

# Authentic Connection: Engaging with Students through Empathy

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**abstract:** As learning environments shift toward meeting the needs of an increasingly diverse student population, empathy is becoming an important tool for instructors. Empathy deepens the connection between students and instructors. This connection can also emerge in the library, where librarians are teaching students in a variety of contexts, from the reference desk to the one-shot instruction session. This article references current literature on empathy in the classroom and elaborates on how empathy can lead toward relationship-building based in trust, which ultimately enables learners to put aside their apprehensions and deepen their understanding of new concepts.

## Authentic Connection: Engaging with Students through Empathy

As libraries have moved from a focus on research skills to emphasizing growth for the whole student, classroom management techniques and interactions have shifted. This expansion of our mission to see students holistically provides an opportunity for increased empathy to enter the classroom. Empathy in teaching is important because it allows an instructor to better engage and retain students. It enables instructors to see the whole student in their many life roles—such as caretaker, employee, and learner—and gives the instructor the chance to present themselves as fully human as well. Empathy allows a person to show up in the classroom as their authentic self and make connections with students beyond the curriculum. By using empathy to connect authentically with students, barriers are reduced. Some of the anxiety and intimidation that can come with the education experience is eliminated. This recognition that everyone in the classroom is a person with a multifaceted life lets the instructor understand their students' struggles while allowing them to see how the instructor has navigated similar life circumstances.

Many of the actions and recommendations discussed in this article overlap with practices that naturally occur in libraries, such as setting learning objectives for teaching or approaching work with clear goals. Additionally, many library workers will be

able to identify pieces of empathetic practice in the way they regularly operate. While it is important to recognize that many libraries and library workers naturally engage in this work, the purpose of this article is to introduce the element of intentionality to the practice. Intentional practice differs from naturally occurring practice in that one gives attention to details that may be overlooked when not using a focused lens of intentionality. For example, many librarians set learning objectives for their instruction sessions. These objectives often focus on information literacy skills. When an intentional empathetic practice is added to the setting of learning objectives, additional objectives such as “reducing library anxiety” or “identifying resources to serve the non-academic life of the student” can become just as important as the skills students need to meet assignment and research requirements. Using empathy with intention allows one to delve beyond the surface level needs of a student and embrace them as a whole person.

Colleges and universities are offering empathy training to students and employees as they seek to serve the whole student.<sup>1</sup> Academic libraries are finding innovative ways to meet students’ needs beyond their immediate academic concerns, providing referrals to student services and community resources.<sup>2</sup> It is becoming necessary for library staff at these institutions to be conversant with basic principles of empathy so they can meet the needs and expectations of the changing academic library landscape.

This article presents information about the current research on empathy in the classroom and how it relates to librarians as instructors and within an organization. The goal is to help readers understand how empathy affects relationships with student library users. Strategies for learning and growing empathy, and methods for employing empathy are explored. Suggestions focus on maximizing empathy in a variety of patron interactions. Practice scenarios are provided to help gauge one’s current understanding of and comfort with empathy.

### Definition and Importance of Empathy

Classroom management provides students with rules and structure that prevent issues with behavior and keeps students focused on classroom instruction. Having insight to the causes of a behavior helps to circumvent it. Empathy can be defined as “the process whereby one can come to know the internal state of another and can be motivated to respond with sensitive care.”<sup>3</sup> Teacher empathy involves cognitive, affective, and behavioral components. Focusing on cognitive empathy means that the librarian as the instructor will take students’ perspectives and personal situations into consideration for the course

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materials and their learning.<sup>4</sup> With the rise of remote teaching, pedagogy of care and empathy are increasingly important.

