



# Empathy Models: Video Case Analysis

## FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

### Tedx Talk:

If time, it is worth playing and discussing the [17 minute Tedx Talk](#) by Dr. Helen Riess, the psychiatrist who created the E.M.P.A.T.H.Y™ tool with which we work.

### Introduction to Empathy (can be read to participants or summarized by leader):

*Although debated at one time, neuroscientists generally agree that almost all humans have the capacity to be empathic and grow that capacity, if desired. Empathic capacity involves three components, perceiving, processing and responding. When you perceive a person is in pain and/or experiencing an adverse event, an empathic person may experience discomfort as well. The Empathy Video Cases and the E.M.P.A.T.H.Y.™ Observation Protocol that is specific to Ms. Roberts and Amina are designed to help us process students' adverse classroom or school experiences and respond with empathy.*

*Empathic accuracy is when you have understood a person's emotions correctly (the best way to know is to ask them). Some roadblocks to empathy involve holding implicit biases against particular groups of people. Those implicit biases can cause us to act empathically towards only certain people. As you watch these videos of two classroom interactions, keep in mind some of the assumptions and stereotypes you may be making about the people involved.*

*As you have learned through the book club reading as well as other empathy activities, 90% of person-to-person communication is non-verbal (Riess, 2018). Look at the seven keys to empathic communication in the Protocol now and make sure you know what to look for with this tool.*

### Learning Goals (For Facilitator to guide the experience)

The first video represents a non-empathic interaction between a teacher and a student. In this scenario, the student feels neglected by the teacher and accuses the teacher of not supporting her with her struggles. The teacher responds with a typical microaggression and victim blaming. During the discussion of EXAMPLE 1, it is important to explicitly address the subtle victim-blaming and authoritative body language.

The second video represents an empathic interaction between a teacher and a student. In this scenario, the student feels neglected by the teacher and accuses the teacher of not supporting her with her struggles. The teacher listens to the student's concerns and addresses them explicitly. During the discussion of EXAMPLE 2, it is important to explicitly address the body language and tone of the teacher.

When discussing participants' entries in the E.M.P.A.T.H.Y.™ Observation Protocol, make sure to focus on the impact that each of the characteristics had on the students' mental state and actions. Address participants' (and the teachers') underlying biases that may have led to the empathic or non-empathic interaction. Facilitator-guided dialogues at the end of this document have "notes" throughout, pointing out certain empathy steps and/or microaggressions that should be noted somewhere during whole group reflection.

### Materials:

- Video Case [slideshow](#)
- Two Videos (*Ms. Roberts and Amina Example 1* and *Ms. Roberts and Amina Example 2*)
  - Have your participants watch the videos of the two interactions synchronously as a whole group. Ms. Roberts and Amina's Example 1 should be done first, with a pause for participants to make any last-minute reflections or notes. Ms. Roberts and Amina's Example 2 should be second, with some time for participants to make notes afterward.
- E.M.P.A.T.H.Y.™ Observation Protocol Tool that is specific for [Ms. Roberts and Amina](#).
  - Pass out, or direct participants to the appropriate place in their empathy journal, the E.M.P.A.T.H.Y.™ observation protocol that is specific to Ms. Roberts and Amina. Ask participants to read the contents of the left column called **criteria**. Discuss any examples if necessary. Let participants know that the middle two columns are for note-taking while watching an interaction between Ms. Roberts and Amina. The right column is for reflection purposes after the fact. If participants have watched the Tedx Talk, have them connect the observation protocol to the ideas Dr. Riess discussed. E.M.P.A.T.H.Y.™ observation protocol that is specific to Ms. Roberts and Amina is designed ONLY to be used to take observation notes as they watch the two example interactions.

### Activity Setup:

Consider giving a "**CONTENT WARNING**" similar to the Book Club to let participants know that there may be some scenes that might be offensive or bring forth some mental health symptoms. They may choose not to participate in this activity if these scenarios may cause stress and can leave at any time. Also, establish **ground rules** similar to the Book Club for engaging in sensitive discussions. Play the videos in the recommended order and have participants write/discuss their reflections on the specific prompts in the Empathy Journals.

