DEGREBE

Development of Green Skills for Better Employability

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Module 4 Sustainability, Empathy

The concept of sustainability has been used since the 1970s. Since then, a number of related concepts and metrics have been developed to promote sustainability. Numerous guidelines, reports and sets of recommendations have been produced at global level, but the idea of sustainability is still little known and practised.

Empathy is the capacity of the personality to empathize with the other person's state of mind in direct communication with the other person. The main means of understanding and intuition is the evocation of the emotions and various tensions of the other person through empathy. This can also be expressed in terms of the personality projecting itself into the other. The experience of the other person's state of mind can be expressed on an emotional-inductive level. Sympathy becomes empathy when the experience is consciously processed, and the context of the other person is named and interpreted for oneself.

1. Sustainability

1.1. The concept of sustainability

The concept of sustainability was jointly developed by Club of Rome scientists in the 1970s in the Limits to Growth report, by the Brundtland Commission's (the UN World Commission on Environment and Development) report Our Common Future in 1987, and by the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development.

Sustainability is broadly defined as living in the present in a way that ensures a happy, healthy and liveable future for us and our descendants in the long term, while keeping consumption, resource use and economic growth within the limits set by nature.

The most important element of the idea of sustainability is to rethink consumption and production, questioning the consumer society and the economic system that serves it. Current consumption and production patterns in society make it impossible to meet the needs of future generations. It is now clear that the trends established and maintained by

a technocratic civilisation that exploits energy and natural resources to the limit are unsustainable.

Sustainable development rests on three pillars: the social, economic, and environmental pillars.

In addition to the concept of sustainable development, the Brundtland Commission also set out the principles needed to achieve sustainability. These are the following:

- Respecting and protecting communities,
- Improving the quality of human life,
- Minimising the use of non-renewable resources,
- Growth that respects the limits of the Earth's carrying capacity,
- Changing individual behaviour and habits,
- Motivating and empowering local communities to care for their own environment,
- Building national cooperation to develop sustainability strategies,
- Global partnerships, agreements.

Sustainability issues can be examined at many levels (individual, family, corporate, national, regional, global). Sustainability issues can be examined at many levels (individual, family, corporate, national, regional, global). Different challenges, perspectives and interests are and can be brought to the front at each level.

As part of its sustainable development agenda, the United Nations has set and adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by its member states. These are the goals that states are expected to adhere to in their economic processes in order to achieve them by 2030.

The 17 general objectives are as follows:

- Goal 1: Eradicate all forms of poverty in all parts of the world;
- Goal 2: End hunger, improve food security and nutrition, promote sustainable agriculture;
- Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and well-being for all, regardless of age;

- Goal 4: Ensure high quality, inclusive and equitable education and lifelong learning opportunities for all;
- Goal 5: Ensure gender equality and empower women and girls;
- Goal 6: Ensure access to water and sanitation for all and sustainable water and sanitation management;
- Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all;
- Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all;
- Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation;
- Goal 10: Reducing inequalities within and between countries;
- Goal 11: Building inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and other settlements;
- Goal 12: Develop sustainable consumption and production patterns;
- Goal 13: Take immediate action to address climate change and its impacts;
- Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development;
- Goal 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainable forest management, stop desertification, stop and reverse land degradation, stop biodiversity loss;
- Goal 16: Creating peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, ensuring access to justice for all, building well-functioning, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels;
- Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and renew the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

In addition to the concept of sustainability, we need to be familiar with other related concepts.

One of these is the concept of ecosystem services. These include the benefits that people derive from the ecosystem for people and communities.

The concept of a green economy is to green the economy as a whole, to mainstream sustainability into everyday life. This includes advanced environmental thinking, cleaner, more material-efficient production, waste minimisation, environmentally friendly products and product chains, green energy production based on renewable energy sources, more efficient energy use and energy saving. In general, the term refers to an economy in which all production and consumption decisions are made with regard to the well-being of society and the overall health of the environment.

The concept of corporate social responsibility expresses the commitment of the company's management to the well-being of the environment and society, in addition to the economic and efficient operation of the company. In practice, this means that management takes environmental and social aspects into account when carrying out a risk analysis prior to a decision.