Empathy is sometimes used interchangeably with sympathy and confused with compassion. Sympathy is defined as acknowledging that someone is going

through something and offering comfort. It can drive disconnection and focus on silver-linings, whereas empathy chooses to prioritize connection and deep understanding.<sup>5</sup> While compassion has the emotional response to another’s struggle, there is also the



desire to relieve the suffering and alleviate the distress. In short, compassion involves taking intentional action about the emotion.<sup>6</sup>

According to Karen Aldrup, Bastian Cartensen, and Uta Klusmann, increasing empathy has a positive outcome for students' academic interests and behavior engagement.<sup>7</sup> Students' discernment of instructor empathy impacts the view of their learning and academic performance. A sense of connectedness and feeling cared for ensures that students are performing to the best of their abilities. Libraries and librarians can be that connection when students need it most. "Students need to know someone cares for them as persons so that in low moments, they will continue to work out of trust and love for their teacher until better moments come along."<sup>8</sup> Ultimately, determining the needs of others will lead to enhanced service provision.

### Seeing the Whole Student

Empathy enables a librarian to experience their users not as objects, but as holistic people with unique experiences and life circumstances. Employing empathy gives insight into user needs without requiring the librarian to fix them.<sup>9</sup> Recognizing a user as a whole person lets a librarian make space for the many roles the user plays—student, parent, employee, and more—and creates an understanding environment where the librarian can account for the unique needs that arise from the combination of roles a user plays in their own life. This discernment of others' needs results in higher quality service by allowing librarians to thoughtfully design experiences to meet a user's unique needs.<sup>10</sup> Flexibility, which results from empathy, allows the development of user experience and interaction to be customized to each visitor to the service desk, classroom, or website.<sup>11</sup> This customization of experience can make a user feel valued and understood, which makes the library environment feel less intimidating and encourages a user to return when they have new or continued needs.

Empathy gives librarians the tools necessary to provide emotional support, which is positively associated with academic interest.<sup>12</sup> When a learner feels supported, they feel safer exploring new concepts and displaying vulnerability by asking questions. Emotional needs must be met before new information can adequately be conveyed to an individual.<sup>13</sup> If a student feels unsafe or insecure, they may not feel ready to welcome new ideas, and their threshold for understanding may be lowered as their mind and body is in a state of alertness that does not foster understanding and growth.

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academic libraries as a foremost place for students, faculty, and staff to gather, find support, and engage with their campus community. The

increasingly digital twenty-first century has necessitated the exigent transformation of academic libraries into “third places” for the betterment of their users and the survival of the library as a physical space. Sociologist Ray Oldenburg wrote in his book *The Great Good Place* that community members require “third places” outside of their homes and their places of employment to engage with their communities and satisfy their basic human need for connection and socialization.<sup>14</sup> The academic library serves as a natural third place for many students on campus. Oldenburg sets three parameters for a space to graduate to the designation of a third place: it must “be easy to get to, provide food & drink, and have a design that invites students in and allows them to linger.”<sup>15</sup> Academic libraries have become these third places which allow students to socialize, learn at their own pace, access resources – intellectual and holistically physical and socioemotional – and yes, check out books. Importantly, Oldenburg designates that this third place is necessary for people to engage with one another, build community and relationships, and have their socioemotional needs met. The academic library already serves this purpose on college campuses. Twenty-first century academic libraries have mindfully shifted to include more common area seating, opportunities for conversation, expanded food service hours, and resources supporting the development and health of the entire student body. Adding empathy to their frameworks only increases their effectiveness at accomplishing their goal of building community and supporting the student body.

With the roles of academic librarians expanding to encompass more holistic student support than ever before, it is pressing that librarians utilize the environment they have already created – the library as the campus “third place”—to introduce the language and practice of empathy. Empathy *must*, therefore, come from the library; the library is the best-equipped place on campus to support these new developments, because it is already the predominant “third place” established by the student body, where their additional socioemotional needs are being met. The authors offer that Oldenburg’s requirements for a third place – ease of access, opportunity for food and drink, and a relaxing and comfortable design – necessitate the addition of a fourth: staff and faculty trained in empathetic practices.