## **Step-by-Step Facilitation Guide for Video Case Analysis:**

1. Play the [17-minute Tedx Talk](#) by Dr. Helen Riess, the psychiatrist who created the E.M.P.A.T.H.Y™ tool with which we work.
2. Read aloud both the content warning and ground rules before beginning the play:

### **CONTENT WARNING:**

*There are some instances in the videos that might be offensive or set off some mental health symptoms. The video(s) contains themes such as victim blaming, microaggressions, disrespectful language, biases, and assumptions. You may choose not to participate in this activity if these scenarios may cause you stress and you can leave at any time.*

### **GROUND RULES:**

*Since these plays contain sensitive topics, it is important to set some ground rules about how we will talk about them.*

- **Center the Voices of Minoritized People:** While multiple perspectives are necessary for growth, it is important to center voices of people of color and people that represent other oppressed populations (e.g., impoverished, LGBTQ2S+, multilingual learners/immigrants, students with disabilities, etc.)
- **Do Not Impose a Teaching Tax:** Do not expect people from minoritized populations to teach the group; they are not required to do so, and should participate in ways that are affirming to them.
- **Speak Your Truth:** Share from your own experiences and do not speak for others
- **Seek to Understand:** Listen to learn, not to find the flaw in someone's perspective; think about your reason for responding before doing so.
- **Respect Others' Experience:** We may have different OR similar stories to share, and contexts to draw from. All are legitimate.
- **Disagree Without Discord:** Disagreement is expected. HOWEVER,
  - Approach unexpected ideas with curiosity, not accusation.
  - If you disagree, ask questions to understand. Don't attack the speaker.
- **Share the Air:** Make room for all voices to be heard, and don't dominate the conversation.
- **Confidentiality:** Do not share the experiences you hear in this space outside this space without the participants' permission.

- **Be Comfortable with Discomfort:** We are all learning and will make mistakes. Take risks and do not freeze someone in time if they make a mistake. Assume that each participant is engaging to learn.
- **New Ground Rules:** Ask participants if there are any other ground rules they would like to add

Adapted from UMass Amherst Equity & Inclusion Learning Community Overview

3. Give 5-10 minutes for the participants to read the Ms. Roberts and Amina Observation Protocol, especially the criteria column.
4. Now, Play the [Ms. Roberts and Amina Example 1](#) TWICE.
  - a. Ask the participants to just watch the video the first time and they can take notes on the Ms. Roberts and Amina Observation Protocol during the second time. Remind the observers to focus only on the middle column(s).
5. After the video has ended, give 5-10 minutes for participants to make any last minute reflections on their E.M.P.A.T.H.Y.<sup>™</sup> Observation Protocol that is specific to Ms. Roberts and Amina.
6. Now, Play the [Ms. Roberts and Amina Example 2](#) TWICE.
  - a. Ask the participants to just watch the video the first time and they can take notes on the Ms. Roberts and Amina Observation Protocol during the second time. Remind the observers to focus only on the middle column(s).
7. After the video has ended, give 5-10 minutes for participants to make any last minute reflections on their E.M.P.A.T.H.Y.<sup>™</sup> Observation Protocol that is specific to Ms. Roberts and Amina.
8. Now that both videos have been watched and analyzed individually, Break into small groups of 2-3 participants
  - a. Have participants compare notes from their E.M.P.A.T.H.Y.<sup>™</sup> Observation Protocol that is specific to Ms. Roberts and Amina.
  - b. Have participants answer the **Reflection Questions** in the right column of E.M.P.A.T.H.Y.<sup>™</sup> Observation Protocol that is specific to Ms. Roberts and Amina.

#### Reflection Questions:

- Which example demonstrated an empathic interaction between teacher and student?
- How did the empathic teacher's eye contact, facial expressions, and posture contribute to creating a supportive and understanding environment for the student? In addition, how did the same impact the willingness to engage and respond to the teacher?
- In both scenarios, what impact did the teacher's affect and tone of voice have on the student's willingness to share their struggles and engage in the learning process?
- How did the teacher's active listening and consideration of the student as a whole person (beyond just their academic performance) or a lack thereof such listening and consideration contribute to fostering a sense of trust and safety?
- Reflecting on the student's response in both examples, what changes did you observe in their attitude, confidence, or motivation throughout the interaction with the teacher?

