

## E&T Final Project Research Notes

### Losing Empathy When Depressed: Here Is Why

Link: [Losing Empathy When Depressed: Here Is Why | OptimistMinds](#)

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- Depression is linked to inability to differentiate self from others.
  - o Empathic distress
  - o Empathy fatigue as a defense mechanism

### Empathy and Depression: What's the Link?

Link: [Empathy and Depression: What's the Link? | Psych Central](#)

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- Potential link between depression, empathy, and antidepressants.
- Depression and some medications can lower empathy levels.
- 2017 Study
  - o Asked participants to rate how upset they thought someone felt.
  - o Participants going into the study with a low mood also thought the person in the video was more upset than participants going in with better moods.
- 2014 Study
  - o
- 2021 Study
  - o The link between empathy and depression may change with age.

### A Link Between Empathy and Depression

Link: [A Link Between Empathy and Depression | Psychology Today](#)

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- Being empathetic towards others is a matter of mentally placing yourself in the position of another person and imagining what your feelings in the position of that other person would be.
- Depression involves someone not allowing themselves to experience their feelings and blocking negative feelings
  - o May inhibit the ability to feel empathy towards others
    - If you can't allow yourself to feel your own emotions, you can't understand others
    - Empathy in practice may be difficult despite having an intellectual understanding of what it is and how to do it

## Empathy Fatigue: How it Takes a Toll on You

Link: [Empathy Fatigue: How it Takes a Toll on You – Cleveland Clinic](#)

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- On the flip side, empathy fatigue can cause people to show depressive symptoms

## Low Moods Lead to Increased Empathic Distress at Seeing Others' Pain

[Low Mood Leads to Increased Empathic Distress at Seeing Others' Pain - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#)

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- Abstract
- Introduction
- Materials and Methods
  - o Participants
  - o Procedure
  - o Data Analysis
- Results

## Empathy in Adults with Clinical or Subclinical Depressive Symptoms

[Empathy in adults with clinical or subclinical depressive symptoms - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](#)

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- Background
  - o Depression associated with problems in social functioning
    - Poor empathic abilities may be contributing to this association
  - o To what extent does depression affect someone's cognitive and affective empathy?
    - Is there a difference depending on gender?
- Methods
  - o PsycInfo and Medline
    - Systematic review of all studies on empathy and depression conducted on individuals diagnosed with major depressive disorder
- Results
  - o Depression is related to one type of affective empathy
    - High levels of empathic stress
    - Not related to abnormal empathic concern
    - Related to limited cognitive empathy
      - Poor perspective taking
      - Theory of mind
      - Empathic accuracy
- Limitations

- Self-report studies are subjective and vulnerable to bias
- Cannot establish absolute causality
- Conclusions
  - Empathic abilities may be impaired for someone who is depressed

## Depressed Brain: How It Affects You

[Depressed Brain: How It Affects You \(healthline.com\)](https://www.healthline.com/health/brain-depression)

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- Depression may cause the brain to shrink
  - Hippocampus
  - Thalamus
  - Amygdala
  - Prefrontal Cortices
- When someone has depression and anxiety, their amygdala increases in size
- Brain inflammation
  - Can reduce the functionality of neurotransmitters
- Structural Differences
  - Neurotransmitters
    - Serotonin
    - Dopamine
    - Norepinephrine
- Oxygen Restriction

## Depressed Brain vs. Normal Brain

[Depressed Brain vs. Normal Brain | Mental Health Blog \(banyanmentalhealth.com\)](https://www.banyanmentalhealth.com/brain-depression-vs-normal-brain/)

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- The Difference Between a Depressed Brain vs. a Normal Brain
- Grey Matter Abnormalities
- Brain Shrinkage
  - People who are depressed release larger amounts of cortisol than the average person
- More Active Amygdala

## The Relationship Between Dimensions of Empathy and Symptoms of Depression Among University Students During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Network Analysis

[The relationship between dimensions of empathy and symptoms of depression among university students during the COVID-19 pandemic: A network analysis - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36111111/)

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- Background
    - Established link between empathy and depression
    - Network Analysis
      - Offers framework for visualizing the association between empathy and depression
        - System consisting of interacting nodes
    - This study was an investigation of the relationship between different dimensions of empathy and individual symptoms of depression during the COVID-19 pandemic
  - Methods
    - 1177 students completed the Chinese version of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index and the Patient Health Questionnaire-9
      - Measuring empathy and depression respectively
    - Calculated associations between different dimensions of empathy and individual depressive symptoms
    - Calculated the bridge expected influence to examine how different dimensions of empathy may activate or deactivate the symptoms of depression cluster
    - Examined the difference between genders
  - Results
    - Personal Distress
    - Perspective-Taking
    - Empathic Concern
    - No major differences depending on gender

Association Between Children's Empathy and Depression: The Moderating Role of Social Preference

[Association Between Children's Empathy and Depression: The Moderating Role of Social Preference - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](#)

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- Empathy typically an adaptive characteristic
- Extreme empathy alone and/or in combination with a negative environment may increase risk of depression
- This study investigated three constructs of empathy and depression in children
- 1223 children completed questionnaires about empathy and depression
- Low social preference
  - Extremely high and low empathy were associated with increased depression
  - Moderate empathy was associated with lower levels of depression
- High social preference
  - Higher positive empathy was associated with lower depression

Antidepressant Treatment, Not Depression, Leads to Reductions in Behavioral and Neural Response to Pain Empathy

[Antidepressant treatment, not depression, leads to reductions in behavioral and neural responses to pain empathy - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](#)

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- Hypothesized that Major Depressive Disorder leads to impairments in empathy