### Being Authentically Present as an Instructor

Being authentic allows an instructor to focus on the users and the knowledge being shared. Instead of redirecting focus onto creating an idealized presentation of oneself, an authentic presentation allows the instructor to be seen as the holistic person that they are. Being authentic humanizes an instructor to others and starts a foundation upon which trust can be built.<sup>16</sup> Users can perceive when an instructor is uncomfortable or putting on a persona, and this perception erodes the trust that an instructor so often needs to build in order to be successful. One of the biggest enablers of trust in new relationships is empathy.<sup>17</sup>

When practiced with intention, empathy can deepen relationships.<sup>18</sup> Storytelling is a way that one can be intentional in empathy and relationship building. Storytelling creates a connection between the storyteller’s experience and the listener’s different, yet similar, experience, allowing for a perception of common ground.<sup>19</sup> When students feel connected to their instructors, they are better able to focus on learning, rather than focusing on being right or making their instructor happy.<sup>20</sup>



## Learning and Growing Empathy

While for some people empathy is a skill that comes naturally, it is important to recognize that empathy can be learned and practiced. Empathy can be increased by engaging in educational and practice activities to build an ability to connect.

### Strategies to Increase Familiarity with Empathy

Three of many options to increase familiarity with empathy include attending workshops and conferences, creating research opportunities, and implementing empathetic practices in all communication avenues.

Attending workshops and conferences is an enlightening way to see what others are doing and to learn best practices for implementing empathy in new and exciting ways. Workshops and self-paced online courses about empathy are emerging because this field is rapidly increasing in popularity and will only continue to do so. For those interested in more structured, facilitated learning, self-paced online courses such as “Empathy for Self and Others” offered by Arizona State University and hosted on Coursera can be a low-cost way to engage with this topic.<sup>21</sup> Focus groups can also be used to increase an understanding of empathetic practices in the workplace. Continually seeking out new applications and approaches to empathy allows for better service to one’s colleagues.

Understanding the basic processes of empathy in the workplace through reading publications from mindfulness professionals can be a first step into exploring the research. There are a number of easy ways to get started, such as reading articles such as Calm’s “How to be More Empathetic: 8 Exercises to Develop Empathy.”<sup>22</sup> Empathy research in the context of libraries specifically is still an underdeveloped field. The relationship between libraries and empathy can and should be explored in new research endeavors. Intentionally creating research opportunities allows progression to a more sophisticated and scholarly level of understanding different empathy applications and provides more context for other learners in the field.

Offering various communication modes for engagement with the topic facilitates a ground-up approach to growing a culture of empathy in the library. Katie Scherrer, a mindfulness expert and former children’s librarian, suggests considering several perspectives to assist in effectively implementing empathy culture. She recommends considering: (a) the community, (b) staff, (c) administration and leadership, and (d) yourself.<sup>23</sup> When all stakeholders in the library are considered, their different perspectives can influence creation of new library policies, best practices, and interactions among staff and stakeholders in order to best support the development of empathy in the library.

Students could lead library staff toward different resources to highlight in their collection. For example, if students are in greater need of equal-access resources for the Internet and online resources, the library staff can focus their efforts on providing necessary resources in an act of empathy, rather than providing baseline resources which may not meet specific needs. Well-being programs in the workplace can foster an environment in which librarians have a positive influence on their health and well-being, ultimately increasing their capacity for engaging with empathy in their communities and with their patrons.<sup>24</sup>

Self-care and self-respect are equally important aspects of building an empathetic environment. Research suggests that self-awareness may enhance empathetic practices.

Nathaniel S. Eckland et al.'s study of 94 undergraduate students revealed that a higher level of personal emotional clarity—awareness and understanding of personal emotions—corresponds to an increased level of cognitive empathy, including the abilities to recognize and identify others' emotions.<sup>25</sup> If empathetic practice starts with self-

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empathy and awareness, librarians may benefit from additional empathy and mindfulness practice to enable them to better serve themselves and others. Library practices should influence one's own methods to increase empathy, as enacting empathy may look different in various work routines and with different stakeholders.

### Engaging Students in Empathy Education

Empathy is not just something that can be tacked onto library practices. It is highly unique to everyone, and must therefore be applied individually, carefully, sustainably, and intentionally. Before one can begin to make changes to their practice to involve more intentional empathy, one needs to first learn empathy or develop an awareness and identify norms and experiences of the intended audience. Table 1 offers suggested strategies for engaging students.