9. Debrief the participants' responses to the reflection questions as a whole group.

10. *After the debrief session, have participants write their reflections on the Overall Reflection Questions in their Empathy Journals.*

**Overall Reflection Questions:**

- In both examples, when the teacher demonstrated empathic vs non-empathic behavior towards the student, what specific actions or behaviors did you notice that conveyed empathy or lack thereof?
- After reflecting on both examples, at what point in the interaction could Ms. Roberts have changed their response?
- Based on your observations of both examples, how would you describe the importance of empathy in a classroom setting and its potential impact on students' learning outcomes and emotional well-being?

## Empathy Video Case Dialogues

### Ms. Roberts and Amina (Example 1)

#### Characters:

- **Ms. Roberts:** A strict math teacher.
- **Amina:** A struggling student in Ms. Roberts' math class.

**Scene:** A math classroom. Ms. Roberts stands at the front of the class, wrapping up the conversation on equations.

*[Ms. Roberts turns around to face the class.]*

**Ms. Roberts:** Today, we focused on the concept of quadratic equations and we'll begin to do the same tomorrow. But, before you all go, I would like to talk with some of you all individually. Amina, would you mind staying back for a moment?

*[Amina looks nervous, keeps her head bowed, and stays seated as the other students start to leave. Moment of silence as the classroom clears out.]*

*[Ms. Roberts walks over to Amina's desk and hovers over Amina]*

**Ms. Roberts:** You have a failing grade in this class right now. What seems to be the problem?

*[Amina looks down, avoiding eye contact.]*

**Facilitator Note:** Participants should be encouraged to make note of the body language (both Amina's and the teacher's body language)

**Amina:** It's the concepts, Ms. Roberts. I just don't get it. I don't get anything.

*[Ms. Roberts' facial expression shows impatience and frustration.]*

**Ms. Roberts:** Amina, what don't you get? We've studied these concepts day in and day out. Look at the board. We go over these. I don't get what your issue is.

*[Ms. Roberts stands, displaying a rigid and authoritative posture.]*

**Facilitator Note:** Participants should be encouraged to make note of how Ms. Roberts responds to Amina's struggles

**Amina:** I have a lot of things going on right now and I'm just trying to figure this all out.....

**Ms. Roberts:** *[Interrupts sternly]* I think you should spend more time studying and less time making these excuses.

*[Ms. Roberts' affect is condescending, cold, and detached.]*

**Amina:** I do study Ms. Roberts. I study all night. I just don't get it- It's too confusing...

**Ms. Roberts:** *[Interrupts again]* I don't want to hear it. Okay. I have tutoring. Do you come to that? Study groups? Office hours? You don't show up to any of them. If you cared, then maybe you would show up.

**Facilitator Note:** Participants should note that Ms. Roberts interrupts Amina and what these interruptions say about the extent to which she values Amina's responses to her questions (i.e. it seems like they are rhetorical because Ms. Roberts is not listening)

**Amina:** I do care.*[Close to tears]* I'm trying my best Ms. Roberts. I really am. I just don't get what's going on.

*[Ms. Roberts dismisses Amina's concerns without considering any external factors or personal challenges he might be facing.]*

**Ms. Roberts:** Listen. I can't be bothered with your personal issues. Personal issues are meant to stay outside of the classroom. Okay? I expect you to come to class tomorrow ready to learn.

*[Ms. Roberts folds her arms and stares down at Amina]*

**Amina:** *[Resistant]* Well I can't be bothered with your Math.

*[Amina starts packing up her things]*

**Facilitator Note:** Participants should note that Amina's frustration in trying to explain her struggles turns into resistance/behavioral issue when she sees that she is not being heard

**Ms. Roberts:** Amina, you know that's disrespectful. Imagine what would happen if I called your parents.

**Amina:** *[Frustrated]* Whatever.

*[Amina picks up her backpack and proceeds to walk out of the classroom]*

*[The scene ends with Amina feeling discouraged and isolated, unable to seek assistance or improve his understanding of the subject.]*

## Ms. Roberts and Amina (Example 2)

### Characters:

- **Ms. Roberts:** A compassionate math teacher.
- **Amina:** A struggling student in Ms. Robert's math class.

**Scene:** A math classroom. Ms. Roberts stands at the front of the class, wrapping up the conversation on equations.

*[Ms. Roberts turns around to face the class.]*

**Ms. Roberts:** That's all for today, everyone! Today, we focused on the concept of quadratic equations and we'll do the same tomorrow. But, before you all leave, I would like to talk with some of you all individually. Amina, would you mind staying back for a moment?