The concept of sustainable food production

Sustainable food production and consumption is about promoting more environmentally friendly, resilient, healthy, and equitable food systems. Food systems are responsible for around a third of the world's greenhouse gas emissions, mainly through agricultural production. It is a priority to reduce carbon emissions from agriculture. At the same time, other sectors of food production, such as packaging, processing and transport, also have a major climate impact. More environmentally friendly production systems that respect biodiversity and ecological aspects must be introduced. However, it is clear that this change cannot happen overnight, especially if we do not provide adequate support for producers to change their current production practices and move to more sustainable production methods using new agro-ecological methods. The production of food to feed a growing population is a challenge for the global economy. Food production damages arable land, reduces habitat for living organisms, requires huge amounts of drinking water and increases greenhouse gas emissions. To keep our planet liveable, reforming the way we produce and consume food is more relevant socially, environmentally and economically than ever before.

It is important to know that about 1/3 of the crops consumed by humans benefit to some extent from **pollination** by bees or other insects. In Europe alone, 4,000 vegetable

varieties depend on the work of flower pollinators, but so do many of our fruit trees need insects to pollinate them. Cherries, sour cherries, strawberries, tomatoes, apples, pears, almonds, sunflowers, wheat, rice, maize and many other crops we eat regularly are pollinated by bees. In addition to crops in cultivation, 90% of wild plants are also reproduced by insect pollination. Wild pollinating insects are becoming increasingly scarce all over the world. For this reason, it is important to try to provide suitable habitat for pollinators. Centuries ago, they lived almost alongside us, nesting in the walls of a mud house or under our roof. Today the situation has changed, and our building methods are less favourable to them. Moreover, many people have an unjustified aversion to them. If we put bee colonies in areas where there are flowering hedges, small gardens, community gardens, parks with a variety of plants, flower-covered balconies, we have already helped.

Major reforms are needed in food production to meet the ever-changing needs of a growing population and consumers, as well as to respond to the challenges of climate change. In the absence of arable land and agriculture, large cities rely on imported food, often from surrounding areas, but more often hundreds or thousands of kilometres to reach store shelves. This long supply chain is extremely demanding in terms of human and natural resources, and also has a serious environmental impact. As more and more conscious consumers seek to eat local food, food production is moving closer to the consumer.

The concept of sustainable consumption

There are several definitions of sustainable consumption. On the one hand, it can mean unsustainable consumption, consumption in a different way or a lifestyle that goes back to tradition, and it can also mean less consumption or even more efficient consumption. There is no clear definition of what is right and what is professional behaviour if we want to live sustainably.

Basic conditions for shifting consumption patterns towards sustainability:

- education and awareness raising,
- creating a value system and infrastructure,
- developing efficient technologies and products,

- developing public regulation.

Also related to this the concept of socially responsible consumers, who are consumers who take into account the social consequences of their individual consumption or take care to reverse negative changes in society through their purchasing power, who take sustainability into account in their purchasing decisions, and who consider the social, economic and environmental impacts of their purchasing decisions.

1.2. Key theories of sustainability

It is known from literature that consumers are generally aware of environmental problems. Yet, surveys show that the average European is reluctant to act in an environmentally friendly way, especially if it affects their lifestyle. The average European is not willing to give up the everyday convenience of driving, shopping, etc. Yet some researchers argue that radical lifestyle changes are needed to reduce environmental impacts, while others suggest more modest, less radical changes for the time being.

However, there are now social groups who recognise their own responsibility and are trying to take action to reduce their environmental impact. Such groups include, among others, the followers of the LOHAS (lifestyle of health and sustainability), low waste, zero waste lifestyles. While the first group is conscious of their health and sustainability, members of the other groups aim to reduce and minimise their waste and their ecological footprint in general.

It is typical of human behaviour that we know how we should act, but we choose to act differently and often take the easy way out. Because of this phenomenon, some experts argue that knowledge of environmental information is not enough, because it does not immediately lead to environmentally conscious actions. However, there is evidence in the literature that knowledge of environmental problems and actions is a necessary condition for action, but not a sufficient condition for action. Nevertheless, a group of researchers believe that increasing knowledge can have a positive impact on environmentally responsible behaviour.