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## Table 1.

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### Strategies for engaging students

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Engage with your student body.

Create social media posts (carousel infographics on Instagram, informative TikTok posts, Snapchat filters) with information and resources on empathy.

Involve empathy in university orientation efforts by hosting an informational session at the beginning of the fall semester for freshmen to attend and learn about empathy in a collegiate context.

Collaborate with student and diversity organizations on campus to share resources about empathy and host informational sessions.

Host workshops on empathy development by inviting guest lecturers.

Create displays in the library about empathy education, highlighting books about empathy and on- and off-campus resources on empathetic development.

Offer pop-up tabling events in different places around campus with free goodies and activities to build and develop empathy.

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After beginning the learning process, take steps toward growing empathy in the library. This cycle is repeating and ongoing, as demonstrated in Figure 1.

Regular check-ins can occur between librarians and patrons, instructors and students, or between friends. Such conversations allow individuals to connect on a professional and personal level with one another. Look for ways to initiate regular check-ins at the beginning or end of typical interactions. Perhaps include space in the day for meaningful conversations with others.

Examining a library as a public organization enables staff members to highlight the practices of their library and determine which ones encourage empathy. As a check-in, co-workers may collaborate with one another to assess their organizational practices, establish new ways to support each other, and determine what visible and invisible aspects of their library or individual unit encourage empathetic behaviors.

Employing meaningful phrases in communication helps library employees connect with patrons and colleagues beyond the details of the shared library experience. These meaningful phrases come from a place of sympathy and support and help establish a network of support. Some examples of meaningful phrases are listed in Figure 1.

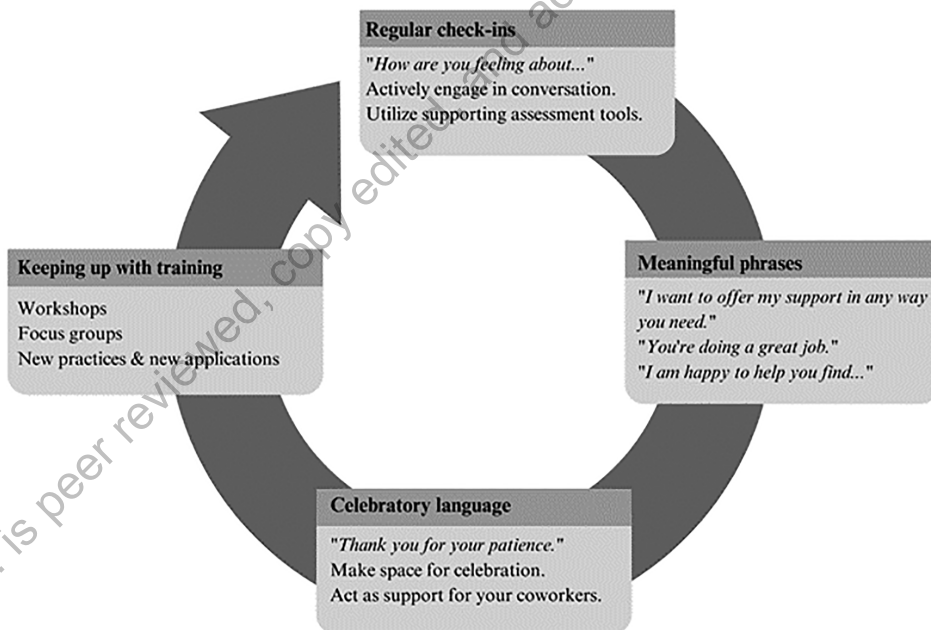


Figure 1. The cycle of growing empathy and authentic connections.

