is to expand the ways that STEM is appealing to people with a wider range of identities. A lot of scientific fields are still very homogeneous and there's a lot of gender disparity, there's a lot of groups that still remain underrepresented despite decades of efforts to the contrary. When you look into the research about why that is, a lot of it is because either people don't see STEM as relevant to their lives or to the communities that they care about. And so they choose to pursue other fields that have more relevance for them. Or they feel that it's kind of impersonal and competitive. And the problems that your address are just abstract, decontextualized, like not everyone is going to be interested in learning about coding just because they find it fun. People might be more interested in learning about it if they can do something that makes a difference in the world. That helps and so those emotional and social elements of what it is that you're doing, are actually really important for getting people into STEM in the first place. And often it's around middle school when that really solidifies. People decide "I'm a science person" or "I'm not a science person" at that point. So it's really important to introduce them to STEM in ways that acknowledge those social-emotional aspects of the field early on before they turn away from it.

I think it's super impressive how you and the museum connect science and engineering with soft skills and social-emotional skills. I think it's a very inspiring approach!

Yeah, what we found is that it makes almost any scientific problem that you're tackling much more inclusive to ground it in. Something that people care about really draws people into the topic or the question. It gives those who might not see themselves as a science person a reason to be interested, a reason to care about it, a reason to try to solve this problem, and a reason to persist in, tinkering and figuring things out even when things are challenging. I think it helps on a number of levels.

When you say "inclusive"; I read that you are also very aware of the diverse context of the museum and that you try to represent that diversity. How do you do that? Or how important is it?

It's very important to all of our work! We are located in a very diverse area of the country and even in New York City, Queens is one of the most diverse counties in the entire United States. In terms of our own audience at NYSCI, our visiting audience is not completely representative of the diversity that's in our surrounding neighborhoods. We still have a ways to go in inviting everyone into the museum or making sure that everyone feels welcome. But even still, based on our visitor surveys, we have at least a more diverse audience than most other science centers do. In some of our research, we're trying to make sure that we're getting representative samples based on who's coming to the museum which already is a fairly diverse audience. In other cases we're targeting our research around specific community programs that we have going on, that are aimed to our local community in particular. There are some after school programs where local families get free access to the museum during after school hours and we've done a lot of research during those times so that we can make sure that the people that we're speaking to are there from our direct community. And that audience tends to be more diverse than the audience that comes to the museum on the weekends for example or during vacations. They are not tourists, they are people who live and walk away. So I think we do it in a number of ways. In our exhibit designs, we're trying to think about the assumptions that we might have about the kinds of experiences that people are coming in with and really questioning those assumptions and making sure that we're not prescribing one way of interacting with our experiences or one way of learning but rather tapping into the prior experiences and knowledge that people have and that there's openings for people to see themselves in the exhibits that were creating. Also, to make contributions or share their own perspectives in ways that are meaningful. Again, it's not like "we're teaching you what the answer is", it's more like "we're sharing some information to you that might spark a question or allow you to explore an idea that's already been on lines from your everyday life". Thinking about it that way allows for diversity and how people approach the learning experience rather than trying to force them down one path.

I see, flexibility really is important, amazing! Would you like to tell a bit more about your project connected to narratives and empathy?

Sure. We were involved in a collaboration at NYSCI between researchers and activity developers in our design lab space. And we're also partnering with two other museums in different areas of the country. Our goal was to try to understand how we could take abstract, decontextualized engineering activities and infuse narratives on to them in kind of light touch ways, so nothing heavy handed, now elaborate constraining narratives but more just like a hint of narratives that would work in some context that you could dive into. We were trying to think about how these kinds of narrative elements, like a character or setting, could help communicate who you were trying to help with, the problem that you were solving and why, like what the problem was that you could solve. We were basing a lot of this on prior research on empathy. And even in engineering education there's a growing recognition that empathy is a really important skill for

engineers to cultivate because really what they're doing is trying to understand their clients' perspectives and design solutions that will be helpful for them. In order to do that you need to take their perspectives and understand how they're experiencing the world, how they would use this solution that you're designing, how they will think and feel in each of these situations. There's already a growing recommendation that empathy should be included in engineering education as a fundamental skill. So we were thinking about narratives as one strategy for evoking empathy encouraging these ways of approaching engineering problems and trying to design activities that would do that. That's the basic framework. We created six different activities that have narrative elements that were empathic in some way. In each of the six we tried to test out different ways of using narratives and different types of empathy that they might evoke in different ways. We're just sort of just playing around with how this could look. Using characters in one activity, using settings in another activity, using both in a third activity, seeing what differences there were between those different strategies. Also, just on a practical level, like what's involved, how the materials that you choose and the facilitation strategies can support visitors, buy into the narratives, and express empathy in action. And then using that empathy to help them solve these engineering challenges. We were iteratively developing the strategies along the way both within each activity and then across the six.

How were your experiences or the results? Did you see a difference from how empathy was expressed in the beginning and afterwards? Or is it even possible to measure it?

We were drawing on research from psychology and neuroscience that have defined empathy as multifaceted. In the prior research in this area, there's a general acknowledgement that there are affective and emotional qualities of empathy which are things like if you see someone laughing you laugh along with them or if you see someone crying it makes you cry, just like emotional contagion. Also things like sympathy, compassion, and concern for other people, where your own emotional response might be different from other persons but you're still identifying with what they're feeling. There's also a cognitive aspect of empathy that really involves imagining someone else's point of view. You can do that even without an emotional component to it, you can take their perspectives, think about what they might be experiencing. Some theories extend it to prosocial actions and actually taking action to help somebody else as being the logical next step of all those things. So, what we were looking for in the activities is "Do we see kids expressing any emotional connections with other people or the people that they're trying to help with their designs in those engineering activities?", "Do we see them imagining how someone else might be experiencing the situation?" like "What is it like to have this problem?", "How would somebody use this invention that I created?". And then "Are they motivated to try to help someone else do their design?" like "Do they keep persisting and like working and working and working on this problem until they get their design perfect because we really want to help them?" In our research we were trying to observe those things and we also did some interviews

with the kids who were participating in the activities afterwards to ask them to describe the problem that they were trying to solve, what they were thinking about while they were designing and iterating their creations, and if they were thinking about the narrative at all or the people that we suggested. Just to give you some examples of the activities that we were testing: One of them was designing something to help a grandparent with everyday problems. We called it “help grandma” and we had persona cards that showed an illustration of a particular person and a problem that they had, like “My groceries are too heavy, it’s hard for me to carry them” or “I don’t hear the doorbell rang when it rains”. And then children were using repurposed materials to design a prototype of an invention that would help solve that problem. We also had a chain reaction activity which is kind of like making a Rube Goldberg machine out of repurposed stuff like kitchen items, ramps, tennis balls. We added life-sized models of animals to these activities so that you could design a contraption that would help take care of a pet in some way. We had dogs and cats and you could design an invention that would feed them in a creative way or play with them. Some of the activities had settings around them, for example we had an air powered vehicle activity. This is a pretty common engineering activity in museums where you create something that is powered only by something like a fan. You put in front of a fan to test how hard it will go. And we added testing stations with different landscapes like a forest or a desert. And you could think about what you might want your vehicle to have in that environment, where you might be going, what qualities you might have to have. As far as what we found in our research, we were comparing these narrative versions of the activities (that had the grandparent, the cat or the landscape) to versions of the activity that didn’t have those things. So just like a basic textured surface that you might test your vehicle on rather than a desert with a backdrop. And seeing what the differences were both in how invested people were in solving this problem and then how much engineering they engaged in when there was a context for the problem versus not a context. What we found was that when we had these narrative framings for the activity - we were looking at girls between seven and 14 specifically - they stayed longer doing the activity and also engaged in more engineering practices throughout the time they were there. We were observing empathy and of course these narratives were evoking a lot of different aspects of empathy. I can talk about that more as well, but the take-home message for us was that it also made the science-learning stronger. It wasn’t just a strategy for getting in the door it was also a strategy for supporting and learning what you’re trying to get at. In terms of how the narratives evoked empathy, it was really interesting because we were thinking about characters, like the grandparent or the dog, settings like the landscape and just general narrative problem frames that just changed the way you are thinking about the problem. An example of that would be whenever activities use sticks and rubber bands and you could create a 3-dimensional structure with that. In the baseline version of that activity that was the whole activity, in the narrative version that we created we told kids to think about making a structure that would protect them and their families in an earthquake. It had to fit everyone in their group and it had to be sturdy enough that it wouldn’t fall over with you inside of it. So in that case the materials are exactly

the same, it's just the way you're thinking about the problem that's different, that's giving you the human contexts. And there are strengths in each of those approaches for evoking empathy. **What we were finding across the board was that when there's a sympathetic character that you're thinking about, like the dog or the grandparent, that is really effective at evoking those emotional aspects of empathy and to really sympathize with that person and you really care. That also leads to motivation to help and wanting to persevere and really help that person or that animal. In contrast to that, when you're using a setting like imagine being in this place, testing a vehicle in this landscape, that is a little bit stronger at the perspective taking parts of empathy. Sort of "imagine what it's like to be there", what it would be like to use a solution. It's a little bit more detached, a little bit more cognitive. In some of the activities that we developed later in our series of six, we tried combining those two. That's almost the strongest way that you can evoke empathy because you get both parts, both facets of empathy. You get some perspective taking and also some emotional affection at the same time. It becomes much more immersive.**

Wow! And how do you make sure that what the kids do in the exhibition stays relevant for them afterwards as well? How do you extend the learning after the single visit?

It's tricky because in a lot of the activities that we're creating, we're assuming that we might only interact with visitors once. And they don't all have a take-home-component to them, they're just a singular experience. But we are still trying to relate to people's lives outside of the museum in all the activities that we're creating. Both drawing on those experiences in order to motivate the problem solving that they're engaging with in that moment and also if you're working on a problem that relates to your life we're hoping that has a stronger connection to you after you leave as well. For example in the "help grandma" activity, we suggested a lot of personas, like here are some different grandparents with different problems, but we also encouraged visitors to think about people in their own families or in their own communities that had problems that they might want to think about trying to help with. Likewise, even kids who chose one of the persons often used those experiences to help them come up with solutions. If they had a card about a grandparent who had trouble opening jars, we talked to some kids who were saying like "This is familiar to me because my own grandmother has the same issue". So then they're thinking about what would be helpful for her, what kinds of issues does she have that I can think about, that would help me come up with an idea for this problem. Making those connections, it makes the learning a little bit stickier. So that people feel like they already have some knowledge that's relevant and useful which makes you feel a little bit more capable in that moment working with the problem. But then also, hopefully, extends beyond the one visit and allows you to approach other problems in the future in a similar way. In some of our projects we are trying to make that connection a little bit more explicit. I'm working on another project now where we're doing workshops that are all around design thinking and introducing people to the process of defining a problem, brainstorming solutions and creating a prototype. And then also giving them some

tools that they can take home with them, like an app or activities that they could do at home that use the same process. We're testing out what supports families' needs after they leave in order to be able to do the same kinds of activities at home or at least engage in the same kinds of thinking at home. We're still learning more about how to do that in effective ways because there's a lot of limitations and barriers that families have. Like not having time, not having space, not feeling like they know exactly what they're doing. There's a lot of challenges that we're still thinking through and coming up with strategies to get around that. And then the last thing I'll say is that the museum does have a lot of frequent visitors from our local community - most of our visitors, I think about 75 percent, are from Queens itself, not just the neighbourhoods immediately surrounding the museum but from other neighboring places. There are a lot of visitors where it's almost a regular part of their family routine. At least before the pandemic it was, we don't know exactly how it's going to be later. But there are families who come to the museum every weekend or once a month. People who are here often. So there is a lot of opportunity to connect those experiences over time or they might do similar activities each time they're at the museum. That's also another opportunity we haven't fully dug into in our research. How to support those types of families? In what ways are they building on their experiences over months or years? But that's something that we're aware of as an opportunity and the exhibits team designs experiences that can be flexible if you are doing it for the first time versus doing it for the tenth time. There is still some new challenge that you can build on regardless of where you're coming from. I don't know if that fully answers your question but there are a lot of different avenues.

From all of those things, what would you say is most important when designing workshops or exhibitions for children?

Relating it to their everyday lives is probably the most important thing. Yes, drawing on people's existing understanding of the world really helps them take whatever information that you're giving them and have a framework for understanding it. It also allows them to come up with questions that they're truly interested in and say like "This new information that you're giving me, how does that relate to what I already know?" and "What does that make me curious about?". I think that's really important in providing a reason to be learning about whatever you're learning. Also, that relationship to your everyday life gives you something to keep building on as you go forward. The second thing that's important is to build those relationships over time and have frequent touch points with people. Where they're getting ongoing support for that process, where you can continue to suggest new questions, where you can continue to pursue new challenges. I think both of those are key.

What about providing a safe place where they are allowed to make mistakes and take risks?

I think this is really interesting because at least in the United States - just taking a step back for

a minute - NYSCI's "Design, Make, Play" philosophy is grounded on the research on the maker movement and the types of learning that happen in these hands-on maker spaces. A lot of that pedagogy is around making mistakes, failures being okay, trying things out. You would think on the surface how could these be bad, but I think one critique is that they place a lot of focus on individual learning at the expense of more social approaches to collaborating, getting information from people who are more expert than you. They can put a lot of pressure on the individual to be the one figuring it out by themselves. Also then absorbing that failures and the mistakes as their own responsibility to work through. There's some tension there. It is important to iterate and learn from your mistakes but I think you also need some social support in order for that to not feel overwhelming. We can't assume that people will just be able to figure it out on their own by learning through their mistakes. They might need some encouragement, they might need some other information at that failure point to help them. Having a safe space it's not just about showing that failures are okay, it's about seeing what supports and what other information people need in order to get over those sticky points or those moments where something didn't work that they wanted to work. How you learn from that experience and at what point do you need some instruction and some information from someone knowledgeable. Those are really respectful, helpful, and safe ways of approaching a situation rather than leaving it completely open-ended for someone to figure it out on their own.

Maybe we can use the last minutes to talk about another project of yours because you just mentioned how important social support is. I saw that you were working on a project where you tried to engage parents more in the process of making. I'm very interested in how you include the community and the parents and not only the kids themselves?

In that project, we were looking at a lot of different making and tinkering programs that were happening in different spaces throughout the museum and that had different types of facilitation strategies. Some of them were very step-by-step facilitated with a lot of instruction and some of them were very open-ended where facilitators were kind of hands-off. Some of them had really complex materials and tools like virtual reality or 3D-printers and some of them were more everyday things like knitting or woodworking, hand tools, felting, crocheting. We were looking to see what are the social elements that make a difference in terms of families as a whole participating and not just children. And what ways of facilitating helps caregivers be more involved. We were thinking about it, trying to be as inclusive as possible in seeing caregivers' involvement not just in one way but in a range of ways. We were looking to see if caregivers were helping their children with what they were doing. If they were working on their own projects side by side with their kids or if they were just actively observing what children were doing, noticing, and being interested in children's projects. And I think all of those are completely valid ways of participating in these kinds of experiences. What we were finding was that there are few design features of these activities that supported families and caregivers in being involved in and par-

ticipating in any of these ways. One was when facilitators were giving information directly to caregivers and not just addressing their children, that really helped bring caregivers in and help them feel like they had enough information to either help the children or to start a project by themselves. Another was minimizing the instructions up front and getting people involved in interacting with the materials right away. Because when there was a lot of instruction, caregivers were inclined to step back and let facilitators take the lead. They separated themselves a little bit from the activity in that case. In terms of the familiarity of the materials, when it was things that were very familiar to families already, like knitting or woodworking, we saw caregivers more likely to be helping and contributing their assisting. They might already have some knowledge about those tools so they could help their children more. And when it was more high-tech tools or things that they didn't know yet, they were more likely to try it and actually do the activities side by side with their kids. Some of this is a judgment call. Where for an individual space they might want to promote caregivers being collaborative with their children, in other cases you might want caregivers to be learning alongside their children and learning the same kinds of things. You could choose material strategically based on what you want to support. Those three things were the key for getting caregivers in the door. In terms of working with the community, we were trying to recruit families during those after school hours that I was mentioning before. Where it was mostly local families who were participating in this. So we wanted to see how we could create making and tinkering programs that would appeal to not just children but to their whole families.

