

Deep Empathy is Overwhelming

The great task that awaits the individual who becomes secure in his identity... is to share that identity with others. You need to know with every bit of who you are that you are not alone in the world. Consider deeply, for a moment, what that implies about how you interact with other people.

One of the hardest things in the world for exceptional people to accept is that the average human will never share their values. The fact that you pursue excellence does not mean you can expect others to. To hold this expectation is profoundly arrogant. It means you have not learned true empathy, for you cannot see other people as individual beings separate from you.

It is a major emotional milestone to see other people as conscious entities, each experiencing their subjective reality in the shared space of absolute truth. We all begin life somewhat sociopathic, first developing only awareness of our own needs. Then, slowly, we realize the beings around us must also think, feel, and experience in a similar manner to how we do.

Ordinary people only ever empathize in a limited fashion. They acknowledge other people for the role they play as particular social conveniences. The cashier takes your money. The doctor heals you. Your friends entertain you. Your companion loves you. That is the only space you allow them unless you expand your capacity for empathy. The goal is to see people as close as possible to how they truly are, beyond the biases of your specific human psyche.

It takes practice. It may even hurt. You can develop your empathy any time you interact with another person, no matter your prior relationship. The point is to move beyond existing knowledge. It is to forget the limited scope through which you categorize the people you know. Your closest friends are equal to complete strangers when you can see everyone in a neutral way. They don't change. Only you do, because you look past the little nodes of information that nail down an interpreted version of the truth as fact.

Look at someone you know well. Look inward to yourself. Watch as your mind flickers into action. At first, the story you already know will flash before you. If you are sharp in attention, you will see that it is only a story. However, without sharp, focused awareness, you won't even perceive the story, as it is so unconscious and familiar to you. Both you and the object of your awareness become victims to the story. Neither of you ever questions the accepted narrative, and fictions become a reality.

Clarity is the most valuable gift you can give to others. You can be strong enough to look at

them with new eyes, even when they cannot see themselves as more than what they think they are. Imagine their complete inward experience in every moment. Dive into their heads and examine the familiar world with the associations they have acquired. When you can understand another person's personal biases completely, you can simulate their thoughts and feelings. You can predict their actions. You will know what conclusions they will reach before they do. Empathy can be overwhelming because you will finally start to see how someone who is not you experiences the world under different operating conditions. You will see things beyond your automated reactions. Deep empathy is intense.

Empathy does not mean you have to agree with another person's value judgments. It only means that you must be willing to hold them in your mind for a time, so you can see how they affect their reality. You can do this with anything, even the ideas you utterly resist. You do not have to become a murderer to envision what it is like to internally justify murder. You do not have to enjoy watching sports to see what someone else gets from the experience. All human states are available to you when you open your empathy to them. You can take the lessons they give you and move on with your life, now with greater perspective over why you act the way you do. Without alternatives, no choice can be said ever really to have been made at all.