It remains important, however, to recognize that empathy is built from individual experience. It is impossible to simply memorize a list of phrases and consider empathy accomplished. When applying meaningful phrases, librarians should be aware of multicultural communication behaviors. Communicating with different audiences and communities requires flexibility, mindfulness, and sincerity. Words used should represent oneself and the preferred way to communicate with others.<sup>26</sup>

Nahid Bayat Bodaghi, Loh Sau Cheong, and A. N. Zainab's study emphasizes the need for empathy in a university library in Malaysia.<sup>27</sup> In this study, visually impaired patrons of the university library gave their thoughts on the perceived support and helpfulness of the library staff. They felt included when the library staff used meaningful phrases and a friendly, patient tone of voice to communicate with them. Almost all patrons shared that they felt more comfortable and more likely to ask for help from librarians when a friendly rapport was already established between them, proving again the necessity of using empathetic phrases in interactions with patrons. Additionally, when librarians employed empathy to understand the situation of the visually impaired patrons, they could better meet their specific research needs. For example, librarians could extend the due date on books, find alternate methods to communicate with people who can't rely on visual cues, or find books in the stacks for patrons for whom this task is difficult. Meaningful phrases and empathetic practices are necessary to better serve patrons.

Use of celebratory language is another method of growing empathy, through library instruction and teaching. This can happen naturally after using meaningful phrases. Everyone should partake in the celebration of the community, which can help students feel a greater sense of belonging in library spaces. Examples of celebratory language are "thank you for speaking up," "I appreciate you sharing your thoughts," and "you did an excellent job." These are simple, but impactful words of encouragement. Not only should there be a celebration of others in the library by making space for their successes, but there should be a celebration of oneself in one's daily efforts. Practicing empathy for others, but refusing to allow oneself the same support, negates the benefits of bringing empathy into one's practice. Self-celebration can be as simple as removing unnecessary apologies from one's vocabulary. Instead of saying "I'm sorry for making you wait," say, "Thank you for your patience." Self-celebration can also include positive self-talk and accepting support from others.

### Empathy in Patron Interactions and Instruction

Once librarians become knowledgeable about empathy, they should strive to employ empathetic practices in the classroom as well as in patron interactions. An interaction with a student or other patron may just be a one-time opportunity. This opportunity may be

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a fifty-minute classroom session which has been requested by a course instructor, an online chat session, a reference desk interview, or a scheduled research consultation.





Whatever the format of these interactions or however long they may be, an interaction with a student must be viewed as a relationship-building opportunity. Even during a brief interaction with a student, the librarian has a chance to make an impact, help create a caring environment, and make a positive first impression for the student.

### **Empathy in the Classroom and One-Shot Interactions**

Studies show that “students learn better and have greater positive perceptions when instructors display empathetic values and seek more meaningful relationships with their students.”<sup>28</sup> Ellysa Cahoy and Robert Schroeder note the important role of emotion in the acquisition of information literacy skills and believe that if librarians address students’ emotional needs, the students will be more productive in their research.<sup>29</sup> How can librarians use empathy in instruction and one-shot or brief interactions with their patrons and students? The authors offer the following strategies to demonstrate an ethic of care in all levels of library instruction:

1. Set goals for instruction. Employ empathy in setting goals and preparing for the interactions, whether for a fifty-minute class session, a consultation, an online chat session, or a reference desk interview. This planning and preparation should be centered around creating a sense of connectedness and a caring environment, fostering open discussion and critical inquiry, offering a participatory and engaging environment, and striving for the students to learn actively and work cooperatively.<sup>30</sup> While setting instructional goals is common practice, the addition of connectedness and caring elevates instruction into the realm of empathetic practice. When setting empathetic goals, library workers can choose to prioritize supportive emotional responses and seek to fulfill a need for connection, in addition to meeting a need for information.
2. Create learning objectives that focus on caring and a compassionate approach. Select a small number of essential learning outcomes for a class. In addition to the typical objectives such as teaching to the assignment and familiarizing the students with library resources and information literacy concepts, a primary objective should always be that the student begins to recognize the library as a place to find help and a place that offers a caring environment. Even if time constraints are such that content must be sacrificed, a focus on caring should be the foremost objective. If the instructor is effective in beginning to build a relationship with the students, they are more likely to follow up and seek specific help.<sup>31</sup>
3. Begin relationship-building. During the class, take the opportunity to build rapport with the students. For example, show an interest in their research topics and ask questions to clarify. How is the topic related to their life experiences? Perhaps employ a group activity that encourages participation and engagement and try to establish a sense of community.<sup>32</sup> Again, much of relationship building work feels like a natural part of a public service library job; however, when intentional empathetic practice is combined with relationship building, there is potential for deeper connection and room to relate to patrons beyond their academic selves.