In terms of documentation and when it comes to your research - and when you say “observing” - how can I imagine that? Are you in the space with the children and literally observing what they're doing or maybe even taking pictures?

In many cases it's open-ended field notes. For example in this project 'caregivers participating in the maker programs', and in the narrative project as well, we were writing down a description of everything that's happening. Researchers will sit in the space and maybe choose one child to focus on while they're doing the activities. From when they start to when they're done, and just take qualitative notes about how they approach the problem at the beginning. What it is that they do, if they're talking to other people, what are they talking about. In some cases, depending on the project, note taking might be a little bit more structured where we might have specific behaviors that we're looking to see if that happens, we might have something more like a checklist. With the empathy project for example, you might have a checklist like “Do they show any emotional components of empathy?”. Then you check it off and write some notes about what that looks like or how that happened. So you can do it in both ways. And then, usually we have some follow-up interviews. After people are all the way done with the activity or you can even chat with them while they're doing the activity, if that's appropriate for the situation. Just ask them some questions like “What is it that you're working on right now?”, “Can you tell me about what

you need?”. Just to get their perspective about the problem that they’re solving or what stood out to them about the experience. Usually, we do both of those things and the interviews are maybe five to ten minutes long. Not very long but that gives you some context for interpreting your notes. What it looks like to you and also what they said about it. With ‘caregivers’ for example it was really important to pair the observations. For example, it looked like they were trying to help their child with its activity and then, if I talk to them later, is that also how they describe what they were trying to do? So that you can verify your observations.

I see. The last question is how important is empathy in your work as a design researcher?

I think I’m always taking an empathic perspective whether it’s part of my project or not. Mostly because I’m very focused on trying to create more inclusive learning experiences. And I think in order to do that you really need to, as best as you can, imagine what other people might be thinking or feeling, how they might be approaching the situation, and how it might look or feel to them. That’s often how I’m approaching the research that I’m doing, trying to understand people’s lived experiences a little bit better. I think, for designing experiences, it’s something that’s always at the forefront. Not just for me but for the exhibits team and the educational team at NYSCI as well.

That’s really great! Thank you so much for sharing your insights with me!

8.5 EMPATHY QUESTIONNAIRE: CHRISTINE KUMMER, CHILDREN AND YOUTH MUSEUM MUNICH

1. Who are you and where do you work?

I am Christine Kummer and I work at the Children and youth museum Munich

2. How do you define empathy in your work?

The own ability for empathy is a basic requirement for working with children. Fostering children's ability for empathy is a crucial aim of working with children.

3. How important is empathy in your work and why?

Empathy is required for the conception and the design of exhibitions and exhibition programs. One 'thinks into' the visitors in order to develop content. Topics are being looked at from several perspectives in order to create different access points and to make relationships visible. The aim is to create an understanding for those relationships and to enable the children to position themselves within them. When working with children multifaceted access points foster topical open-mindedness, interest, and a broader understanding.

4. How do you convey empathy when working with children?

My own behavior serves as an example for empathetic interaction, conversations, and formulating questions. When we plan exhibitions, we think about how we can foster empathetic behavior, how we can create situations that empower self-esteem (e.g. through positive experiences like "I did it!", "I can do it" etc.), and how children can become more aware about their own feelings through multi sensory experiences.

5. How do you communicate the importance of empathy?

In a way that allows to experience empathy playfully and all naturally.

6. Do you see a connection between empathy and creativity?

Being empathetic requires to be aware of one's environment and to interpret and understand this perception. High self-esteem creates assurance for the interaction with others, with "the other" (objects/humans/feelings). Also creativity is closely related to awareness and perception interpretation. Creativity is fueled through a constant exchange with oneself and the surrounding world, though being interested in and open-minded towards the unknown, and through understanding of one's emotions.

7. Do you see a connection between empathy and intercultural competence?

Well developed empathy skills build the precondition for intercultural understanding and, therefore, for successful and respectful cohabitation.

8. What is the opposite of empathy? What would you miss in your work without empathy?

My work would be very self-focused and I would miss interaction and emotionality.

9. How important is inclusion in connection with empathy? In a museum, you probably have regular international experiences?

In a museum context, empathy can be tried and practiced in a safe environment. Open situations of encounter allow people to meet on equal terms.

10. Have you had an exhibition about empathy?

No.

11. What has to be reconsidered when planning an exhibition for children?

It is vital to encounter every topic with openness and curiosity and to enable and foster relational thinking. Each station of the exhibition always only focuses on one learning outcome. At the same time the children should be able to independently explore and understand the relationships between them (sustainable learning). Content and design of each station have to go hand in hand, then you don't need long explanations and they work intuitively.

12. Playful learning and exploration are important in the children and youth museum. What else is crucial in your concept?

Our exhibitions and programs always aim to establish self-esteem, relational thinking, and creativity as key competencies for future demands in society (unpredictability, complexity, motivation for change etc).

8.6 EMPATHY QUESTIONNAIRE: NICOLE AND WALLY, AFTER SCHOOL CARE CENTER SCHARNITZ

1. Who are you and where do you work?

Nicole (N): I am a child educator and I run the after school care center in Sharnitz, Austria.

Wally (W): I am a 55-year old woman from Austria and I work in child care.

2. How do you define empathy in your work?

N: Empathy is the ability to feel into the emotional state of being of other children and to behave accordingly.

W: For me, empathy is the ability to feel “into” and “with” the children.

3. How important is empathy in your work and why?

N: Very important! Empathy is the basic condition for all our actions and for the interaction with the children.

W: Empathy is very important in my work. Children are very sensitive and I want them to feel safe.

4. How do you convey empathy when working with children?

N: I try to be a role model and to set an example for the children.

W: I listen and try to understand, if necessary I console. In general, I try to be aware of the children's problems and needs and to take them seriously.

5. How do you communicate the importance of empathy?

N: I react to the children's feelings and communicate them.

W: I try to communicate everything that's important.

6. Do you see a connection between empathy and creativity?

N: Yes, emotions can be expressed through creativity, such as through images, music or writing.

W: I think a child (a human) can only feel good and safe, and express its creativity, if it feels seen and understood.

7. Do you see a connection between empathy and intercultural competence?

N: Yes, in order to have intercultural competence, one needs to have empathy, respect, and compassion.

W: Of course! Every human, no matter which culture and traditions he or she has, wants to feel accepted and understood.

8. What is the opposite of empathy? What would you miss in your work without empathy?

N: Indifference and emotional coldness towards other people. Without empathy, I reckon my work couldn't happen at all.

W: It means not to engage with other human's feelings and needs. My work wouldn't be possible without empathy.

9. How important is inclusion in connection with empathy? In a museum, you probably have regular international experiences?

N: Let's turn it around: How important is empathy in relation to inclusion? Real inclusion is only possible when I am able to engage with somebody both emotionally and cognitively - when I encounter him or her with respect and understanding.

W: Inclusion and empathy go hand in hand. Through them we can show the children that they are being accepted and respected.

10. How do you teach emotional intelligence?

N: You need to be emotionally intelligent in order to be empathetic.

W: I try to teach the children to listen to each other, to approach one another, and to try to understand each other even when it is difficult.

11. How do you create an atmosphere where children feel safe to express their emotions?

N: By reacting to the children's emotions appropriately, e.g. I console them, cheer them up or motivate them.

W: I listen, I hear them out, and I care for them.

12. How do you react to conflicts and differences of opinion?

N: I try to understand both parties, to listen carefully, and to understand them.

W: I listen to all parties, I hear them out, I give them time to reflect about it, and if it's necessary I also ask them to say sorry.

13. Do you work with social-emotional learning? And how?

N: We foster group work, helping each other, and making it possible for the children to learn in their own pace. Thereby social interaction and the children's social competencies are being enhanced.

W: I don't know this concept. But I think, intuitively, I do work with it. I try to teach the children that it is worth caring about learning something new. No matter how it turns out. Everyone is allowed to make mistakes.

14. Do you have experiences with creative projects that support your curriculum?

N: We always try to convey social competencies and empathy through creative projects.

W: Often you only realize afterwards how much a child and also the community has been supported through a project. I think that's very interesting! We try to offer many projects like that.

8.7 TEACHERS QUESTIONNAIRE: SOPHIE, ISABELLA AND MIRA

1. Who are you and where do you work?

Sophie (S): I'm Sophie and I work at a primary school close to Munich, Germany.

Isabella (I): I am studying to become a primary school teacher and am currently in the sixth semester. One day per week I work in a primary school in Munich, Germany.

Mira (M): I'm Mira and I work at a middle school in Gothenburg, Sweden.

2. How do you define empathy in your work?

S: I try to see interactions and the daily school life also with the children's eyes. I provide understanding for different needs of the students. I look behind their behaviour, seek talks with them, listen to them actively, and don't judge them from my point of view.

I: Personally, for me empathy is a fundamental value. Almost a virtue that is essential for social interaction and eventually for all areas where humans come together. It is about moral judgement. What is morally good or bad? Everyone has to ask himself that question sooner or later. Being empathetic with each other and expressing empathy means interacting with teacher other in tolerant, respectful, and appreciating ways. In my work, I see it as my job to role model exactly that to the children and to let them experience empathy. Many children have to learn that first. Also, developmental-psychologically this is only possible from a certain age on. For that we have several possibilities, also interdisciplinary. One example is the "dilemma method". But it doesn't have to be a specific method but can also be practised in the daily school life.

M: For me, empathy is about compassion and to be able to feel with another person.

3. How important is empathy in your work and why?

S: Very important! I think empathy is crucial in all human interactions and in school there are uncountable social interactions. It's important that the children feel good, heard and seen. To create a good base for living with each other, also the personal connection has to work well.

I: Empathy is very important. As a teacher you not only have a teaching mandate but are also supposed to educate students. The educational mandate is all about imparting values that are important for a democratic community and a responsible citizen. It's like giving a carpenter only the wood but no tools for his work. He has the material, the basis, but he won't be able to build proper furniture without the right grinding machine. It's the same for children and their empathy skills. The basis is there but the tools to really act empathetically have to be learned first. The

school is a crucial place for that.

M: Empathy is really important for me and my job! Every day, I teach my students how they can formulate their feelings and why it is important to communicate with each other in order to understand each other's well-being.

4. What do you think which age is adequate to introduce children to the topic of empathy?

S: I think it's possible from the first grade on! In conversations I often realise that children already have a better cognitive understanding than we often anticipate. Through intuitively accessible situations that they can relate to, it is absolutely possible to communicate empathy to them early on.

I: I actually think that the own empathy ability strongly depends from the socialisation during our first years. Meaning that the parents lay the foundation for empathy. But I am confident that students from the first grade on, from the age of 6, can already be introduced to empathy. It depends on the class and the children. But I would introduce the topic as soon as possible!

M: From the age of ten years on it is possible to carefully introduce the students to empathy and its meaning. In that age children develop a special interest for themselves and others. I think it's possible to have really interesting conversations about empathy with students in that age because then it's especially important for them to feel compassion.

5. How do you communicate empathy in interactions with children?

S: I seek conversations about situations and emotions from their experiences, about pictures and movies. But also through role play. I want them to get to know their feelings and needs. Thereby, I try to be a role model. I could also imagine to conduct bigger projects (e.g. about "Giraffensprache", Rosenberg's concept about violence-free communication)

I: Through daily interactions that are respectful, tolerant, and appreciating. As well as through specific methods if the curriculum allows it. I also encourage the children to change perspective. E.g. ask them "How would you feel like if someone had scribbled on your pencil case?" etc.

M: I usually explain how one can talk about one's feelings. For example, I tell the students that they can say: "It hurt to be hit with the ball and it made me sad." That helps the students to understand each other better.

6. Why do you think that a workshop or other educational material could support you in teaching your students empathy?

S: Workshops provide the possibility to give a topic sufficient time and space and to conduct bigger projects. Unfortunately, we are often lacking the time to develop a workshop or material by ourselves.

I: I think it could help me because I, and many other pedagogues too, give my best to communicate empathy but I don't have any concrete material for it that supports me. Material is always good. I just don't know if our time schedule allows it.

M: Because it is important to work with empathy to communicate and talk about how oneself and others feel in different situations. I also think it's important to start with that early on so that children can learn what empathy means.

7. How should a workshop look like in order to easily integrate it in your school days?

S: I think it would be good to start with an intense, time-limited introduction phase, e.g. in form of a "theme week", which then develops into a regular and long-term activity. Tools and inspirations for integrating empathy in the daily school life should be part of it, too. The workshop definitely has to be interactive and explorative! The material should serve a clear purpose but should also be open-ended enough to adapt it to the class. I would like to see a red thread that leads through the exercises. Also, tips that invite you to enlarge upon the topic are helpful. Especially playful exercises and tasks that encourage conversations are important!

I: It definitely needs to allow for interpretation. Empathy is something very personal and individual. I don't think it should be taught in only one strict way. I would like the workshop to be interdisciplinary since that's how we work in our primary school. Also, it should be easy to adapt. I could imagine to use it as a ritual or a game. Anyhow, it has to be action oriented, the children need to be able to do something.

M: A workshop should be divided into several teaching units. In every unit the class should work with a specific topic that is related to empathy. Then the class can be divided into groups or half of the class works in a different room. Clear instructions are needed. The workshop should be interactive and the tasks should encourage students to think and to then reflect upon them with the whole class. I think the idea is really interesting and I would like to conduct a workshop like this with my older students!

S: That depends on the complexity and the concept. It's mainly important that the underlying aim is visible in the material and that it is explained how to use it.

I: An expert who trained me in advance. I think you can also make a lot of mistakes when educating children.

M: I would like an adult to lead the workshop and I could provide support.

9. Do you prefer online material or would you also like to purchase a physical toolbox?

S: I like to work with physical material if it's good and affordable.

I: Both! If it's good, I don't mind if it's online or physical. I would also pay for it.

M: Both! It would be great to have a toolbox and even some extra material that can be printed out.

10. For how many hours could you imagine to conduct a workshop like this?

S: In the intense introduction phase I could imagine two hours per day. Then, periodically (e.g. every four weeks), one to two hours. But it's hard to say.

I: That's a tricky question. But I think a week and maybe eight to ten hours are good.

M: I could imagine to have a workshop like this for five to eight lessons á 45 minutes.

8.8 “HOW DO YOU LIKE TO LEARN?” PRIMARY SCHOOL SURVEY EVALUATION

1. What do you like especially about school?

- Playing
- Being with my friends

2. What do you not like about school?

- Being bullied by others and when no one wants to be with me
- Teachers who are mean
- Older students who run into me
- Sitting still
- Too much homework

3. Why do you like teamwork tasks?

- Because you are together
- Because we can support each other
- Better exchange with others
- I don't feel lonely.
- It's more fun than working alone.

4. Why do you like tasks where you work on your own?

- It's more quiet.
- I don't know.
- I can focus better.
- I hate tasks where I have to work on my own.

5. How does a task have to be in order to draw your interest?

- I like interactive tasks where I can work together with others.
- I like tasks that are active and where I can move.
- I like tasks that explore a topic in varying ways.
- I like tasks where I can test a lot.
- I like tasks without “right” and “wrong”.

6. Do you think that you have enough time in school to talk about your and the classes well-being?

and regularly time for that” the average score was 1,14.

7. How does a lesson have to be for you to feel comfortable to raise your thoughts and needs freely?

- Everyone listens to each other.
- Friendly and respectful interactions
- My opinion is appreciated and not judged.
- I need an atmosphere of trust.

8. How do you like your teachers and classmates to react when you make a mistake?

- They shouldn't rant at me.
- They should help me.
- They should show me how to do it right.
- They shouldn't laugh.
- They should console me.
- They should ask me if I want help.