Csutora-paradox

That knowledge is not enough is further reinforced by the fact that the environmental impact of green and uncommitted consumers with the same income is not significantly different. In fact, consumers do not always do what could have an effective outcome in reducing their environmental impact due to a lack of (usable) information and the choice of an easier route. Moreover, many act on the basis of non-professional assumptions. So there is behaviour change, but it does not have the results that we would expect. This phenomenon is known as. This is known as the Csutora Paradox or the Behaviour-Impact Gap. This theory states that behaviours that are easy to perform or actions that are perceived to be environmentally conscious based on misinformation can easily result in a higher ecological footprint than neutral or non-environmentally conscious actions. The Behaviour-Impact Gap clearly shows that individuals need professionally based guidance in order to practice environmentally responsible behaviours with the right impact.

Circular economy

The circular economy aims to preserve and maintain the value of the products, materials and resources used in the economy for as long as possible and to minimise waste. The concept combines several theoretical concepts and practical solutions: from industrial ecology, cradle-to-cradle and the blue economy concept to biomimicry. The circular economy is a new development paradigm with a holistic vision that integrates the different subsystems of the pillars of sustainability (economy, society and environment) in a multifaceted way. The initiative aims to transform an economic system based on the "take-what-you-use" principle into a resource-efficient system.

The economics of localisation

This approach argues that the vast majority of human needs can be met locally and economically. This is based on the fact that technological progress has made it possible to make relatively small-scale operations economically viable. And on this basis it is not inefficient to transfer control of the means of production and of the flow of goods from producer to consumer back to local communities from global and multinational organisations. The approach offers a social, political and economic framework for individuals, communities and business actors to rediversify local economies.

Boosting and developing the local economy is of paramount importance today. This includes the promotion of local products, their recognition, promotion and marketing, the development of local businesses, local alternative energy production, autonomous small community energy supply, etc..

The local product

A local product is a product produced in a particular municipality or region using local resources and involving local economic actors. Local products are typically produced by the population and by micro and small enterprises. They are typically produced, sold and consumed locally and the distribution channels may be shorter than for non-local products. The resulting added value is local and contributes locally to the development of the economy and society.

1.3. Quality of life and consumption

In the last hundred years, the use, exploitation and presence of many things have increased (e.g. nature, resources, pollution, extinction of species), while the presence and use of other things (happiness, local values, natural environment) have decreased.

The Earth is finding it increasingly difficult to support the human population and to compensate for the negative effects of human existence. This has been documented since the 1700s, but has not been halted or reversed, despite the opportunities offered by technological progress.

This path could easily lead us into a new world of scarcity, where resources are scarce not because they are not well distributed or not good enough, but because they are depleted.

We have built our economy on a few scarce (limited) resources, including oil and gas, which are not available forever. The more sophisticated our way of life becomes, the more vulnerable we become to these resources.

Building on these resources, we have created vast monoculture systems that are highly efficient, but based on these scarce resources. This makes these super systems vulnerable and unstable. They lack flexibility and diversity and the capacity to change.

Our globalised world has also evolved with the help of cheap oil and gas-based transport, and today almost all our tools, objects and food depend on a raw material, component or ingredient found in a remote part of the world. It is obvious that if these transport routes are disrupted or become more expensive, our tools, objects and foodstuffs could disappear from the shelves or become prohibitively expensive. Today, however, we have quickly become accustomed to this prosperity and abundance, and we can no longer imagine our lives without it, without almost unlimited consumption.

In connection with this, society is often confused by calls to reduce and cut back consumption.

However, there are initiatives that focus on other aspects rather than consumption and try to give life a different meaning.

These initiatives focus on human creativity, contemplation and a willingness to act, and encourage people to own and buy fewer things. They give a central role to small communities in the face of a globalised world, where human relationships and the environment are once again at the forefront.

One such initiative is the bioregional model, which is not a 'back to nature' type of concept, but an economic philosophy in which economic actors focus on local resources and meeting local needs in a non-hierarchical society. In a region-based society, multicultural communities of diverse values can be built or developed, in which members of society are interdependent.

Such models are based on, and are also premised on, an intelligent, broad-minded citizen who prefers local goods and services, who is "different and more" than what global capitalism requires as a "consumer".

1.4. The sustainability indicators

Gross Domestic Product

GDP (gross domestic product) is the monetary value of all the final consumption goods (goods and services) produced in an area over a given period of time (usually one year).

GDP measures national income and economic output. GDP per capita is often used as an indicator of average living standards.