4. Foster discussion and active learning. Ask questions. Doing so can demonstrate interest in the students' topics or experiences. For example, instead of using prepared search topics to illustrate a resource or search strategy, let a student suggest a sample search topic. Ask the students what they need to know about the library or research. This positions the student as the leader in the activity instead of the instructor. Watch for the students to acknowledge that care has been received. This can be through a smile, a nod, or a thank you.<sup>33</sup> Demonstrating a search with student-suggested topics creates space for vulnerability and for things to not go as planned, which can model adaptability in the search and remove some of the barriers created by the perceived expertise of the librarian, making the relationship feel more equal.
5. Encourage follow-up. Perhaps the most important thing a librarian can do when interacting with students is to encourage follow-up so that relationship-building can continue. Make that first encounter or interaction be only the beginning of building a relationship with the student. Emphasize availability and a supportive role outside the classroom, outside of consultation or online chat. Show the student that providing needed research or library assistance is a priority. Offer various options for contact and communication. Perhaps provide examples of their need to follow up for further assistance, such as helping with citation formats or determining whether a source is peer-reviewed. Make the effort to contact the student after a time to check in and see how their project or research is progressing.<sup>34</sup>

### Scenarios for Exploring Empathetic Approaches

Before engaging in a few sample scenarios, take a moment for self-reflection. In one word, how do you feel about your ability to practice empathy when engaging with students? Before exploring the following scenarios, keep in mind that this feeling may shift as you re-contextualize your understanding of where empathy can be applied.

#### Scenario 1

A student comes to the service desk and asks if there's a place where they could get a free snack in the library because they are hungry and don't have any money. What do you do?

1. Inform them there is no free food in the library.
2. Give them resources for the campus food pantry.
3. Ask them why they didn't eat before they came to the library.

In each of the potential responses there is a different degree of empathy being demonstrated. Response one, offers the lowest level of empathy. This response seeks to inform users of policy without building relationships or examining deeper needs. Response two demonstrates the greatest degree of empathy. This response humanizes the student and recognizes they are a whole person with needs beyond library resources. It facilitates trust and a relationship by acknowledging this need and directing the student to a way their need can be met. Response three shows an intermediate level of empathy. The



response demonstrates an effort to establish rapport and show curiosity, but it does not employ nuance or the understanding that the question may be embarrassing to ask or cause stress to the student.

### Scenario 2

A student enters the library instruction classroom and takes a seat in the middle row, gets out all their materials, and looks attentive and ready to participate in class. The student falls asleep quietly once the session starts. What do you do?

1. Loudly wake the student by drawing attention to them in front of the class.
2. Walk around the classroom and gently wake the student by tapping on their shoulder.
3. Allow the student to continue to rest, knowing they can get notes or visit you for a one-on-one session to catch up.

Response one shows the least empathy by putting a “failing” of the student on display in a public forum. The approach attracts unwanted attention to the student while failing to recognize external factors that may have contributed to their inability to stay awake. Response two offers empathy by employing discretion in correcting the student, but still fails to acknowledge the student as a whole person who may have things going on outside of the classroom that interfere with their learning. We see the greatest level of empathy in response three, which gives the student space to be a whole person with a range of needs, while still offering availability in a time and space in which they are ready.

### Scenario 3

When you’re leading a library instruction session, a student laments loudly that searching is really complicated, and they feel they will never get the hang of it. How do you respond?

1. Share a story about how you struggled with searching when you were in school, how a librarian helped you, and how you practiced. Now you’re able to help them the same way.
2. Tell the student that it’s always going to be tough to search correctly.
3. Laugh the comment off and continue with your lesson.