9. What is a good motivation for you to keep working on something?

- When I can work together with others
- When I have sufficient time
- When I can contribute my own thoughts
- When everyone is approaching the task with fun
- When I receive positive feedback and appreciation

10. How long can you work on something until you needs a break?

The average answer was between 0,5 to 1,5 hours.

11. What does “success” mean to you?

- I'm proud of myself.
- I'm happy.
- I feel good and it's more fun to do it.
- When I don't make any mistakes.

12. How long should a school project be?

Most children either answered “They should go over different days and last several weeks” or “They should go over one week”.

13. When you are doing a project, is it okay for you to do some smaller homework for it?

On a scale between “1: No, I only want to work on the project in school” and “5: Yes, I like to spend more time with the project at home” the average score was 4,71.

14. If you could change something about school, what would that be?

- More creative subjects and experiments
- More friendly and less strict teachers
- More fun, happiness, and kindness
- More breaks

Summary of the results:

Students like about school that they can play and be with their friends. They don't like to be excluded or even bullied by others. Also, they don't like their teachers to be mean. When it comes to learning they don't like sitting still and getting too much homework. All students agreed that they like teamwork tasks. This is because then they can work together and support each other. Another important reason is that they don't feel lonely. The students think that teamwork tasks are more fun than tasks where they work on their own. But they also like the latter because those tasks are quieter and allow for better concentration. Exercises that are interactive and moved especially draw their attention. The children enjoy explorative and participatory tasks that are not about getting something right. Only one child indicated that they have enough time during class to talk about their well-being. All other children answered that they don't have any time for that at all. In order to feel comfortable to share their thoughts and needs freely, the students require a trustful atmosphere and respectful interaction with others. This means for example that everyone listen to each other and no one is judged. When they make a mistake they want to get help rather than being ranted or laughed at. They are more motivated to continue with a task when they can work together with others, have sufficient time for its execution, can contribute their own thoughts, experience the other's fun and willingness, and receive positive feedback. The interviewed children can work on a task for maximum 1,5 hours before they need a break. They define 'success' as when they don't make any mistakes and especially connect certain feelings with it like joy, proud, and happiness. The students enjoy longer projects that last one or more weeks. When doing a project all of them are willing to do smaller homework for it. One student indicated that he wouldn't change anything about school. The others wish for more creative and experimental tasks and more breaks. They also answered that they would like to experience more fun, kindness, and friendliness, especially from their teachers.

8.9 PROCESS PICTURES

Research sub-questions

How can empathy be established through (inclusive) design?

How important is empathy within the interference of intercultural competence and creativity?

How can children be supported in their identity development through (intercultural) empathy?

How can empathy be taught and learnt in an understandable, enriching, and adaptable way?

How important is empathy during the design process?

Project aims

*intercultural
competence*

*creativity/
problem
solving skills*

*complex
identities*

*emotional
literacy*

inclusion

empathy

compassion

respect

*sustainable
relationships*

imperfection

participation

*sense of
equality*

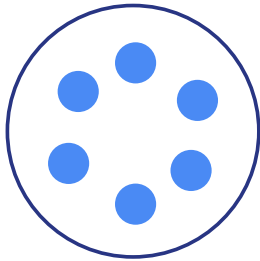
*awareness/
interest*

*authentic
communication*

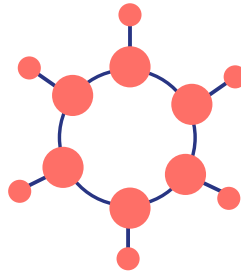
*inter-
connection*

Looking into design discourses

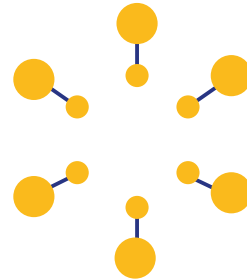
When disputing different design discourses I not only tried to visualise their intentions but also suggested Inclusive Design as a possible interface of Universal Design and Escobar's design for the pluriverse.



*designing one
solution for all*

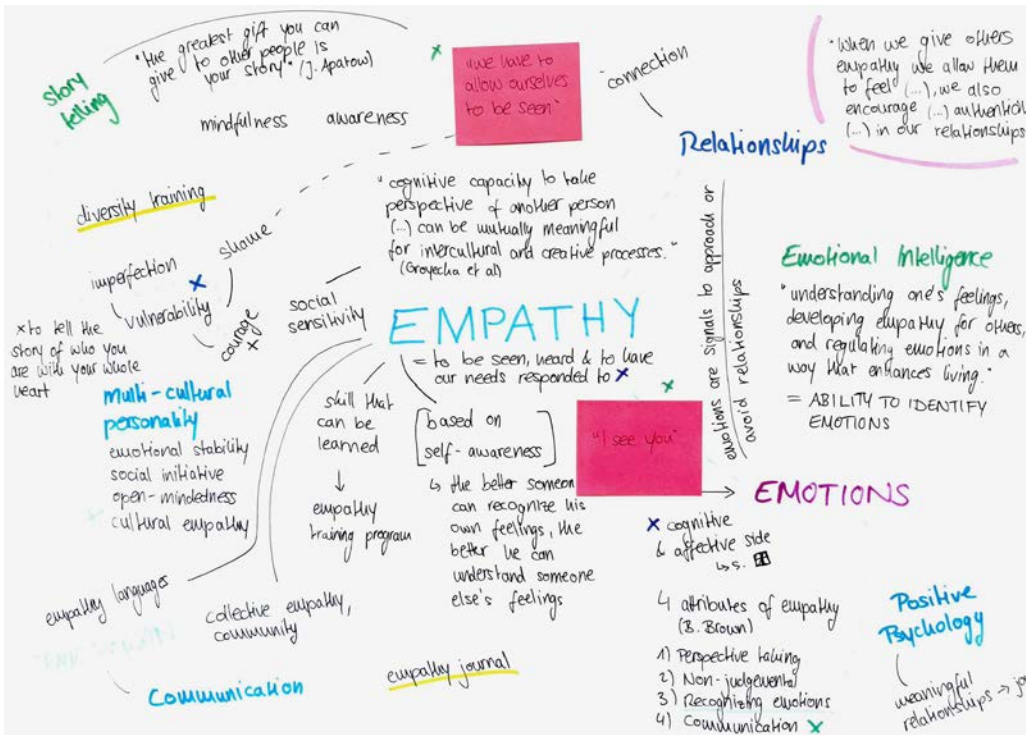
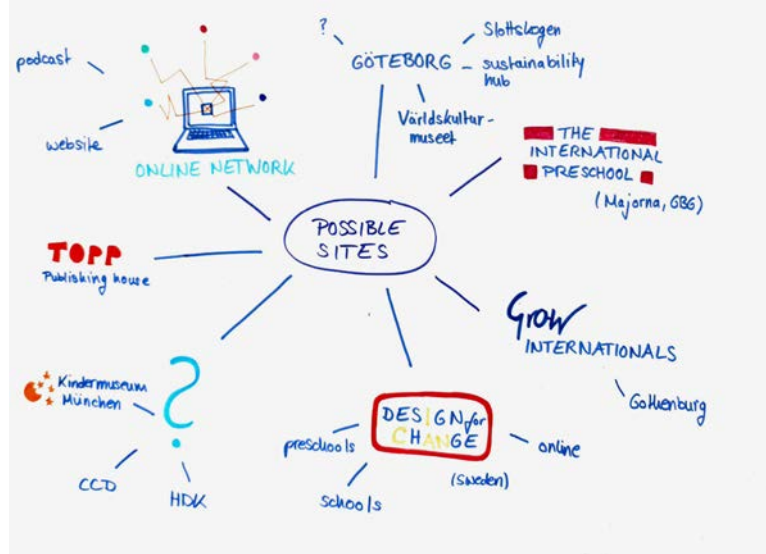


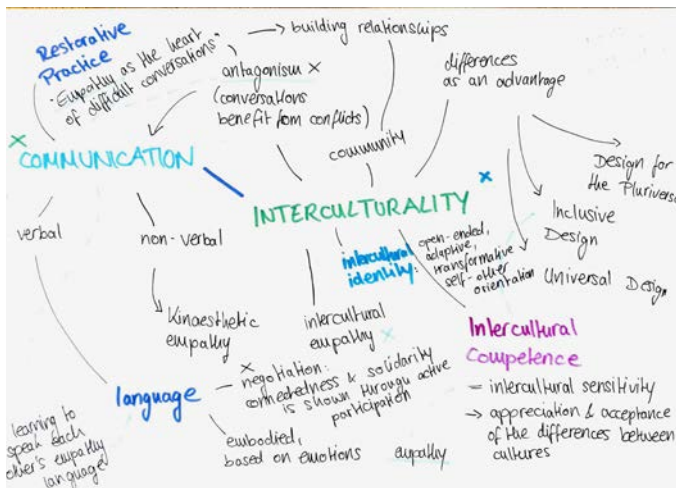
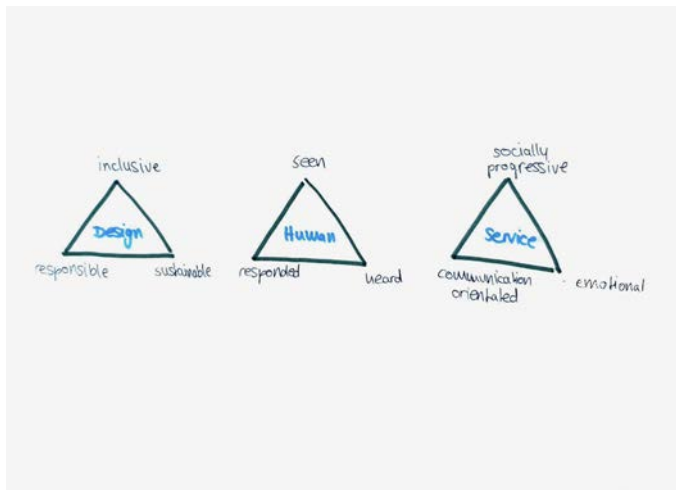
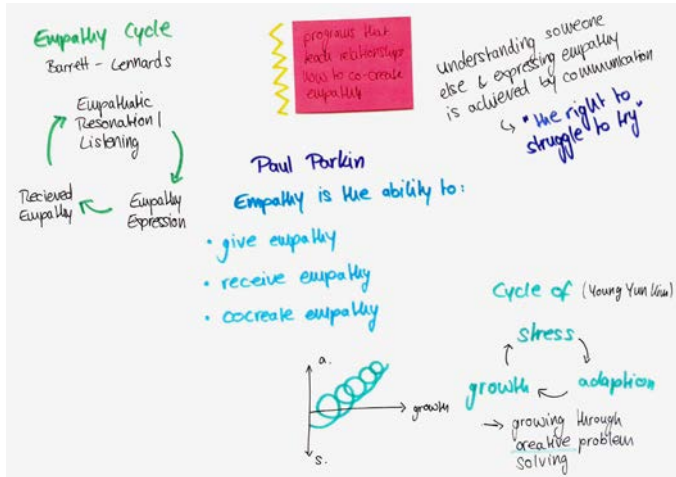
*designing for one,
then expanding to many*



*seeing the whole and
designing for one*

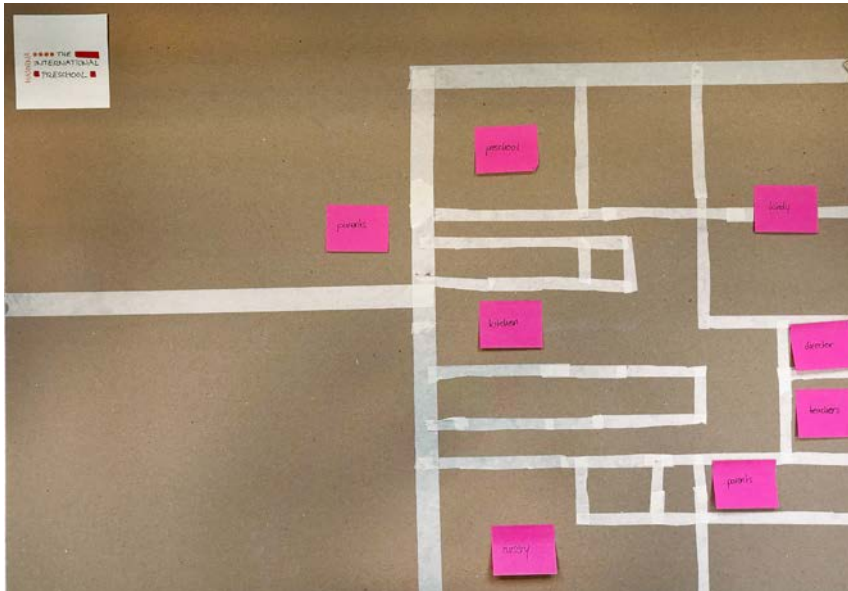
Mappings





What is taking place?

While reflecting upon the received empathy in my every day life I also mapped out the floorplan of the International Preschool Majorna, Gothenburg. I tried to look behind the obvious and asked “What is going on?” and in a second step “What is really going on?”. Thereby I literally investigated where empathy can take place on this site.



WHAT IS TAKING PLACE?
IPS Majorna

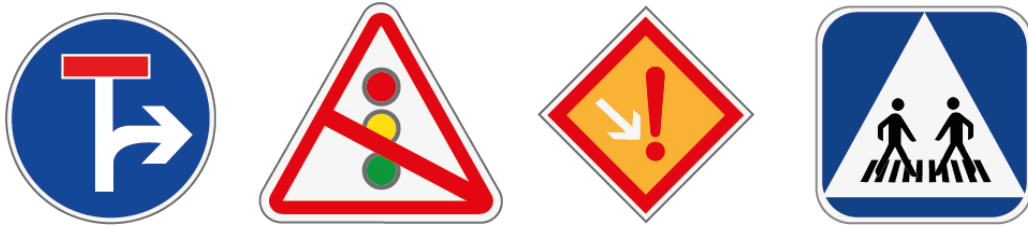
- open-minded
- accepting
- understanding
- global
- learning through play & exploration
- social development
- emotional development
- multicultural
- bilingual
- diversity
- knowledge
- curiosity
- respect
- empathy skills
- understanding & managing feelings
- harmony
- inclusion
- curiosity
- creativity

WHAT IS REALLY TAKING PLACE?
IPS Majorna

- shortage of teachers
- shortage of time
 - ↳ daily routines have to be followed
- stress
- monotonous
- bad balance of autonomous & instructed play
- children being left out
- insufficient sense of community
- missing communication with the parents
- insufficient capacities to support children with disabilities
- language difficulties

Visualising empathy

“The Empathy Spectrum”, my photographic journal, made me aware of the signs that try to regulate social interactions. I also understood that it is easier to establish new knowledge when it is based on something familiar. These insights informed this experiment where I redesigned common traffic signs to explain Brenè Browns four aspects of empathy: perspective taking, no judgement, recognising emotions, and communicating understanding.



PHOTOGRAPHY AS A DESIGN METHOD

- 2b) - change perspective
- observing
 - spotting details
 - finding (unexpected) connections
 - focusing
 - sharpening my sight
 - increase consciousness
 - consuming mindfully
 - documenting
 - reflecting upon the produced material
 - ↳ circulation (narration)

photos as:

- snapshots / examples of multiple similar situations
- material evidence
- expression of interests
- connectors: → seeing → understanding → realising → finding, leading to

- 3) - using different tools, e.g. prismas
- different focus points, e.g. nature, people, objects
 - comparing, e.g. Where does empathy exist? Where has empathy been sabotaged? Why? Where is empathy missing? Why? Where does someone/something need help with expressing empathy? Where are well meant attempts of empathy that do not work? Why?

How?

