EMPATHY

Empathy is the ability and willingness to recognize and understand the feelings, thoughts and emotions of another person and to put oneself in the position of the other person. Based on recent research by psychologist Paul Bloom, this can also lead to empathic reflexes, i.e. empathy can lead to feelings of revenge and empathic empathy motivates us to help people who are similar to us rather than people who are different from us, e.g. have a different skin color. For this reason, Bloom distinguishes between empathy and compassion: "Empathy means: I feel what another person feels. Compassion means: I take care of the other, I take care of him."

The international Code of Ethics, which is part of the basic understanding of social work, point 5.4 states: "Social workers should act in relation to the people using their services with compassion, empathy and care". The demand is therefore: "Social workers should treat those who use their services with compassion, empathy and mindfulness."[4]

Discussion plan: Empathy and compassion

- What is empathy?
- What is the difference between empathy and compassion?
- What does compassion and empathy mean?
- How do you develop empathy?
- Can you be more sensitive? If so, how?
- What are empathic reflexes?
- What is the connection between mindfulness and empathy?

---

[4] https://www.bewaehrungshilfe.de/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Internationaler-Code-of-Ethic.pdf
Accessed 04.06.2018

pssst.eu

Prävention
Sexualität
Schutz
Sicherheit
Scham
Tabu

Exercise: Empathy - giving positive feedback

- o The participants of a group sit in a circle of chairs. Each person takes an A4 sheet (landscape format) and writes his or her own name on it. In one sentence, everyone in the group gives a positive feedback. Attention will be paid to concrete formulations, e.g. "I like about you that you always lend me your pen". "What I like about you is that you never laugh at me."

- o The section of paper that has been written is folded like an accordion so that it cannot be read by the next person.

- o The aim of this exercise is to express appreciation and giving positive feedback to each person and to formulate one's own feelings or judgments in one sentence.

Put yourself in the position of another person

Putting oneself in the position of other people means, among other things, trying to understand the wishes, problems and needs of other people. Empathy is the ability to empathize. Empathy helps us to understand feelings such as fear, grief, the pain of others and the likelihood of helping in such situations is higher than creating such situations ourselves. Is there a connection between the ability to empathize and problematic use of the Internet?

In order to understand others better, to assess them and to recognize the reasons for their actions, we also pay attention to non-verbal communication: looks, posture, gestures etc. Non-verbal communication is an important part of social interaction and can signal to other people: "I understand you without words" or "I feel how you feel." But how is that on the Internet?

Discussion plan: Put yourself in the position of another person

- Can you imagine what it would be like to be someone else?

- How well can you put yourself in the mood of your fellow human beings?

- If you can put yourself in someone's position, is that enough to find a common solution in conflicts?

- The "golden rule" is, "Treat others the way you want them to treat you." What does this mean with regard to interpersonal communication on the Internet?

- Does excessive use of online media reduce empathy, or, conversely, does a lack of compassion lead to excessive use of online media?

Literature

Breithaupt, Fritz: Die dunklen Seiten der Empathie. Suhrkamp 2017.

Kino, Mona: Empathie. Die Kehrseite des Mitgefühls. In: Zeit Online.
https://www.zeit.de/kultur/2017-06/empathie-gefuehle-achtsamkeit-training-10nach8
Accessed on 2018.5.22.

Newen, Albert / Vogeley, Kai: Den anderen Verstehen. In: Spektum.de.
https://www.spektrum.de/magazin/den-anderen-verstehen/1114588
Accessed on 2018.5.22.

Materials

Empathie als Soft Skill im Soft Skills Würfel von André Moritz. In: soft-skills.com.
https://www.soft-skills.com/empathie/
Accessed on 2018.5.21.

Wolf, Iris: Rollenspiele und Empathie. In: Methoden für Deutschunterricht und Leseförderung (5/2014).
https://www.carlsen.de/sites/default/files/1405_Metamodell_Rollenspiele.pdf
Accessed on 2018.5.21.