In response one we see the highest level of empathy on display. In this response, there is an attempt at relationship-building by sharing our personal experiences and being our authentic selves, while demonstrating the student is not alone in their feelings. They are reassured that they can successfully overcome their challenges. This response also leaves the door open for further engagement, in the explanation of how you can help them. Response two provides a moderate level of empathy by acknowledging the student’s struggle. However, it does not provide a resolution, attempt at relationship-building, or point of hope for the student. Finally, response three employs the least empathy, as it minimizes the student’s concerns.



#### Scenario 4

You're teaching an instruction session for a class of students you've never met before. How do you introduce yourself?

1. You tell the students your name and formal title, and you explain you are an expert to be taken seriously.
2. You tell the students your name and title, what you can do to help them, and ask them to stop you if they have any questions at any time during the session.
3. You let the professor introduce you with a formal biography and launch into your presentation when it's your turn to speak.

In this case, the first response shows a medium level of empathy by establishing who you are in the relationship with your learners. However, response two deepens the empathy offered through the simple addition of context about how you can help the students and a way for them to ask for that help. This takes relationship-building a step further than in the first option because it lets students know they can take part in the transfer of knowledge by stopping you with questions. Response three demonstrates the least amount of empathy because it's allowing someone else to begin the relationship-building on your behalf. This doesn't connect as deeply with students and can make it more difficult for them to find comfort and confidence asking for help.

#### Scenario 5

A student makes an appointment with you to get help finding sources for their thesis literature review. They ask you about your time as a graduate student and whether you thought doing research projects was hard. What do you tell them?

1. You tell them research is hard for everyone at first but reassure them that they'll get the hang of it.
2. You tell them that since you studied library and information science the literature searching part of research wasn't hard for you.
3. You share a story about one of the research projects you struggled with during your time in school and tell them the strategies you used to get through it.

Response one offers a high level of empathy. The response acknowledges the student's struggle, positions them as not alone, and offers encouragement for the future. Response two shows very little empathy by distancing the librarian from the student and failing to relate to their struggle. Finally, in response three, we again see a high level of empathy which is demonstrated through sharing experiences, giving personal examples of overcoming a challenge, and deepening a relationship through connection.

Upon the conclusion of these practice exercises, take another moment to reflect.

How has your perception of your ability to practice empathy when engaging with li-

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brary users in expected and unexpected scenarios shifted? Are some scenarios more comfortable than others? Do some responses feel more natural to you? These feelings can help give us insight



into where we may need to seek further professional development or be more intentional with our relationship-building skills. Remember, our levels of empathy are ever-changing. We can learn, grow and adapt our empathy skills whenever we seek to do so.

### Conclusion

Both past research and current practice indicate that empathy is becoming an increasingly important tool in an instructor's toolbox. Practicing empathy, becoming aware of each other's internal states, and responding with sensitive care deepens the connection between instructor and learner. It starts the path toward building a relationship based on trust, which ultimately allows instructors to be their authentic and truest self in the classroom and learners to put aside their apprehensions and deepen their learning on a topic. For some, this empathetic approach comes naturally, but regardless of one's past experience, demonstrating empathy is a skill that can be learned and developed. Attending workshops and conferences, creating research opportunities, and employing empathy in a variety of situations are all ways that empathy as a skill can be developed. When empathy is introduced into an instruction session, like a one-shot interaction, an ethic of care can be demonstrated through methods such as setting goals for instruction, creating compassionate learning objectives, focusing on relationship-building, fostering discussions, and encouraging follow-up interactions. Examining how to employ these strategies through practice scenarios, which can assess one's own familiarity and comfort with empathetic responses, is encouraged.

The authors agree that maintaining the human component of providing services is essential to student success and retention; kindness, compassion, and empathy cannot be lost in the ongoing explosion of information tools and practices. Empathy literacy and mindfulness literacy are trends on the horizon, and librarianship must harness the opportunities of these trends to continue to build excellence in teaching and learning. Additional research is needed in infusing equitable empathetic practices in online and remote learning. Furthermore, assessing the impact of compassionate and empathetic teaching is an area that needs to be more fully explored. Progress in these additional research areas is important if the full potential of making an authentic connection with students by engaging through empathy is to be realized.

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## Notes

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