→ Photography as a method to spot [empathy] to then think further: Where leads to Why/How and What/What (narration)

e.g. Times routes

- interacting instead of silently observing?
- focusing on (objects for) children

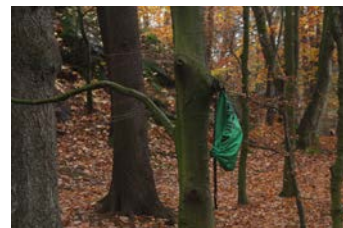
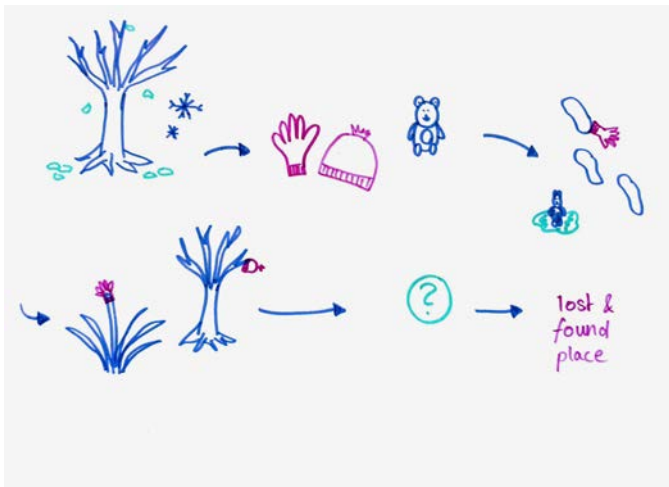
- awareness for empathy (aim & purpose)
- understanding & solidarity
- photography as an interface of the matter and a trigger for behavioural change

TO THINK ABOUT

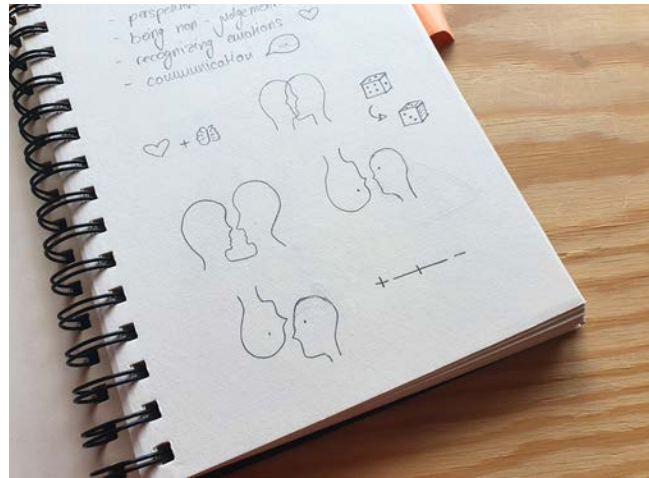
- + Is that method inclusive?
- How to focus on different cultures?
- How to support the development of identity & emotional intelligence?

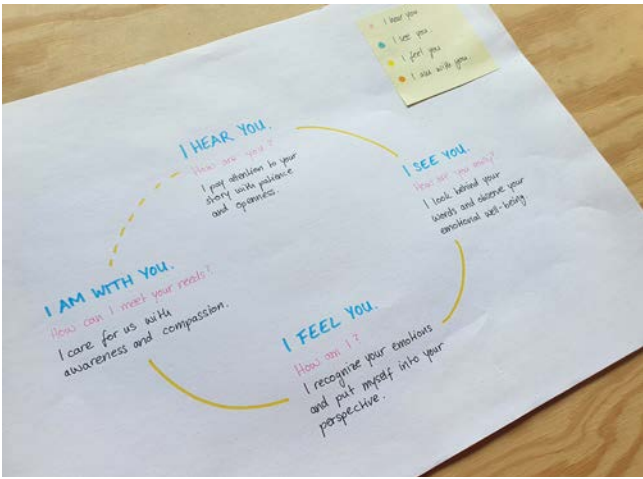
Lost and Found intervention

As another result of my photographic journal I developed an idea for an intervention in one Gothenburg's parks, Sklottskogen. Since I found so many lost belongings that people had picked up and carefully placed for their owners to find them again, I wanted to support this empathetic behaviour. I proposed to create a specific place that would make it easier for the owners to find their belongings again. Having such a "lost and found" station would encourage more people to take care of their own and others' objects.

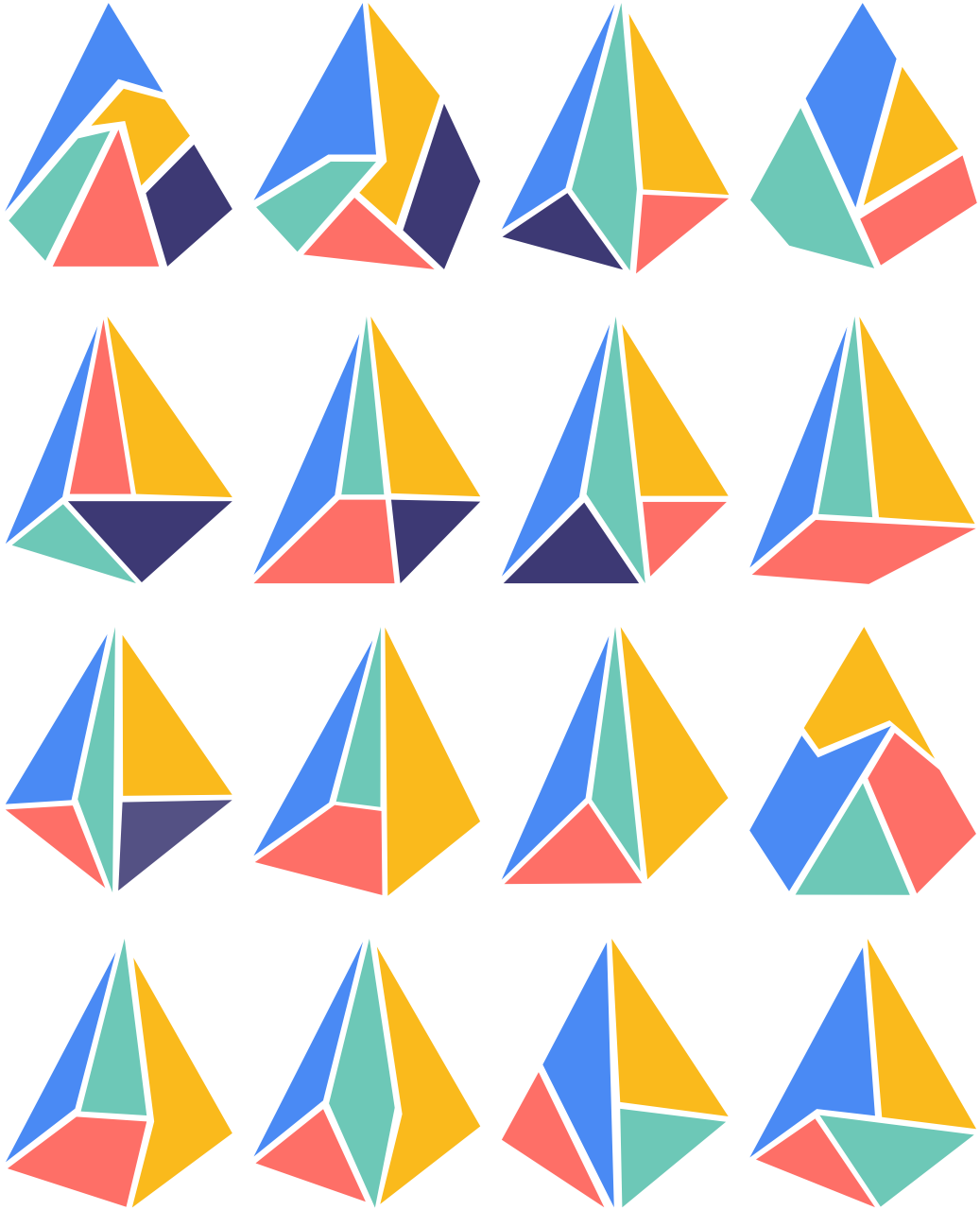


Materialising beEmpathy





Logo variations



Typeface variations



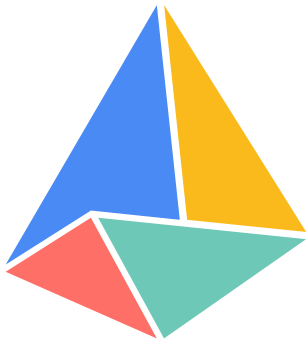
be Empathy



be Empathy



be Empathy



be Empathy

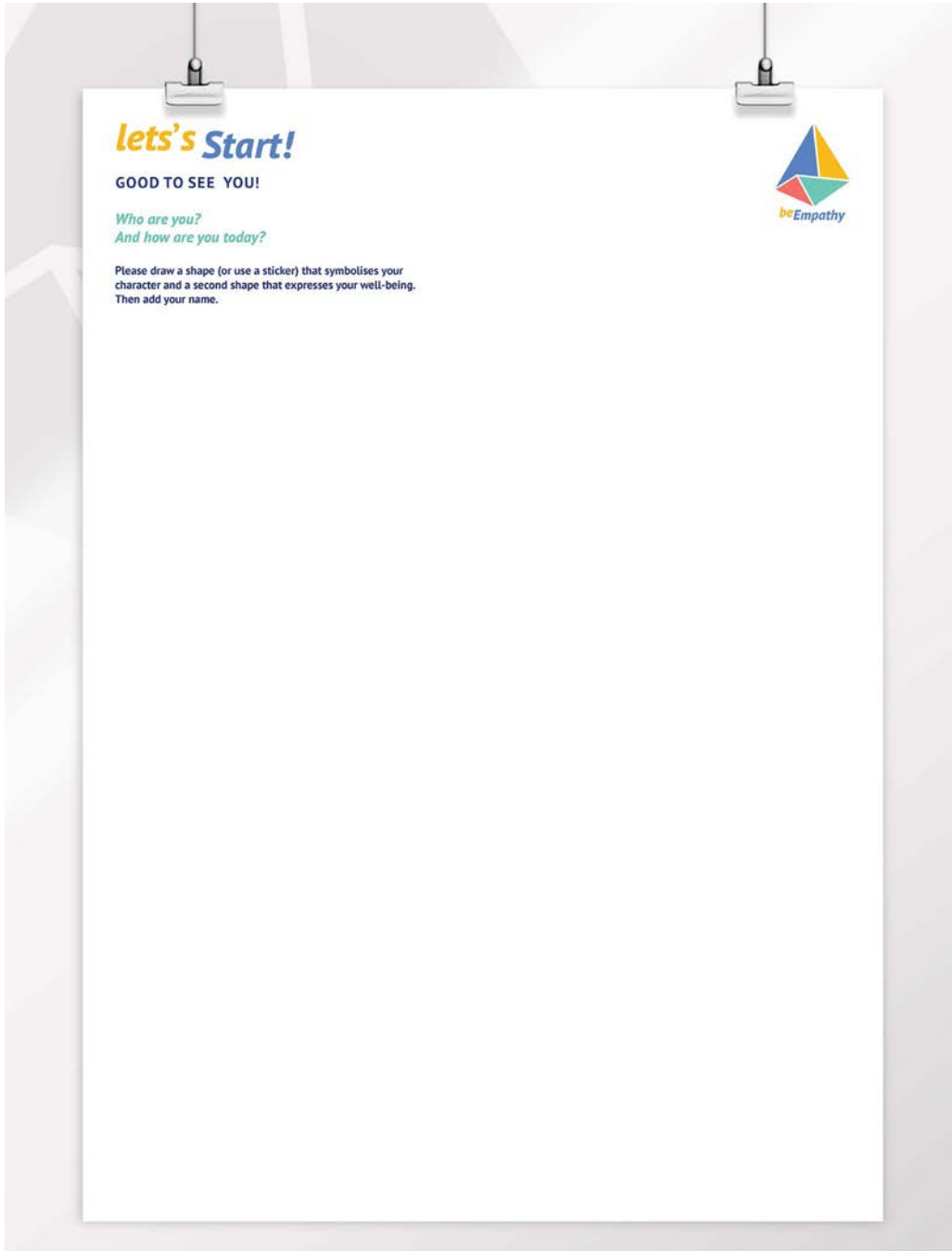


be Empathy



be Empathy

8.10 *beEmpathy* MATERIAL: COPY TEMPLATES, WEBSITE, TOOLBOX, EXTRA MATERIAL







empathy Map

I HEAR YOU.

Who are you? What are you saying?
Experiences | Thoughts | Values | Worries | Wishes

I SEE YOU.

What are you doing?
Tone of Voice | Eye Contact | Attitude and Actions | Mimic

I AM WITH YOU.

What do you need?
Relationships | Future Perspectives | Obstacles | Change

I FEEL YOU.

How are you feeling?
Emotions | Well-Being | Motivations | Influences

empathy Map reflection

I HEAR YOU.

Who is that person?
What is her/his story?

I AM WITH YOU.

What is important for her/him?
How can you support her/him?

STEP 1: I hear you.

How are you?

I pay attention to your story with patience and openness.

STEP 2: I see you.

How are you really?

I look behind your words and observe your emotional well-being.

- T. tone of voice
- E. eye contact
- A. attitude and actions
- M. mimic

STEP 4: I am with you.

How can I meet your needs?

I care for us with awareness and compassion.

be Empathy



STEP 3: I feel you.

How am I?

I recognize your emotions and put myself into your perspective.



beEmpathy

STEP 1: I hear you.

How are you?

I pay attention to your story with patience and openness.



beEmpathy

STEP 2: I see you.

How are you really?

I look behind your words and observe your emotional well-being.

- T. tone of voice
- E. eye contact
- A. attitude and actions
- M. mimic



beEmpathy

STEP 4: I am with you.

How can I meet your needs?

I care for us with awareness and compassion.



beEmpathy

STEP 3: I feel you.

How am I?

I recognize your emotions and put myself into your perspective.



HOW DO I EXPERIENCE MYSELF?

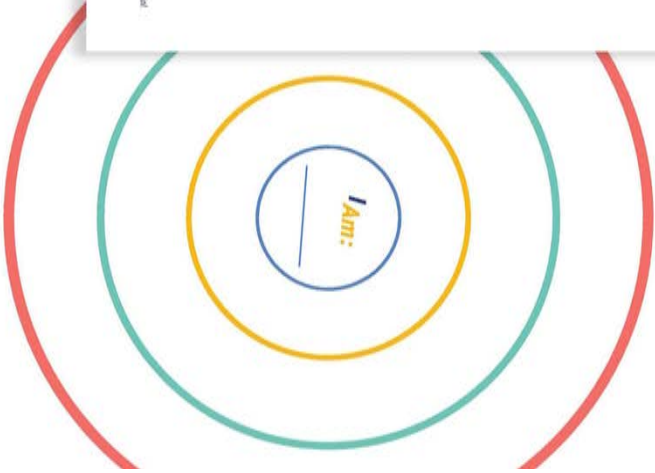
We live in an increasingly multicultural world. We live in constant relationships with each other. But diversity is not only around us, it's also inside us. We are all made up of different experiences that start to look at our own relationships and multicultural selves. Everyone is part of different groups that interact with each other. Right now you are part of your class. But you are more than that. Maybe you are also a big sister? A goalkeeper? Maybe you like to draw. Or you are a very good listener. This exercise is meant to visualize your multicultural identity. Who are you?

1. Start with writing your name in the smallest circle. This is you.
2. Now zoom out a little. What does the second circle represent?
3. Within which other groups do you see yourself? Continue to fill the circles. You can add more circles or map out different attributes within one circle. There is no right or wrong. Trust yourself and what comes to your mind.

SOME QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU:

- Within which group do you feel safe and comfortable?
- Who are your good at?
- Which character traits do you especially like about yourself?
- In which group would you like to make more people?
- Whom do you feel proud to be a member of a certain group?
- Which group do you like to be a member of?
- How do you want others to encounter your groups?
- Which groups are connected?

Inspired by Jonathan Cohen, *Embracing Mind and Heart, Social Emotional Learning and the Power of a Mindset*



you're Multicultural



HOW DO OTHERS EXPERIENCE ME?

It's all natural that others experience us differently. That's because they have another perspective. Their view can be very interesting and valuable for us to develop ourselves further.

