Empathy: A Keystone Leadership Habit

Paul Tevis
Coach & Facilitator
“A keystone species is an organism that helps define an entire ecosystem. Without its keystone species, the ecosystem would be dramatically different or cease to exist altogether.”

National Geographic Society
Certain habits create “chain reactions that help other good habits take hold.”

Charles Duhigg, *The Power of Habit*
Empathy is a Keystone Leadership Habit

Paul Tevis
Coach & Facilitator
The presence or absence of empathy determines whether or not a human ecosystem can flourish
Leaders’ habits of empathy form a keystone for their overall effectiveness.
1. What is Empathy?
2. Why does Empathy Matter?
3. What are some Empathy Habits you can develop?
Seven things you can try
Two disclaimers
“Well, now I’m dropping names almost constantly. That’s what Kanye West keeps telling me...”

Weird Al Yankovic, “Tacky”
Part 1: What Is Empathy?
empathy  noun
em-pa-thy  |  \'em-pə-thē\  \\

Definition of empathy

1  : the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another of either the past or present without having the feelings, thoughts, and experience fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner

also  : the capacity for this

Merriam-Webster
Others’ Emotions & Experiences

Sharing
- Experience Sharing
- Emotional Empathy
- Personal Distress

Thinking About
- Mentalizing
- Cognitive Empathy
- Theory of Mind

Caring About
- Empathic Concern
- Motivational Empathy
- Compassion
Others’ Emotions & Experiences

Sharing
- Experience Sharing
- Emotional Empathy
- Personal Distress

Thinking About
- Mentalizing
- Cognitive Empathy
- Theory of Mind

Caring About
- Empathic Concern
- Motivational Empathy
- Compassion
Perspective-Taking
Part 1: What Is Empathy?
Part 2: Why does Empathy Matter?
Raise your hand if your job would be easier if you were better at building trust.
Would being better at understanding others’ perspectives help with building trust?
Raise your hand if your job would be easier if you were better at influencing others.
Would being better at understanding others’ perspectives help with influencing others?
Raise your hand if your job would be easier if you were better at enabling collaboration.
Would being better at understanding others’ perspectives help with enabling collaboration?
Raise your hand if your job would be easier if you were better at working with conflict.
Would being better at understanding others’ perspectives help with working with conflict?
Empathy Advantages

Leading Effective Teams
Leading Across Differences
Leading with Backbone & Heart
Leading Effective Teams
Research has shown that perspective-taking helps with:

- Creativity
- Interpersonal conflict
- Bias and stereotype reduction
- Relationships & social bonds
Empathic individuals excel professionally

Empathic teams are more successful
Work happens within a container of relationships
Leaders can foster empathy by making it a group norm.
That means you have to model it & let it take root
Leading Across Differences
Raise your hand if you regularly work with someone with a different functional role.
Raise your hand if you regularly work with someone with a different educational background.
Raise your hand if you regularly work with someone with a different employment history.
Raise your hand if you regularly work with someone with a 7-or-more year age difference.
Raise your hand if you regularly work with someone with a different gender identity.
Raise your hand if you regularly work with someone with a different country of origin.
Raise your hand if you regularly work with someone with a different family situation or background.
Diverse teams have a competitive advantage
...but only if those differences are inclusively tapped for wisdom.
People may not volunteer their experiences
Leading with Backbone and Heart
Leadership is about attending to the “space between”
“**Backbone** means knowing and clearly stating your position, whether it is popular or not.”

“**Heart** is staying engaged in the relationship and reaching out even when that relationship is mired in conflict.”

Mary Beth O’Neill, *Executive Coaching with Backbone & Heart*
“Leaders have to bring backbone by standing up for and articulating their positions in the face of others challenging them. They bring heart when they have compassion for those they lead and seek to understand their challenges, concerns, and ideas.”

Mary Beth O’Neill, Executive Coaching with Backbone & Heart
Empathy Advantages

Leading Effective Teams

Leading Across Differences

Leading with Backbone & Heart
Part 2:
Why does Empathy Matter?
Part 3: What are some Empathy Habits you can develop?
Seven Empathy Habits

- Understanding Yourself
- Understanding Others
- Understanding Each Other
Understanding Yourself
Self-awareness is the first step towards understanding others.
Personality Assessments

Big Five
DISC
Predictive Index

StrengthsFinder
Riso-Hudson
Enneagram Type Indicator (RHETI)
Personality Assessments

- Big Five
- DISC
- Predictive Index
- StrengthsFinder
- Riso-Hudson
- Enneagram Type Indicator (RHETI)
The F-word
Feelings
Habit #1: Treat Feelings as Data

Dr. Marshall Rosenberg

paul@vigemus.com
What am I observing?
What feeling am I experiencing?
What need of mine is/isn’t being met right now that gives rise to that feeling?
What might I do to help meet that unmet need?
Emotional Granularity
“Emotions aren’t mystical signals; they’re based on expertise, experience, and rapid information processing.”
“The reason emotions get a bad rap is that we don’t know how to decode them.”
“Paying attention to all your feelings allows you to control them instead of the other way around.”
Habit #1: Treat Feelings as Data

Dr. Marshall Rosenberg

paul@vigemus.com
Understanding Otters
Understanding Others
Habit #2: Listen at Level 2+
Levels of Listening
Levels of Listening

1. Internal Listening: Self
Levels of Listening

1. Internal Listening: Self
2. Focused Listening: Other
Levels of Listening

1. Internal Listening: Self
2. Focused Listening: Other
3. Global Listening: Context
Empathic Presence
Habit #2: Listen at Level 2+
Habit #3: Notice Your Judgements

Dr. Virginia Satir
Satir Interaction Model (simplified)

1. Intake
2. Meaning
3. Significance
4. Response
Satir Interaction Model (simplified)

1. What did I just see or hear?
Satir Interaction Model (simplified)

1. What did I just see or hear?
2. What did that mean?
Satir Interaction Model (simplified)

1. What did I just see or hear?
2. What did that mean?
3. How do I feel about that?
Satir Interaction Model (simplified)

1. What did I just see or hear?
2. What did that mean?
3. How do I feel about that?
4. What will I do now?
Satir Interaction Model (simplified)

1. What did I just see or hear?
2. What did that mean?
3. How do I feel about that?
4. What will I do now?
What story am I telling myself about what I just saw or heard?
Habit #3: Notice Your Judgements

Dr. Virginia Satir
Habit #4: Ask “WTF?”
Habit #4: Ask “Where’s That From?”

