

Empathy

Rahul Jain - 2021

Why talk about Empathy?

**We are all irrational
beings**

“we usually think of ourselves as sitting the driver's seat, with ultimate control over the decisions we made and the direction our life takes; but, alas, this perception has more to do with our desires-with how we want to view ourselves-than with reality”

— Dan Ariely, Predictably Irrational: The Hidden Forces That Shape Our Decisions

Non economic decision making

When purchasing a \$25 pen, most people would drive to another store 15 minutes away to save \$7.

When purchasing a \$455 suit, most people would not drive to another store 15 minutes away to save \$7.

The amount saved and time involved are the same, but people make very different choices.

- **Discrimination on the basis of gender or race**
- **Buying designer products**
- **Paying extra to buy the same beer we drank in college**
- **Giving money to a charity**
- **Procrastinating**



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“Most of us think of ourselves as thinking creatures that feel, but we are actually feeling creatures that think.”

**— Jill Bolte Taylor, My Stroke of Insight:
A Brain Scientist's Personal Journey**

**People* never make bad
decisions. Not in their eyes, not
when they're making them.**

***who aren't clinically insane**

**We are all irrational
beings**

**We are all ~~ir~~rational
beings**

**We are all ~~ir~~rational
beings
in our own eyes .**

Why talk about Empathy?

Good Leaders are Changemakers

Changemaking isn't about outlining
the rationality of your point of view.

Changemaking happens when you
make people fall in love with the idea
of a change.

**To force ourselves to come face to face
with our non-economic
irrationality, and then learn how to
connect and communicate with that very
same set of emotions in others.**

What is Empathy?



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RSA shorts - Brené Brown on Empathy

Empathy doesn't involve feeling sorry for someone. It is our honest answer to the question, "why did they do what they did?" The useful answer is rarely, "because they're stupid." Or even, "because they're evil."

In fact, most of the time, people with similar information, similar beliefs and similar apparent choices will choose similar actions.

So if you want to know why someone does what they do, start with what they know, what they believe and where they came from.

— Seth Godin, <https://seths.blog/2015/08/empathy>

**Empathy is not about agreeing
that the other person is right and
in applauding whatever they do.**

It's entirely possible that they're acting against their best interests,
entirely possible you want to deplore or work against their actions.

**Accepting that based on what
someone believes, what they
want and what they know,
they are acting rationally.**

Sonder is defined as that moment when you realize that everyone around you has an internal life as rich and as conflicted as yours.

That everyone has a noise in their head.

That everyone thinks that they are right, and that they have suffered affronts and disrespect at the hands of others.

That everyone is afraid. And that everyone realizes that they are also lucky.

That everyone has an impulse to make things better, to connect and to contribute.

That everyone wants something that they can't possibly have. And if they could have it, they'd discover that they didn't really want it all along.

That everyone is lonely, insecure and a bit of a fraud. And that everyone cares about something.

— Seth Godin, <https://seths.blog/2017/10/the-sonder-breakthrough/>

How to practice Empathy?

**The only way to engage with
someone is to begin where
they are, to see what they see,
to gain enrollment in a
conversation.**

Become intentionally curious.

Not curious in order to change them, but curious to discover who they are, what their beliefs are, what their rationality is?

When you sit on the same side of the table, when you give this person the chalk and the chalkboard and ask them to map it out—to TEACH you, not to persuade you, but to actually teach you what they know.

Don't correct their logic, don't point out the holes in their argument, don't interrupt or complete sentences. It's challenging, but you'll find it opens doors.

- **Curiosity** about others
- **Get out of your own echo chambers**
- **Understand the origin of your own beliefs (and biases)**
- **If I was in their place, would I act differently?**
- **Wear their shoes.**

Next step

Write a short essay on

**why people who oppose
an issue that you support
are correct to do so.**

Don't do a superficial treatment. Really go at it. Remember that those who disagree with you are **neither stupid, nor irrational**. And they are most likely **not uninformed**.

Try to fully see the other person, their story, their needs. Become them. In your writing, accept and embrace that their point of view has legitimacy and value. Remember that, **if you believed what they believe and you knew what they know, you'd agree with them**.

end