1. Give this sheet of paper to your partner.
2. Now, it's their turn to fill in your multicultural circles.
3. When you are both done with each other's sheets, exchange them again.
4. Read through your partner's contributions.
5. Talk about them! What's different?

QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU FILLING IN YOUR PARTNER'S CIRCLES:

- What do you like about your partner?
- What do you think your partner is good at?
- What do you see in your partner?
- Where do you see differences?
- Which group would you like to join?

QUESTIONS FOR THE DISCUSSION:

- What do you have in common?
- Where do you see differences?
- Are you different from each other?
- Would you like to connect some groups?
- Did you get to know something new about yourself?
- Did you get to know something new about your partner?
- What do you think about your partner's contributions?
- Do you agree?

Facilitated by Jonathan Cohen, "Educating Minds and Hearts, Social Emotional Learning and the Passage into Adulthood"





How do you feel? Name your basic emotion(s): joy, sadness, fear, anticipation, trust, surprise, disgust, anger. Then try to be more specific. How do you really feel? The last step is to think about your reaction. How can you express or support yourself?

	DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5
basic	blue	yellow	green	red	blue
specific	blue	yellow	green	red	blue
reaction	blue	yellow	green	red	blue
basic	blue	yellow	green	red	blue
specific	blue	yellow	green	red	blue
reaction	blue	yellow	green	red	blue
basic	blue	yellow	green	red	blue
specific	blue	yellow	green	red	blue
reaction	blue	yellow	green	red	blue

How are you today?

step 3
I FEEL YOU.
How am I?
I recognize your emotions and put myself into your perspective.
What do you experience when putting yourself in someone else's perspective?

Use Empathy

step 4
I AM WITH YOU.
How can I meet your needs?
I care for your interests and compassion.
What do you experience when meeting someone else's needs?

5 day REFLECTION
How did it feel to be empathetic?
How did it feel to be empathetic with yourself?
How can you use empathy in the future?

step 1
I HEAR YOU.

How are you?
I pay attention to your story with patience and openness.
What do you experience when hearing someone else's story?

step 2
I SEE YOU.

How are you really?
I look behind your words and observe your emotional well-being.
What do you experience when seeing someone else's emotions?

step 3
I FEEL YOU.

How am I?
I recognize your emotions and put myself into your perspective.
What do you experience when putting yourself in someone else's perspective?

step 4
I AM WITH YOU.

How can I meet your needs?
I care for your interests and compassion.
What do you experience when meeting someone else's needs?

basicEmotions



JOY

a feeling of great happiness or pleasure



SADNESS

a feeling of being unhappy, especially frightened or worried by something dangerous, painful, or bad that is happening or might happen



FEAR

a feeling of being frightened or worried by something dangerous, painful, or bad that is happening or might happen



ANTICIPATION

a feeling of excitement about something that is going to happen in the near future



TRUST

a feeling of safety and reliability; to believe that someone is good and honest and will not harm you



SURPRISE

a feeling caused by something unexpected happening



DISGUST

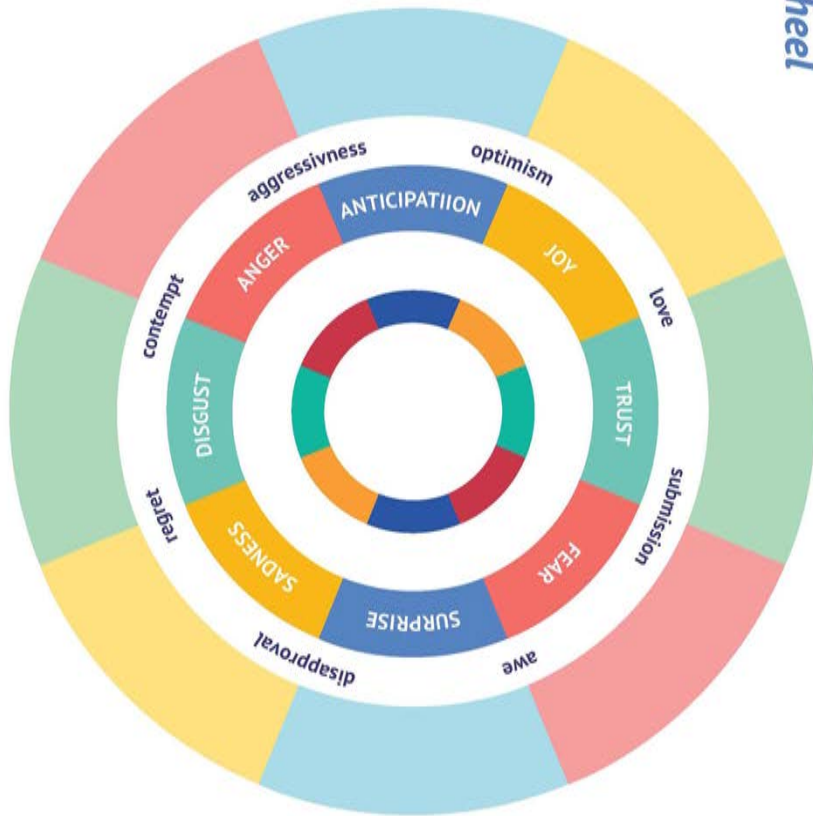
a strong feeling of disapproval and dislike



ANGER

a feeling of dislike and annoyance caused by unfair, painful, or bad happenings

emotion Wheel



emotional Awareness

Find an example for all basic emotions. What makes you experience trust?
How can you react when you feel angry? Or why do you cry when you are sad?



What is happening?
trigger situation

What does your mind tell you?
cognitive reaction

What does your body tell you?
emotional reaction

How do you react?
behavioral reaction

Why do you react like this?
function



JOY



SADNESS



FEAR



ANTICIPATION



TRUST



SURPRISE



DISGUST



ANGER

_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____





emotion Map

HOW DO YOU FEEL IN YOUR CLASSROOM?

1. Make a sketch of your classroom on the back of this sheet.
2. Capture those elements that are important for you.
3. Find a colour for each of the eight emotions below and mark them accordingly.
4. Move through your classroom. Experience it with your body.
5. Stop and pay attention to your emotions. How do you feel here? How do you feel over there?
5. Mark your emotions in your sketch. Add elements that you didn't consider earlier.

Remember:
How your sketch looks like is not important. Use words, symbols, lines or whatever seems good and doable to you.

Here I feel happy. Here I feel soft. Here I feel afraid. Here I feel surprised.

Here I feel sad. Here I feel disgusted. Here I feel angry. Here I feel hopeful.

emotion Map reflection

HOW DO YOU FEEL IN YOUR CLASSROOM?

Where do you feel happy? Safe? Afraid? Surprised?
Where do you feel sad? Disgusted? Angry? Hopeful?

Why do you feel happy there? Safe? Afraid? Surprised?
Why do you feel sad there? Disgusted? Angry? Hopeful?

Which of those emotions are positive for you?
Would you like to be more specific about some emotions?

What could be changed to feel less negative emotions?
What could be changed to feel more positive emotions?



changeMaker

CLASSROOM RECREATION



WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO CHANGE IN YOUR CLASSROOM?

DO YOU HAVE AN IDEA HOW TO CHANGE IT?

I LIKE THIS IDEA:

idea 1

idea 2

idea 3

idea 4

idea 5



classroom Recreation

MY SUGGESTIONS FOR OUR NEW CLASSROOM

What would you like to change about your classroom?
Make a new sketch and rearrange its elements in a way that would make you feel better.

Remember:
How your sketch looks like is not important. Use words, symbols, lines or whatever seems good and doable to you.





interplay Construction GAME RULES

PREPARATION

1. Collect different materials. Look around your classroom, the school. What can you find? Compile a good selection of paper, cardboard, strings, wood, tubes, toilet paper rolls, chairs, fabric, and all kinds of things that can be creatively repurposed.
2. Create free space in your classroom. Remove furniture and other things that you don't want to work with now.
3. Build groups of 2 to 4 students. Every group finds a spot in the classroom where it has enough space to get creative.
4. Every group should have access to building tools like scissors, tape, nails, hammer, etc.

THE CONSTRUCTION

interplayConstruction is about building together without knowing what kind of construction. It is about empathic communication, teamwork, and creative problem solving.

1. Every participant gets a card that will tell them what to build.
2. The participants read the instructions silently and don't talk about their tasks.
3. They give back their cards. Once everyone is ready the construction starts.
If wanted, you can play silent music in the background. This serves as an acoustic signal that tells the participants when to start, build, and come to an end.
4. Now the building takes place. The members of one group are all building one construction together. During the process, they are encouraged to interact with each other. But they are not allowed to talk. The participants should find a way to fulfill their tasks together.
5. After 0.5 to 1 hour the construction stops. The participants put their materials and tools aside.

DISCUSSION ROUND 1

6. The groups gather around their construction.
7. Each group member shares with the others what their task was and how they implemented it.

Here are some questions that can help during discussion round 1:

*What was your task?
How did you implement your task?*

*Why did you implement it like that?
What did you want to show with your construction?*

DISCUSSION ROUND 2

8. The participants talk about their experiences during the construction.

Here are some questions that can help during discussion round 2:

*Was the task difficult?
How was it not being allowed to talk?
How was it not to know what your team members were building?
Which difficulties appeared?
How did you solve those challenges?*

DISCUSSION ROUND 3

9. The participants discuss their construction and how to present it to the other teams.

Here are some questions that can help during discussion round 3:

*What did we create together?
How does it look like?
Which happenings positively influenced the final construction?
What does our construction represent?
How do we want to present it to the other teams?*

THE EXHIBITION

10. Once the groups finished round 3, everyone is invited to explore all constructions. The participants go through the room and silently visit each others' constructions.

TIDY UP

11. After the exhibition everyone helps to clean up the materials and tools.
12. Finally, the groups take care of their constructions and find a place where they can be further exhibited.



beApathy

DO YOU WANT TO BE APATHETIC? HERE IS WHAT TO DO:



- 1** Never allow or respect dissenting opinions and impressions. Strictly avoid taking a different perspective. You are always right. Don't even try to understand someone else. Especially not his or her feelings.
- 2** Be as cold as ice. Be selfish. Egoistic. And filled with hatred. Treat other persons like your worst enemies. Under no circumstances, treat them like you want to be treated.
- 3** Neglect your own needs and emotions. They will potentially hinder you from following the straight way of life.
- 4** Interrupt open-hearted talks and change the topic to something less sensitive. Tell the other person that he or she is alone with what he or she is going through.
- 5** Always put your schedule first. Patience and mindfulness will only delay it. Watch out to not accidentally care for people and experiences that aren't useful for you.
- 6** Do not listen. In case it happens unintentionally, only listen to what has been said. Body language and hidden emotions are only irrelevant human errors.
- 7** Judge as much as you possibly can. The other person has to know that he or she is not allowed to feel that way. You strongly disagree with everything.
- 8** Immediately make every conversation about you. That's most important. Eliminate the following traits: responsibility, compassion, and kindness. It is especially effective to not ask any questions.
- 9** Do you have an idea about how to make someone else feel better? Keep it a secret. You might even want to give the person a contrasting advice that makes him or her feel worse. Help and support are just arduous tasks.
- 10** Keep everything superficial. It might make a positive difference for you and others to explore thoughts and feelings. You don't want that. Never.

empathyMisses

"Developing an understanding of the common empathy misses can help us learn how to show accurate empathy."



Reference: Brené Brown, *daringclassrooms*



1 *Friend A:* "I am frustrated and sad. Yesterday, I had another argument with my parents. They just don't get me. I feel so misunderstood and don't know what to do."
Friend B: "I feel sorry for you."

2 *Friend A:* "And then I started crying. I hate that! So I ran into my room and told them to leave me alone."
Friend B: "Really? I can't believe you did that!"

3 *Friend A:* "It took me so long to calm down again. I didn't even want to watch a movie anymore."
Friend B: "Oh, I didn't expect that from you. I thought you would always do well."

4 *Friend A:* "Then I just sneaked out of the apartment. I know my parents would probably be super worried. But I just didn't care."
Friend B: "What happened? I mean, what were you thinking?"

5 *Friend A:* "I don't know if my parents really listen to me. I feel like they're always busy with their own things."
Friend B: "Now you're exaggerating! I'm sure it wasn't that bad. Your parents love you!"

6 *Friend A:* "We had argued before but yesterday it was really bad."
Friend B: "That's nothing. Do you know how bad it is when I have an argument with my parents?"

7 *Friend A:* "We haven't talked to each other since then. We didn't even have breakfast together. I don't like that silence."
Friend B: "Okay, but I know what to do! Let me fix it for you!"



empathyMisses

EMPATHY MISSES AND EMPATHETIC ALTERNATIVES



Questions for discussion:

Why was empathy missed here?

How does it feel to receive an empathy miss? (Friend A)

How could an empathic response look like instead? (Friend B)

Do you remember a similar situation?

Knowing what you know now, what would you do differently?

Reference: Brené Brown, *daringclassrooms*

1 SYMPATHY VERSUS EMPATHY

Friend B resonates with sympathy rather than with empathy.

"Empathy is a one-on-one connection because of a deep understanding that comes from sharing an emotional experience. Sympathy is a feeling of sadness or pity felt for another person." Sensitive sympathy can offer support. But it often creates a feeling of alienation. It's better to be authentic and to be empathetic towards the other person's emotions and needs.

(Tchiki Davis, 2020, *Sympathy vs. Empathy, Psychology Today*)

Empathic alternative, Friend B: "I understand. And I feel with you."

2 GASP AND AWE

Friend B feels shame on your behalf.

Instead of figuring out how Friend A can meet her own needs (which is empathy), she will try to make Friend B feel better.

Empathic alternative, Friend B: "What is it you actually wanted your parents to do? What do you need?"

3 THE MIGHTY FALL

Friend B is disappointed in Friend A.

Friend B has high expectations on Friend A and supposed she would do better. Empathy means to allow another person to be vulnerable and be there for her.

Empathic alternative, Friend B: "It's okay to don't always do well. I am still here for you."

7 THE IMMEDIATE PROBLEM SOLVER

Friend B immediately wants to solve Friend A's problems.

Friend B is fast in jumping to conclusions. Instead, he could ask Friend A if and how she like to have help. If she doesn't want help or can't formulate her needs right now, it also means to just be with her and her experience.

Empathic alternative, Friend B: "How can I support you? I can just sit here with you and listen. Or should we try to figure it out together?"

Window & mirror

THE VALUE IS LOOKING. WHAT DO YOU SEE?

1. Look at the pictures and discuss them.

What do you see?

What do you not see?

What happened before the picture was taken?

2. Can you relate to the picture and its meaning?

If you can, it's a "mirror" picture because it reflects your own values or experiences.

If you can't, it's a "window" picture because it shows you a new point of view.

3. Considering that empathy is nothing someone either has or hasn't but a skill that has to be cared about and practised:

Where in the Empathy Spectrum does the picture belong? Place it according to your thoughts.

