

Listening Script for TPO Test 10 Speaking Task 6

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Narrator

Now listen to part of a lecture in a psychology class.

Professor

OK, we generally assume that babies can feel only very basic emotions like happiness or anger, that is, that babies just react to things that happen directly to them. However, some new research is suggesting that babies may be able to feel concern for others, to have empathy for others. Now empathy is a complex emotion. It involves a baby relating to someone else's emotions, not just reacting to things happening directly to them. Let's talk about an experiment that may show that babies could be capable of feeling empathy.

OK, for the first part of the experiment, well, um, we've always known that babies start to cry when they hear other babies crying, right? One baby in the room starts crying and all the rest join in. We've always assumed that the other babies cried because they were reacting to the noise of the crying, that the noise itself was distressing. So in the experiment researchers played a tape recording, a tape of babies crying, to another baby. And sure enough the baby started crying when he heard the sound of other babies crying. This was no surprise of course. And researchers assumed that the baby cried because of the noise.

But the next part of the experiment was surprising. The researchers played the baby a tape of his own crying. Now it was just as noisy so the researchers expected him to cry. However this time the baby did not cry. He wasn't upset by the sound of his own crying. Why not? Well, maybe it wasn't the noise that had made him cry before when he heard other babies crying. In fact, maybe noise had nothing to do with it. It could be that the baby felt empathy for the other babies. And that was why he got upset when he heard them crying. The researchers concluded that it is indeed possible that babies feel empathy, concern for others.