

## R E V I E W

International Journal of Caring Sciences, 1(3):118–123

## Empathy and emotional intelligence: What is it really about?

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**ABSTRACT:** Empathy is the "capacity" to share and understand another's "state of mind" or emotion. It is often characterized as the ability to "put oneself into another's shoes", or in some way experience the outlook or emotions of another being within oneself. Empathy is a powerful communication skill that is often misunderstood and underused. Initially, empathy was referred to as "bedside manner"; now, however, authors and educators consider empathetic communication a teachable, learnable skill that has tangible benefits for both clinician and patient: Effective empathetic communication enhances the therapeutic effectiveness of the clinician-patient relationship. Appropriate use of empathy as a communication tool facilitates the clinical interview, increases the efficiency of gathering information, and honours the patient. Additionally, Emotional Intelligence (EI), often measured as an Emotional Intelligence Quotient (EQ), describes a concept that involves the ability, capacity, skill or a self-perceived ability, to identify, assess, and manage the emotions of one's self, of others, and of groups. Because it is a relatively new area of psychological research, the concept is constantly changing. The EQ concept argues that IQ, or conventional intelligence, is too narrow; that there are wider areas of emotional intelligence that dictate and enable how successful we are. Success requires more than IQ (Intelligence Quotient), which has tended to be the traditional measure of intelligence, ignoring essential behavioural and character elements. We've all met people who are academically brilliant and yet are socially and inter-personally inept. And we know that despite possessing a high IQ rating, success does not automatically follow. The aim of this review is to describe the concept of empathy and emotional intelligence, compare it to other similar concepts and clarify their importance as vital parts of effective social functioning. Just how vital they are, is a subject of constant debate.

**KEY WORDS:** Empathy, emotional intelligence, communication skills

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