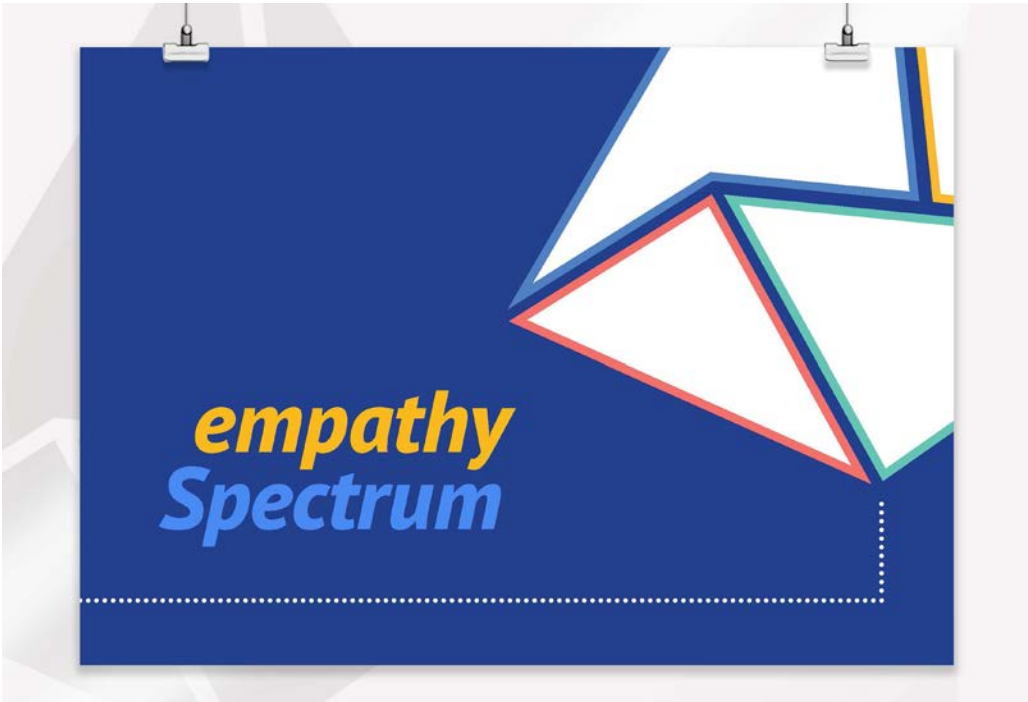
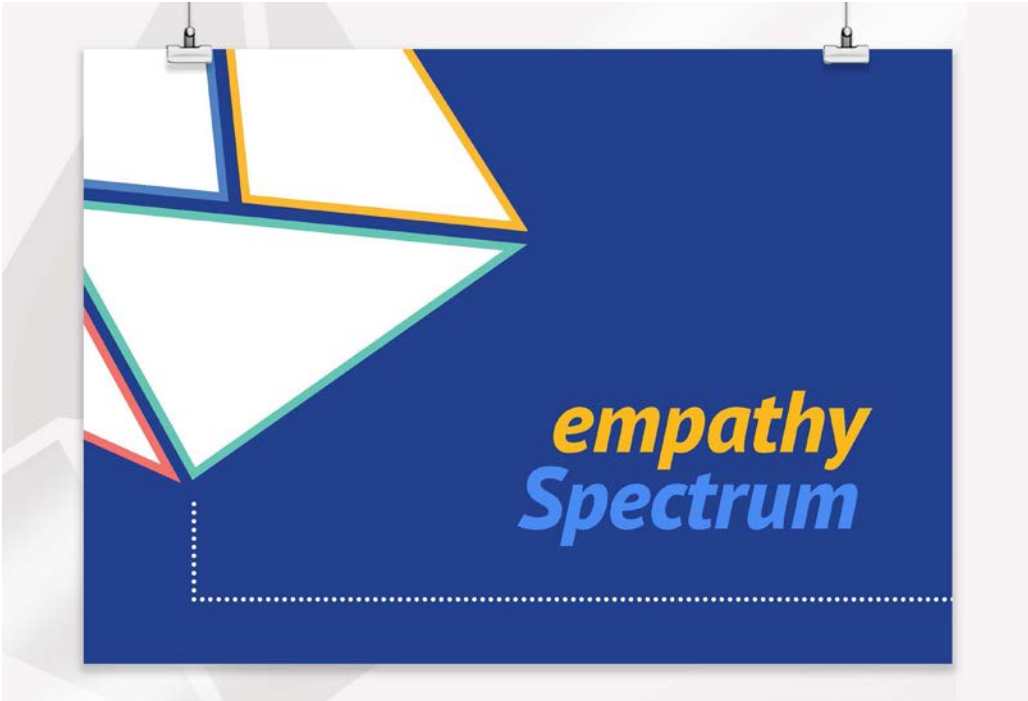
Author: Emily Syle in Jonathon Cohen Teaching Minds and Hearts

Social Emotional Learning and the Passage into Adolescence



supported tree





coCreation

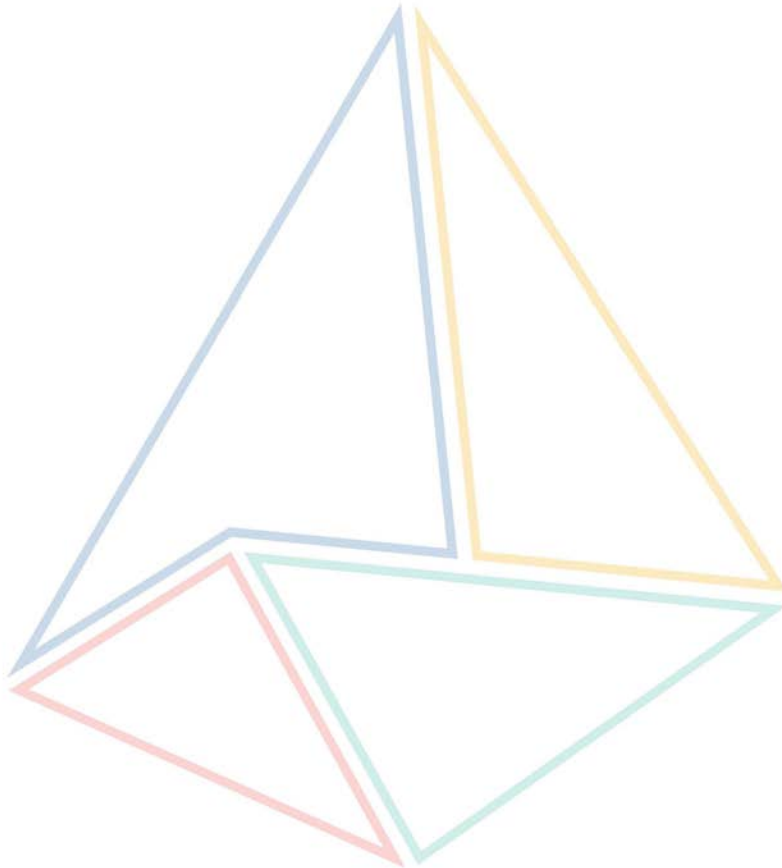
CREATE A PRISM TOGETHER

*How are you today?
How can I be with you?*



Please draw a shape that symbolises your well-being inside the prism.

BUT: Don't just draw it anywhere. Think about where to place it. E.g. is someone having a bad day but you feel good and energised? Maybe you can draw your shape next to the other to show that person that you want to cheer him/her up. Or you decide to place it further away from it because the other person might not want company?





see with your Ears GAME RULES

PREPARATION

1. Build pairs. The participants should sit face-to-face.
2. Each pair gets a big sheet of paper that they place in their midst.
3. Each participant gets a dictionary card, post-its, and a pen. Either the post-its or the pens should have different colours.

ROUND 1

Round 1 is about emotional literacy - being aware of and naming emotions.

1. Participant A chooses one of the words on his dictionary card. He then writes the word on a post-it and places the post-it on the paper.
2. Participant A reads the word again and asks himself: How does the word make me feel?
3. Participant A tries to label the feeling: Is it one of the eight basic emotions? Or is it another emotion?
4. Participant A writes down the emotion on a post-it. If he can't label the emotion, he can ask participant B to help him.
5. Similar to a common domino game, he connects the emotion-post-it with the word-post-it.

6. Now it's participant B's turn.

Option 1: Connecting to the word-post-it

Participant B asks herself: Which emotion does that word arise in me? She labels the emotion, writes it on a post-it and connects it with the word.

Now she has to place a new word. She reads the emotion-post-its again and tries to find a word on her dictionary card that arises the same emotion in her. She writes the word on a post-it and places it next to the emotion-post-it on the paper.

Option 2: Connecting to the emotion-post-it

Participant B asks herself: Which of the words on my dictionary card arises the same emotion in me that participant A has placed on the paper. She chooses a word, writes it on a post-it and connects it with the emotion-post-it.



Now she has to place a new emotion. She reads the words again that have already been placed on the paper. Once she has labeled an emotion for one of the words, she writes it on a post-it and places it next to the word on the paper.

7. Then it's participant A's turn again. The participants continue with step 6 alternately. If they can't place both an emotion and a word, they can also just place one post-it instead. Once each participant has placed ten emotion-post-its, round 1 is finished.

Here are some questions that can help during round 1:

- How do I feel when I read the word ... ?
- Why do I feel ... when I read the word ... ?
- How does my partner feel when reading the word ... ?
- Why does my partner feel ... when reading the word ... ?

ROUND 2

Round 2 is about being empathetic with each other.

The game continues as before. Only now the participants are supposed to place words and emotions for their partner. Based on round 1, they try to make empathetic guesses about the other's response. Once each participant has placed ten emotion-post-its, round 2 is finished. If the participants are unsure they can just ask each other.

Here are some questions that can help during round 2:

- How do you feel about the word ... ?
- Why do you feel ... when you read the word ... ?
- Does the word ... make you feel ... ?

IMPORTANT

The game is best played slowly. It is not about winning but about the conversations the game will evoke. The participants should both pay attention to their own and their partner's emotional responses.



beEmpathy?

What do you think about these empathy definitions?
Where in the Empathy Spectrum would you place them?



1. "I sit with them and their emotions. I see them. I ask how they are and leave space for them to answer."

2. "Treating them like you would want to be treated when you feel like they are feeling now."

3. "Having respect for the other person's feelings, thoughts or experiences without judgement, even if you don't understand them or know how they feel."

4. "All channels of communication are open to receive."

5. "Make people feel safe, seen, heard, and okay with themselves."

6. "Being able to take someone else's perspective, to feel with another person."

7. "Being sensitive to what is going on."

8. "Trying to understand the emotions and behavior of others by imagining oneself in their situation."

9. "Empathy is the ability to read and understand someone's feelings without them saying them out loud."

10. "Allowing yourself and others to express how they feel and being able to understand or accept it."

11. "I can only think of empathy as pity and sympathy."

12. "Being a kind and loving human being."

13. "Being able to imagine how it might be to walk in someone else's shoes."

23. "It's not something you can learn to have."

24. "It must be more normal to be empathetic."

25. "Some people don't have it."



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empathyAgreement



HOW DO YOU AS A CLASS DEFINE EMPATHY?
HOW DO YOU WANT TO PRACTISE EMPATHY TOGETHER?

By now you have discussed different definitions and perceptions of empathy.

To which of them can you relate best?

Which of the different exercises were especially important for you?

Which experiences would you like to integrate in your daily interactions at school?

1. Formulate a definition of empathy that everyone in your class feels comfortable with.
2. Add some examples of what you want to do in order to practise empathy.
3. Is there something else you want to document? Please do! Make this your agreement.
4. Then, everyone signs the agreement.
5. Find a place in your classroom where you can display your poster.

EMPATHY IS ...

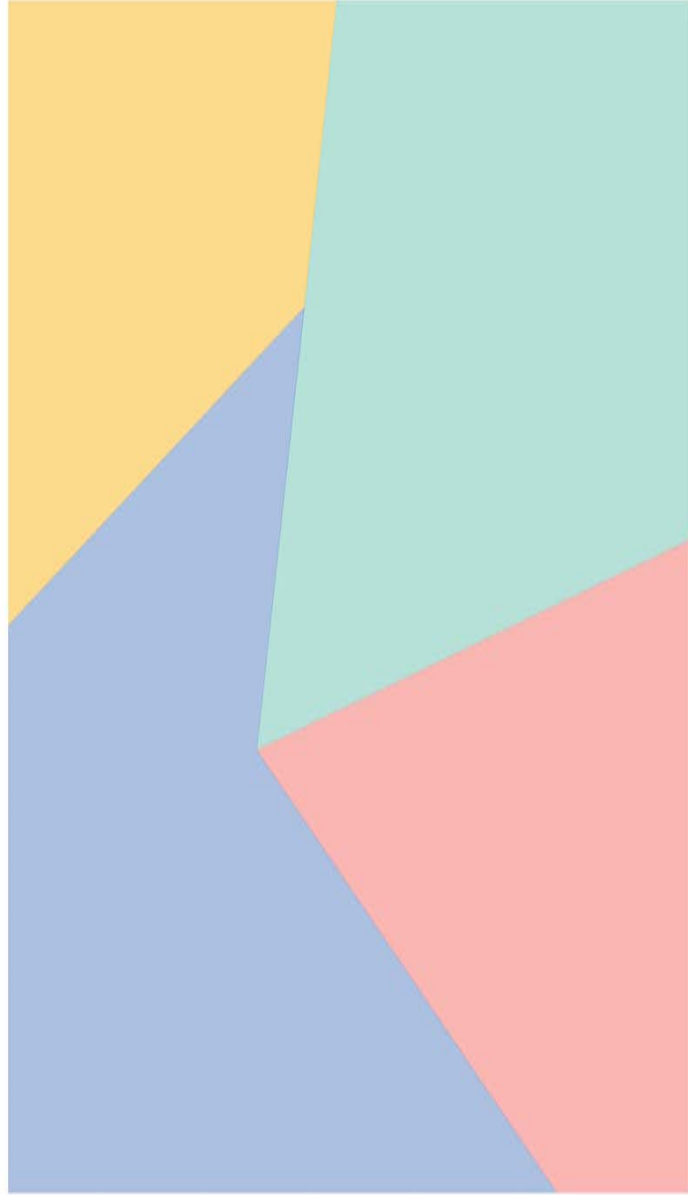
WE WANT TO ...

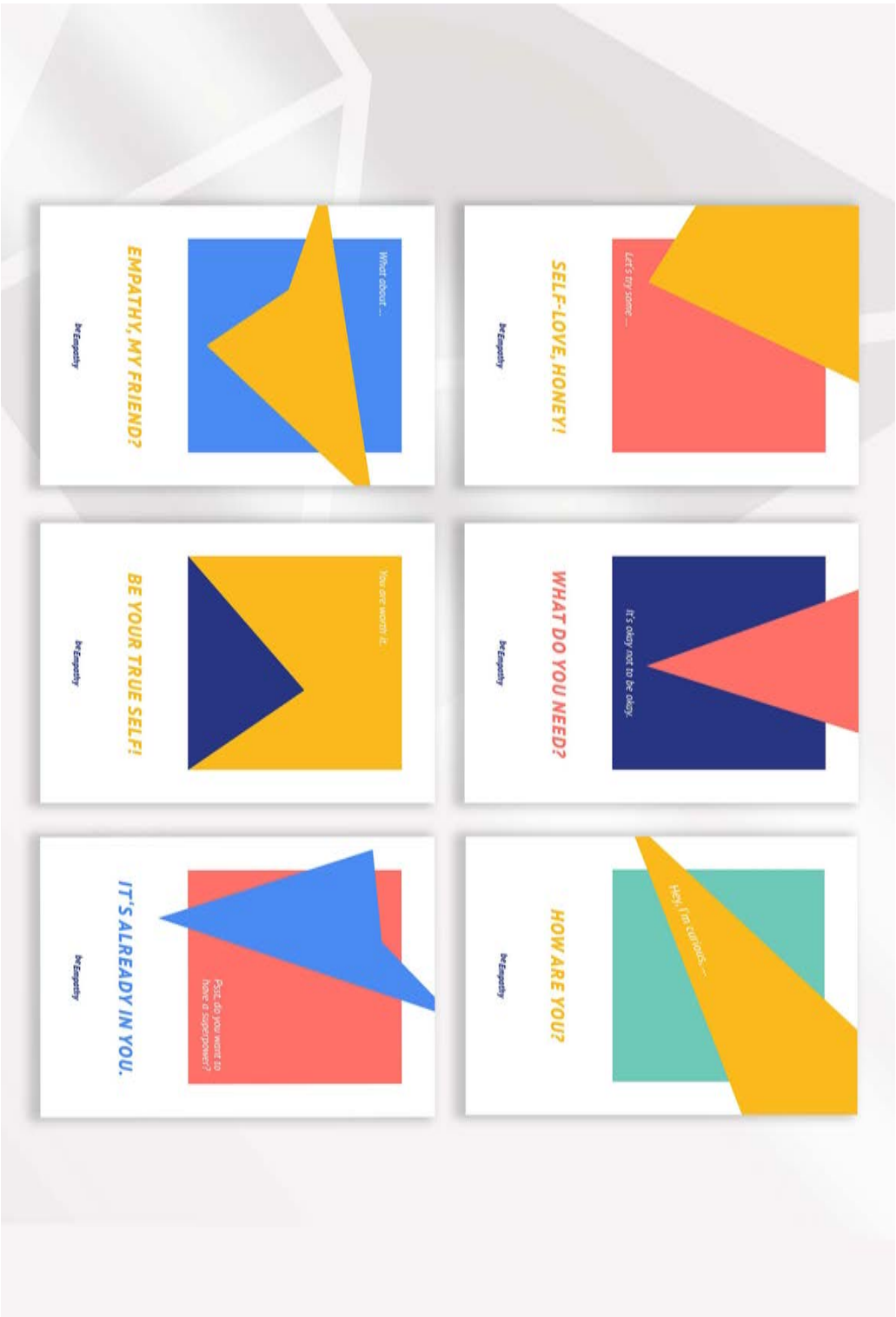
WE AGREE TO PRACTISE EMPATHY:



comfort Case

HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT EACH OTHER WITH EMPATHY?
HOW DOES EMPATHETIC COMMUNICATION LOOK LIKE IN YOUR CLASS?