Ellen Grove
Fundamental Attribution Error
My actions are a reflection of my circumstances.
Your actions are a reflection of your character.
If I assume I am actually dealing with a reasonable person, and that they have a good reason for acting the way they do given their circumstances, what might those circumstances be?
Habit #4: Ask “Where’s That From?”

Ellen Grove
Understanding Each Other
Habit #5: Help People Empty Their Cup

Lee Jun-fan (Bruce Lee)
You cannot put tea in a cup that is already full.
Knowing that our ideas are understood by someone else helps us to empty our cup.
Reflective Listening
Advanced habit: Ask others to help you empty your own cup.
Habit #5: Help People Empty Their Cup

Lee Jun-fan (Bruce Lee)
Habit #6: Know & Disclose

Jim McCarthy
The Core Commitments

1. I commit to engage when present.
   (a) To know and disclose
      i. what I want,
      ii. what I think, and
      iii. what I feel.
   (b) To always seek effective help.
Hi, friends!

I'm feeling a little overwhelmed and unskilled right now. You know what would help me out? Reminders of either (a) a time you and I did something awesome together, or (b) a time I did something that was helpful to you, or (c) a time I was kind to you in a meaningful way.

Thanks!

67

193 Comments 1 Share
Rachael Groynom You've always been nothing but kind! I miss hanging out.

Like · Reply · 35w

Tim Newsome We're still married, and I remember our officiant with fondness. 😊

Like · Reply · 35w

Linda Ellen Hyde You are just so damned likeable.

Like · Reply · 35w
John Cutler: Great 1:1 conversations that both challenged my perspective and provided support.

Angelo Cavelli: It's not an exaggeration to say that you showed me how great a professional facilitator can be. Emulating you has helped me be a better coach and person.

Oana Theogarajan: Paul you not only helped teams form and find their groove but in the process you helped us become friends. That was fuckin awesome.
Heidi Shetzer Helfand I'll never forget when you stood on a table while facilitating 40 people!!!

Like · Reply · 35w

Heidi Shetzer Helfand And when you gave me strength so that together and only together we could cofound the sb agile Meetup group

Like · Reply · 35w

Heidi Shetzer Helfand And when you led the charge so we could do a constellation with 200 people and then you coached me to lead one that afternoon

Like · Reply · 35w · Edited
Blake Rickter: I haven't seen ya in years, but I remember Trevor Bliven, you and I would crash your basement pretending we were WWF wrestlers. Someone always got hurt. I think we also all had to pick our fin8shing move.

Trevor Bliven: You got me into cub scouts and tee ball when we were kids

Trevor Bliven: And that was in spite of the fact that I was regularly a jerk to you
Tom Hockensmith Paul Tevis I probably haven't seen you since 1996... but as Samuel Spade mentioned you are part of some of my greatest memories from the 90's. I'm sure you're still the smartest person in the room but most will notice your kindness first. You are one of a kind. You got this.
Paul Tevis Holy crap you guys. Who is chopping onions in here?

Like · Reply · 35w
Habit #6: Know & Disclose

Jim McCarthy
Habit #7: Ask for Reactions
When things get tricky, slow down and help with the processing.
Ways to ask for reactions
Ways to ask for reactions

● How was it to hear that?
Ways to ask for reactions

- How was it to hear that?
- How does that land with you?
Ways to ask for reactions

- How was it to hear that?
- How does that land with you?
- What does that bring up for you?
Ways to ask for reactions

- How was it to hear that?
- How does that land with you?
- What does that bring up for you?
- I’m wondering if that was hard to hear...
Habit #7: Ask for Reactions
1. What is Empathy?
2. Why does Empathy Matter?
3. What are some Empathy Habits you can develop?
Others’ Emotions & Experiences

Sharing
Experience Sharing
Emotional Empathy
Personal Distress

Thinking About
Mentalizing
Cognitive Empathy
Theory of Mind

Caring About
Empathic Concern
Motivational Empathy
Compassion

paul@vigemus.com
Empathy Advantages

Leading Effective Teams

Leading Across Differences

Leading with Backbone & Heart
Treat Feelings as Data
Listen at Level 2+
Notice Your Judgments
Ask “Where’s that From?”
Help People Empty Their Cup
Know & Disclose
Ask for Reactions
These things are simple.

That doesn’t mean they are easy.
7 Empathy Habits available at

http://vigemus.com/empathy
7 Empathy Habits available at

http://vigemus.com/empathy
The following images are used under a CC license which requires attribution:

- [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Safari_Endeavour.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Safari_Endeavour.jpg) (Wolfgang Kähler)
- [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Urchin.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Urchin.jpg) (Ratha Grimes)
- [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Proxy_pattern_diagram.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Proxy_pattern_diagram.svg) (TravisHein)
- [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jim_McCarthy.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jim_McCarthy.jpg) (Rkasper)