*[Amina looks hesitant but nods and stays seated as the other students start to pack up their bags. Moment of silence as the classroom clears out.]*

*[Ms. Roberts walks over to Amina's desk, maintaining eye contact throughout and sits down next to her.]*

**Ms. Roberts:** *[In a kind tone]* Amina, I've noticed you've been struggling lately in class. What seems to be going on?

*[Amina looks down, avoiding eye contact.]*

**Facilitator Note:** Participants should be encouraged to make note of when and how the teacher decided to bring this up (by waiting until the rest of the class was dismissed and by approaching the conversation with curiosity rather than with a corrective tone, the teacher is supporting the development of an environment that makes space for empathy).

**Amina:** Ummm *[Frustrated]* I just don't get it, Ms. Roberts. I try, but it feels like I'm not making any progress.

*[Ms. Roberts' facial expression shows genuine concern and empathy.]*

**Ms. Roberts:** Hey, that's okay. And it's normal. You know is there anything in particular? We could try a new strategy maybe.

*[Ms. Roberts maintains an open and relaxed posture.]*

**Facilitator Note:** Participants should be encouraged to make note of the fact that the teacher is normalizing that struggle is a part of life and the learning process. Also note any productive body language observed



**Amina:** [Mumbles] I don't see how that's going to help me.

*[Amina defeatedly pulls up her hand and rests it on under her chin]*

**Ms. Roberts:** Well, *[Encouragingly]* I'm here to help you. So, can you show me the specific areas that you find most difficult? *[Picks up the packet that is sitting on Amina's desk]*

*[Amina hesitates for a moment, then starts explaining her struggles with solving quadratic equations.]*

*[Ms. Roberts maintains a calm and reassuring affect.]*

**Amina:** I- I just don't know where to start. It's too many steps and it's all just confusing to me.

**Ms. Roberts:** Okay well, let's try— *[flips through the packet]* maybe these ones? And, it's completely normal to feel overwhelmed at times, Amina.

*[Amina visibly relaxes, feeling heard and understood.]*

**Facilitator Note:** Participants should be encouraged to make note the fact that the teacher supports the students by pointing to a concrete problem for them to think through together and for Amina to point out some of the challenging areas

**Amina:** [Mumbles] ok, I guess.

**Ms. Roberts:** So let's break it down into smaller steps. I'll guide you through the process, and we'll solve a few examples together. Sounds good?

*[Amina nods, showing a glimmer of hope.]*

**Ms. Roberts:** Okay, so first off we have this example. Which is  $y = 3x^2 + 2x + 4$ .

*[Fades/Inaudible Dialogue as Ms. Roberts proceeds to explain the quadratic equations step by step, pausing to answer Amina's questions and providing additional examples.]*

*[Amina solving a quadratic equation problem with Ms. Roberts' guidance, her confidence gradually building.]*

**Ms. Roberts:** Good job, Amina! So, how do you feel about what you did?

**Amina:** I get it a little more. *[Amina smiles]*

**Ms. Roberts:** I'm glad to hear it helped, Amina. But, Beyond math, is there anything else going on? Anything, maybe at home?

*[Amina hesitates, then opens up about personal difficulties at home.]*

**Facilitator Note:** It may be good to pause here and get participants' reactions to Ms. Roberts strategy of asking about Amina's struggles and the connection to her personal life.

**Amina:** Um, I do have something going on but um- I don't want to talk about it. [Apologetically] Sorry.

**Ms. Roberts:** No! No, no no no. That's okay. I just want you to know that we all have challenges outside of school and it's normal to be overwhelmed and stressed sometimes. You know my room is always a safe place to come if you need it. Okay?

**Facilitator Note:** Participants should note that Ms. Roberts says that it is okay that Amina did not want to share. Ms. Roberts also makes it clear that her room is always available for Amina as a "safe place".

**Amina:** Okay [Big smile and a look of big relief] Thank you Ms. Roberts.

**Ms. Roberts:** Yeah. Have a good day! [Gives a big smile]

**Amina:** You too! [Starts packing up her things]

*[The scene ends with them sharing a genuine smile]*