You are not alone.



I FEEL WITH YOU.

beEmpathy

I care for us.



YOU ARE LOVED.

beEmpathy

We need more of those —




EMOTIONS, PLEASE!

beEmpathy



beEmpathy

You are heard.



WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

beEmpathy

Despite, we have something in common:



WE ARE DIFFERENT!

beEmpathy

reflection 1

HOW HAS THE WORKSHOP BEEN TODAY?

Think about the following questions:

- How was it to share your work being with your classmates?
- Did you get to know something new about yourself?
- Did you get to know something new about your classmates?

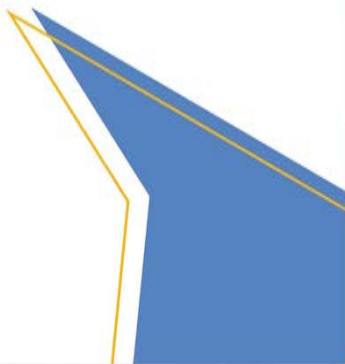
What inspired you today?

Would you like to discuss something further?

What did you like about today?

What would you change about today?

Use post-its to write down your thoughts and ideas.



reflection 4

HOW HAS THE WORKSHOP BEEN TODAY?

Think about the following questions:

- How was it to share your work being with your classmates?
- How was it to notice so and think your reactions?
- Did you get right to talk about your feelings?
- How were your conversations today?
- What do you think about your group's agreement?

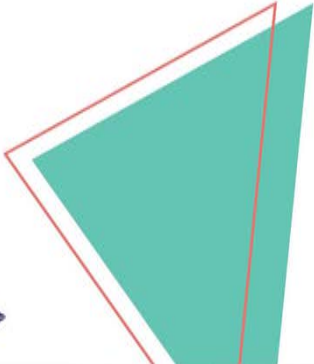
What inspired you today?

Would you like to discuss something further?

What did you like about today?

What would you change about today?

Use post-its to write down your thoughts and ideas.



reflection 2

HOW HAS THE WORKSHOP BEEN TODAY?

Think about the following questions:

- How was it to share your work being with your classmates?
- What messages/feelings did you to share your thoughts with your classmates?
- How do you like the new classroom setting?
- How has the concept of self-empowerment influenced your understanding of empathy?

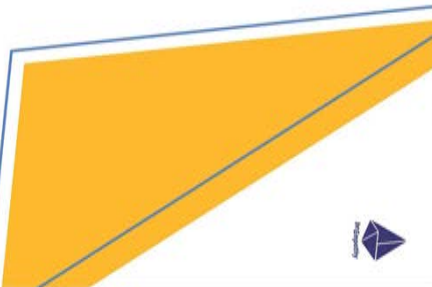
What inspired you today?

Would you like to discuss something further?

What did you like about today?

What would you change about today?

Use post-its to write down your thoughts and ideas.



reflection 3

HOW HAS THE WORKSHOP BEEN TODAY?

Think about the following questions:

- How was it to share your work being with your classmates?
- How was it to communicate without words?
- How does it feel to talk someone's story perspective?

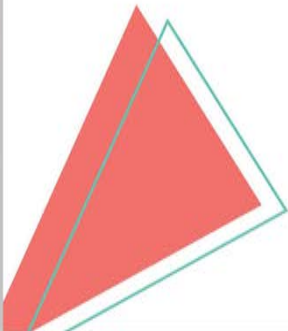
What inspired you today?

Would you like to discuss something further?

What did you like about today?

What would you change about today?

Use post-its to write down your thoughts and ideas.



empathy Ripples

HOW HAS THE WORKSHOP BEEN?

Think about the following questions and take notes while answering them:

How does the beEmpathy framework help you?

Which of its four steps are easy/tricky? And why?

What could you do to make them less tricky?

How has your understanding of empathy changed?

How does it feel to receive empathy?

How does it feel to give empathy?

How does it feel to be empathetic with yourself?

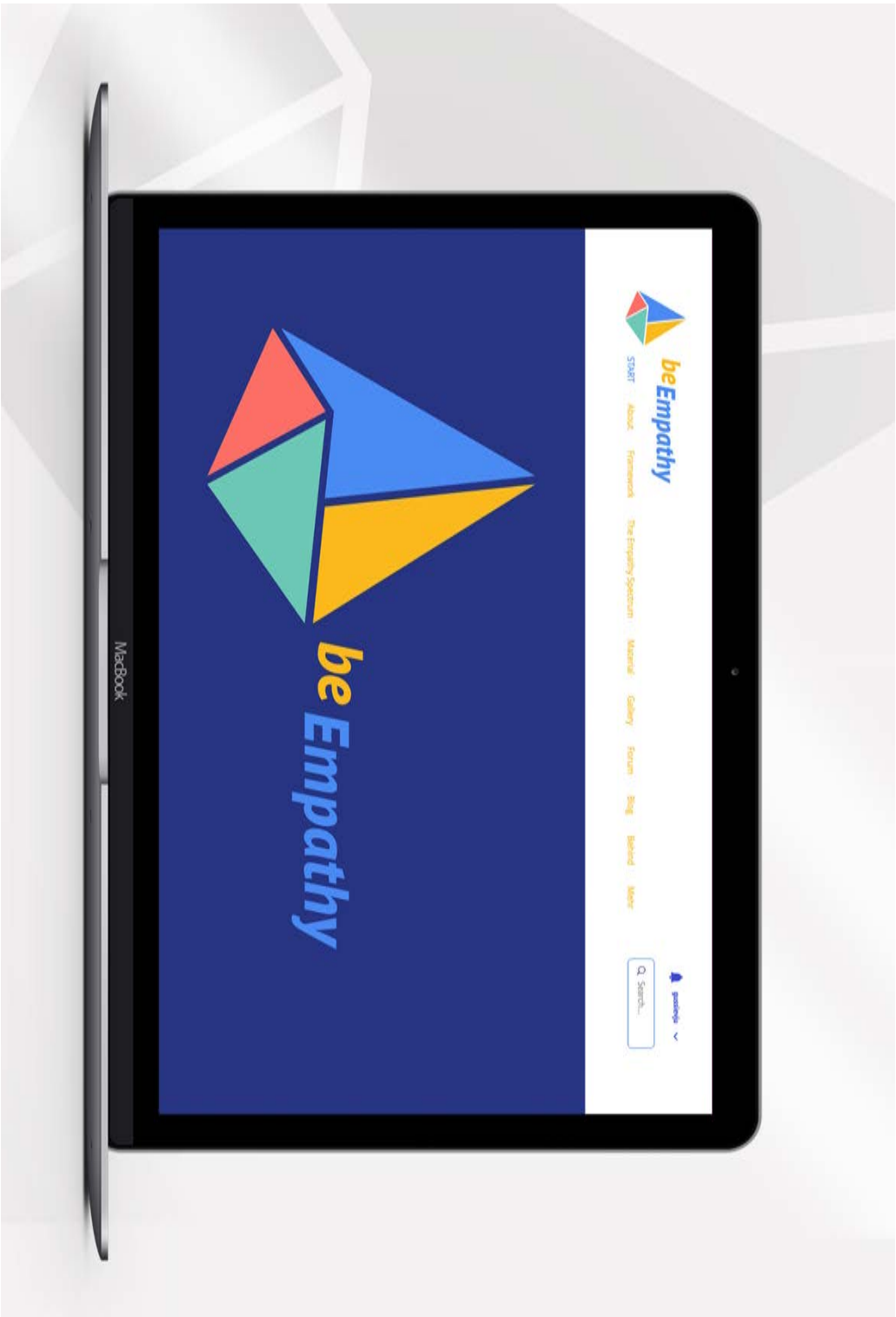
How can you benefit from empathy in the future?

How can you keep fostering empathy in your class/school days?

How can you further establish your classroom as a safe place?

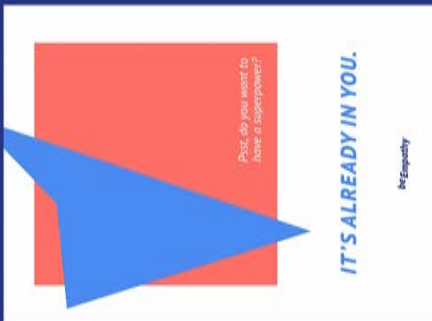
Use your notes to create the empathyCollage.



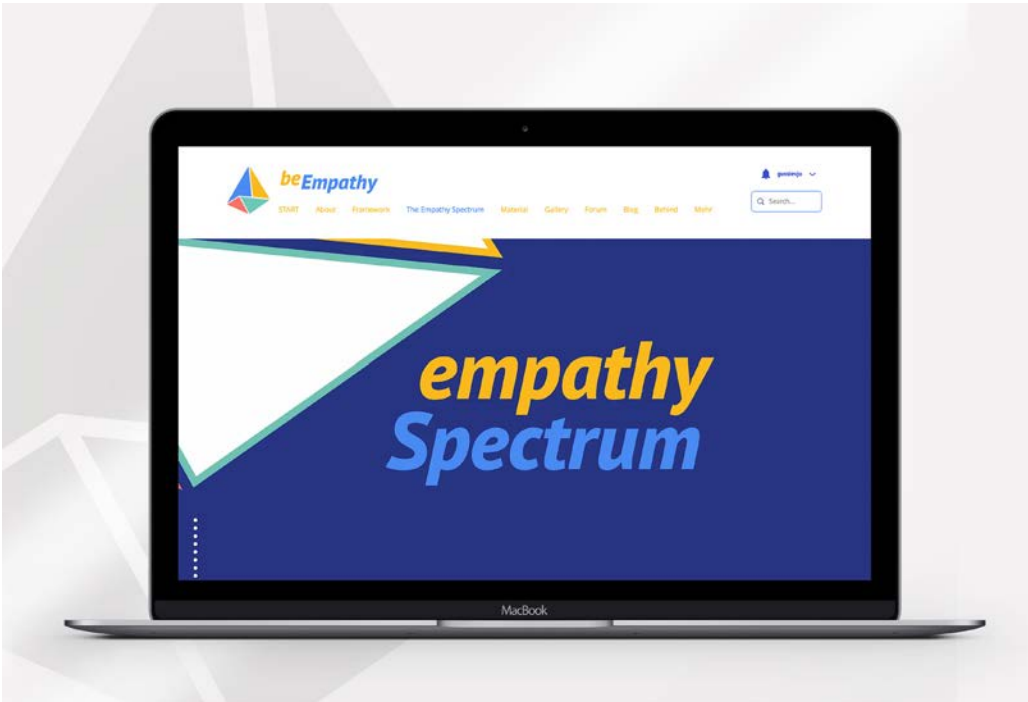
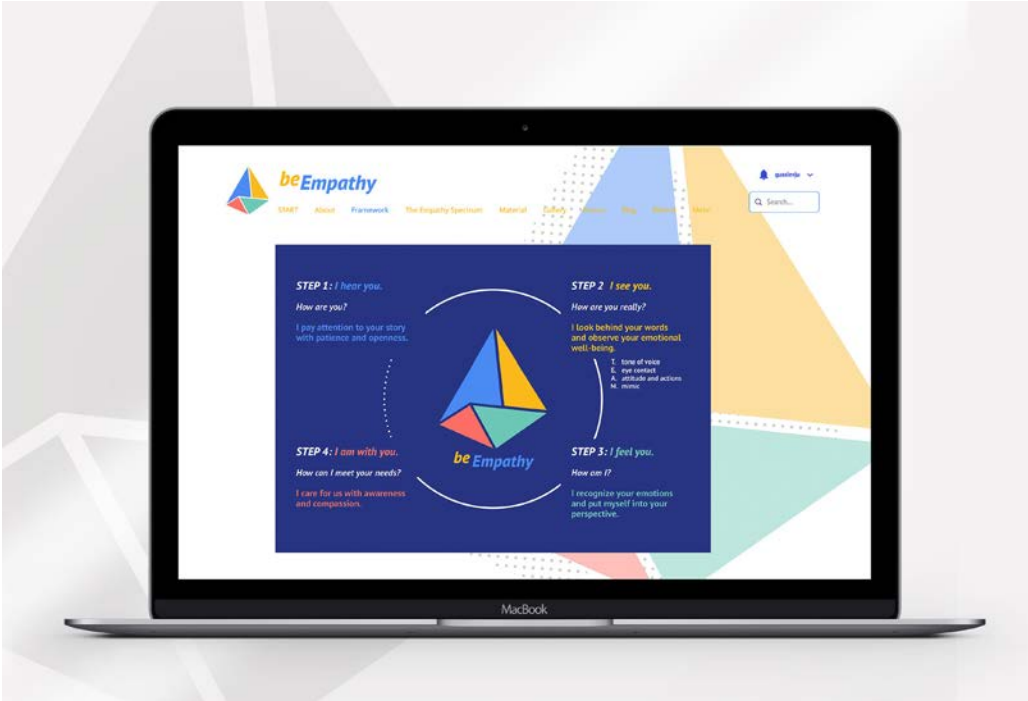


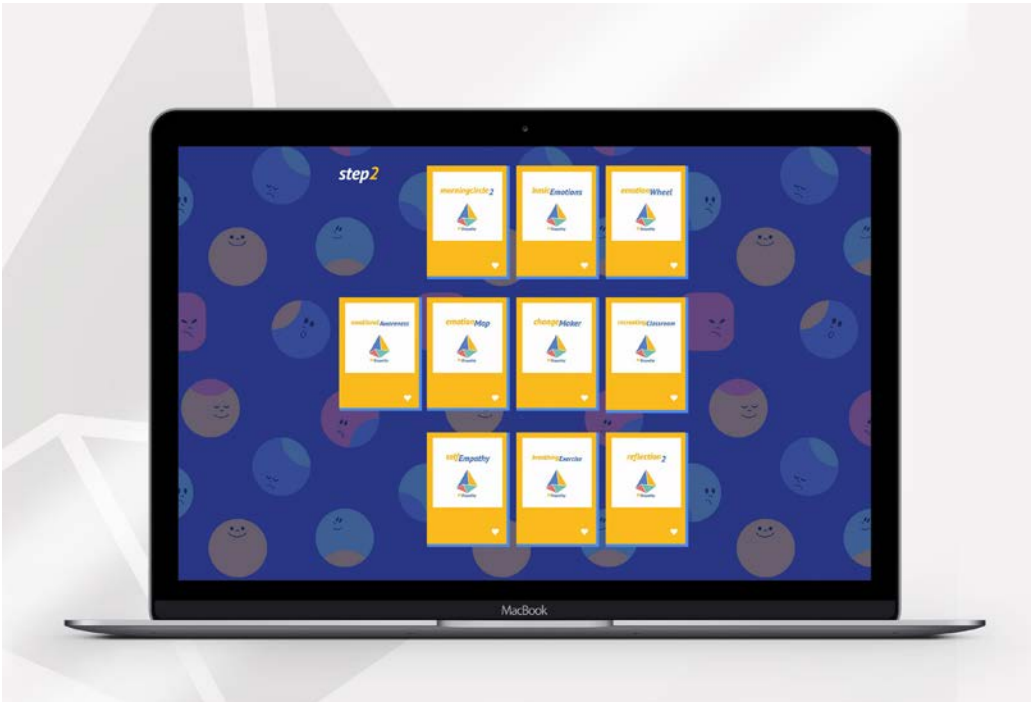
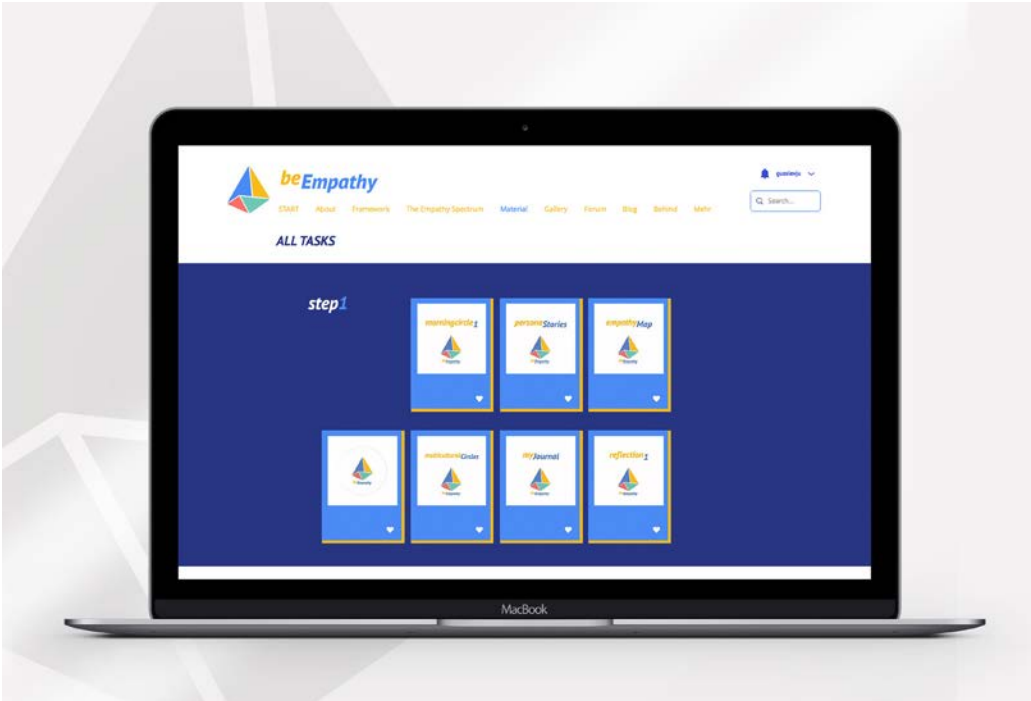
DEAR STUDENTS, DEAR TEACHERS,

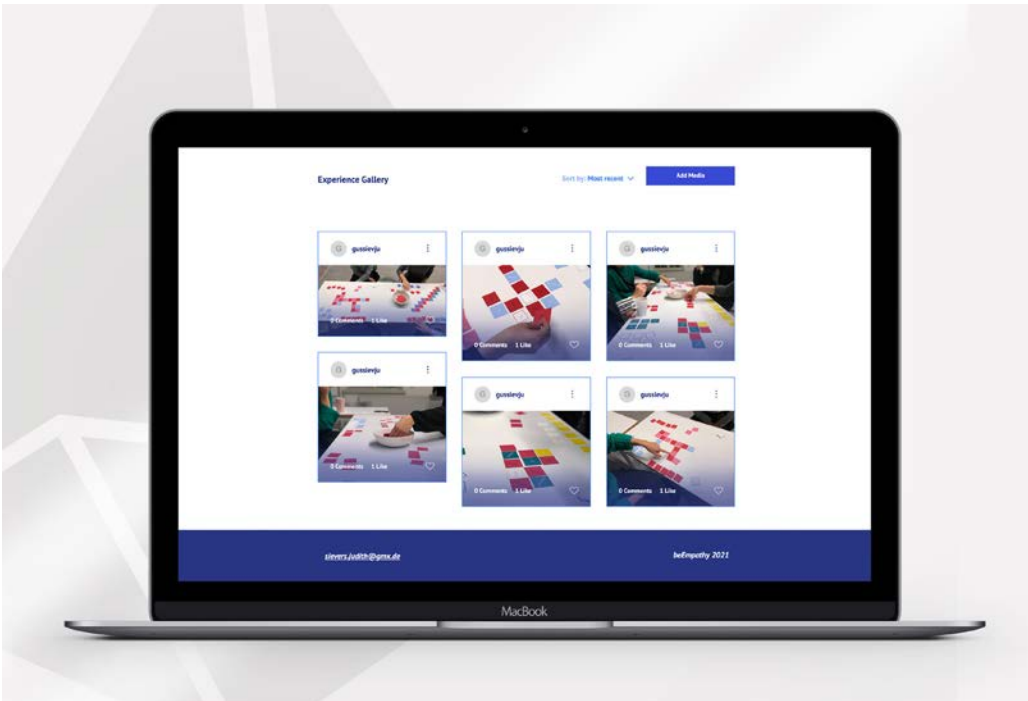
This is your chance to improve your daily school life! In school, you find yourself in uncountable interactions with others. Shouldn't they be as positive as possible? And what about your class room? An atmosphere of trust and safety makes you feel more comfortable. With empathy you can both improve your individual and your collective well-being. How do you do that? With beEmpathy! beEmpathy is a workshop about empathy and emotional awareness. In interactive and playful exercises you can explore different aspects of empathy. You will practice how to support yourself and others. Your class will grow together and build a community of care. beEmpathy encourages you to be confident, to have fun, to make mistakes, and to support each other. Listen, observe, feel - and be with each other! beEmpathy provides both a workshop structure and a pool of exercises. You decide how you want to use it! Make the tasks fit your needs and turn the provided material into your material. You all have the ability for empathy - it just needs to be activated!

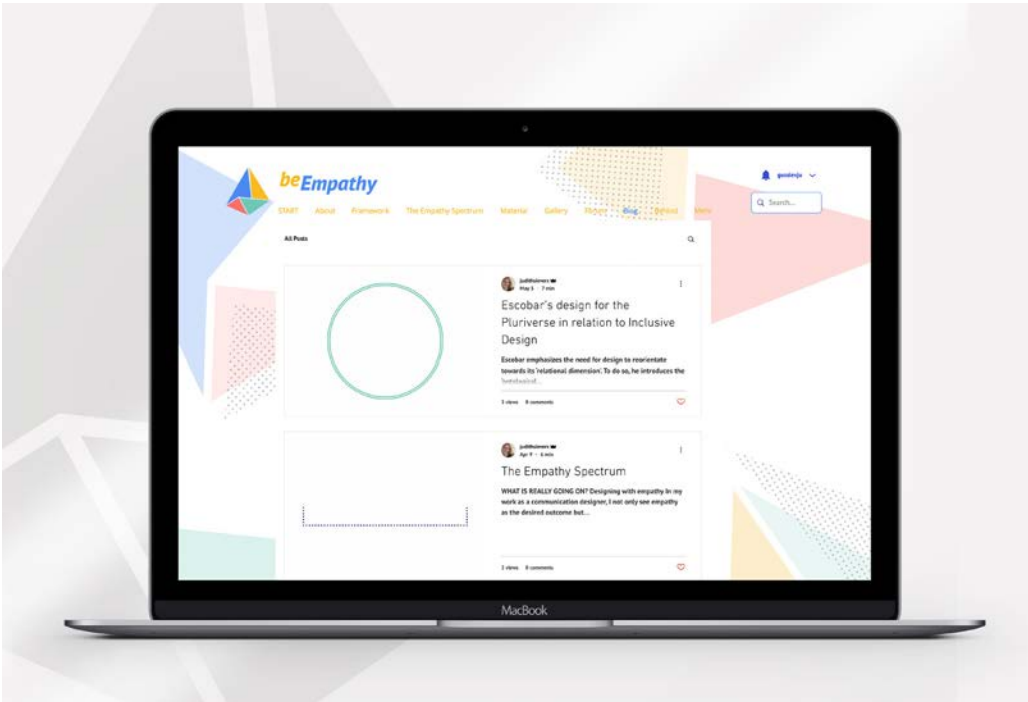
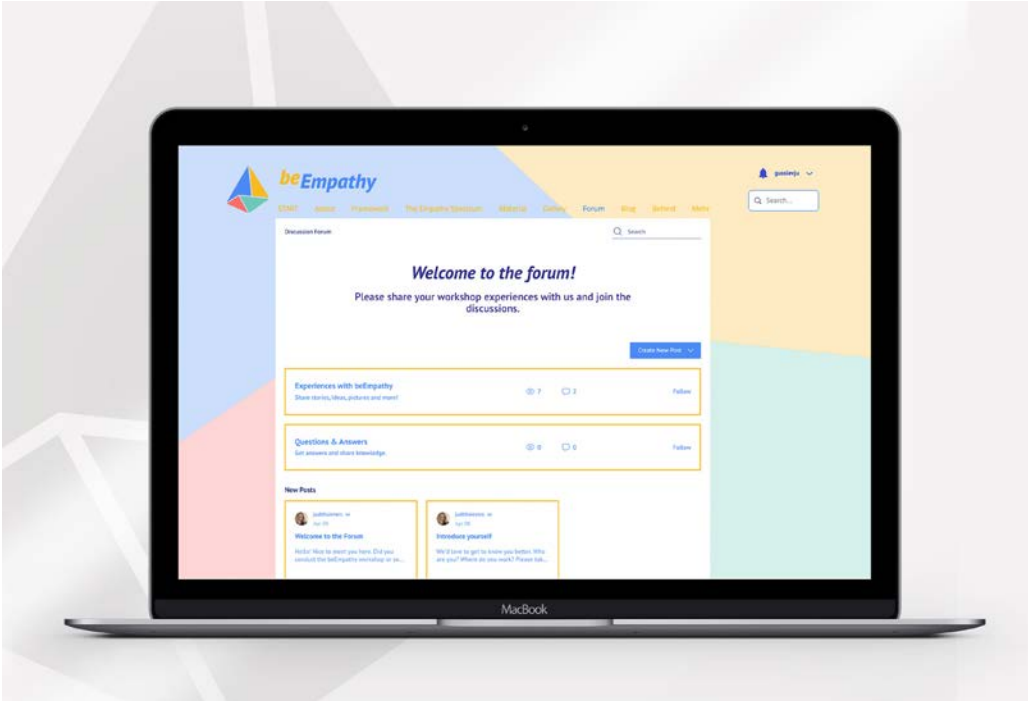


MacBook







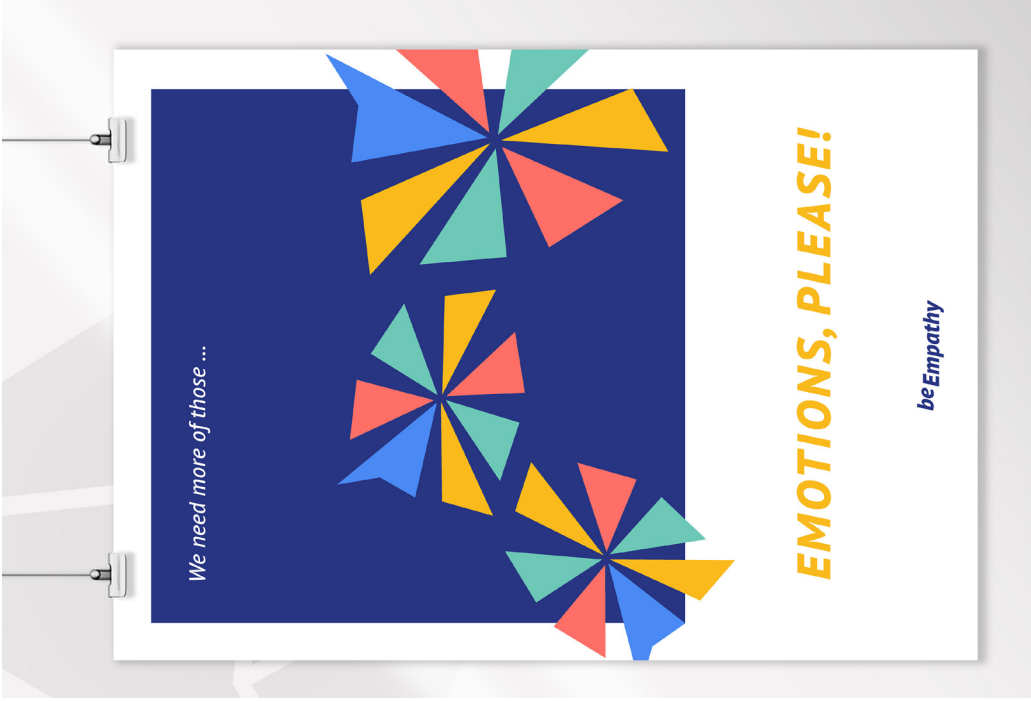




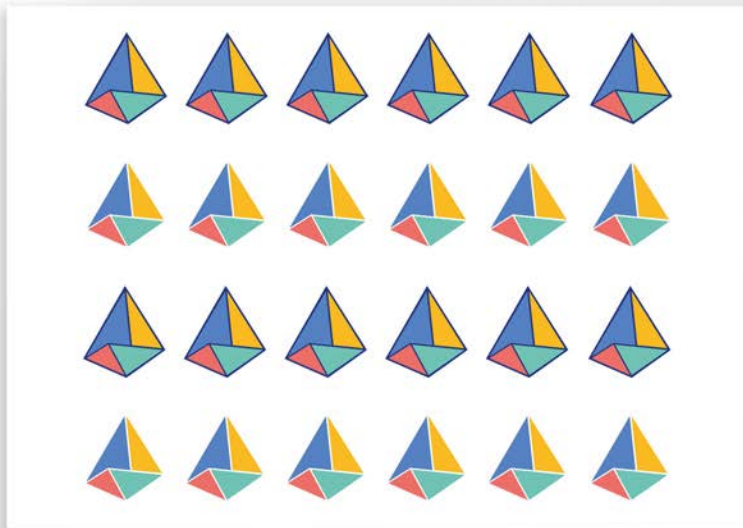
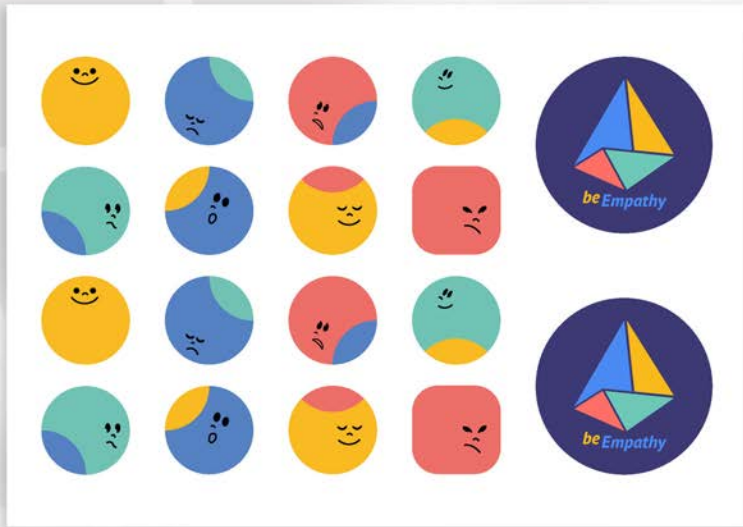
beEmpathy

The workshop about empathy and emotional awareness for students and teachers who want to invest in their social interactions.

<https://siewersjudith.wixsite.com/beempathy>

























beEmpathy

beEmpathy

DESIGNING WITH AND FOR EMPATHY

Judith Sievers

2021

MASTERTHESIS IN DESIGN

Gothenburg University, Faculty of Arts and Design