One method of determining GDP is to calculate it on an output basis. In this method, the total output of all the actors in society is calculated separately and then summed. The components of GDP are: household consumption, government consumption, business investment, net exports (difference between exports and imports).

GDP also has economic shortcomings because it does not take into account the informal economy or work done within the household, but it does take into account activities to repair environmental damage. However, perhaps the biggest problem with GDP is that it does not take into account the cost of increasing economic output. The Earth's resources and living things are finite, and over-using them will be at the expense of future generations.

The fact that GDP per capita is higher in one country does not mean that people are better off in another, because income is not used with the same efficiency everywhere. Moreover, if a country's GDP increases, it does not necessarily mean that well-being increases. As has been said, rebuilding after a natural disaster increases GDP, but not welfare. It is therefore recommended to look beyond GDP to other (alternative) measures that give a more accurate picture of the well-being of a society.

Measure of Economic Welfare (MEW)

This index, which is a better measure of well-being than GDP (the economic well-being index), adds the value of leisure time and the value of non-wage activities to the value of GDP, which is based on goods and services only, but subtracts the value of the environmental damage caused. The index is monetised and takes into account only monetary values.

Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare (ISEW)

Several elements of the ISEW indicator are identical to the MEW index. ISEW = personnel expenditure + public expenditure (excluding defence) + value of unpaid works - private defence expenditure - cost of environmental damage.

The starting principle of the construction is clear: certain items do not serve welfare and should not be added to the welfare index but subtracted.

What MEW and ISEW, and similar indicators, have in common is that they rely on the national accounting system, the backbone of GDP calculation, and include some non-market factors in this system. The obvious disadvantage of this approach is that it tries to transfer the monetary values from the social and environmental spheres to the economic sphere: on the one hand, it gives priority to real economic values that are actually measured in monetary terms, and on the other hand, it inevitably neglects important social and environmental aspects that cannot be expressed in monetary terms or are simply left out of the calculation.

Two main procedural strands have emerged to overcome the methodological problem. One is to retain the different sub-indicators in their own dimension and produce a multidimensional indicator system instead of an aggregated unidimensional indicator, while the other procedure seeks to find unifying dimensions other than money to produce an aggregate value, such as ecological footprint, carbon footprint, or water footprint.

The ecological footprint

The metric was first introduced in 1996. The Ecological Footprint is defined as a measure of environmental space consumption, the amount of living space that can sustain a given human population at a given standard of living indefinitely. It measures the number of hectares of ecologically productive land required for the production of food and consumer goods, for infrastructure and built-up areas, and for the disposal of production waste and carbon dioxide sequestration by forests.

The ecological footprint is a measure of how much land and water a population needs to produce all the resources consumed, to neutralise all the waste, using the prevailing technology.

The ecological footprint is expressed in units of land per capita: gha/person (gha = global hectare).

Biocapacity

A concept related to the ecological footprint is biocapacity. It is also expressed in units of area per capita. This indicator shows the amount of productive land per capita on Earth and the number decreases as the Earth's population increases. The total biocapacity of a country is expressed as the amount of fertile land available in the country, measured in global hectares. If the biocapacity of a country is less than its ecological footprint, then that country's farming is not sustainable in the long term. We then talk about an ecological deficit and the country or region is operating in an ecologically unsustainable way.

Gross National Happiness

Gross national happiness (GNH) is an indicator designed to measure the happiness of a society. But since we all have a subjective understanding of happiness, what may mean happiness for some may mean unhappiness for others.

Areas of Gross National Happiness:

- Psychological well-being,
- Health
- Use of time
- Education
- Diversity and cultural resistance
- Good government
- Community vitality
- Diversity and ecological resistance
- Standard of living

Human Development Index

According to the Human Development Index, development is the process of expanding human capabilities. Every year since 1993, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has published HDI values in the Human Development Report (HDR). The HDI emphasises human life in health and creativity, and in making meaningful choices, in addition to consumption in the traditional sense.

This indicator measures the development of countries by combining health, education and wealth as an alternative to GDP, which is unilaterally expressed in monetary terms. While the HDI makes a significant step towards the human and social dimension, it neglects to include the environmental factor.

1.5. The role of environmental education in relation to sustainability

In ancient communities and religions, people looked upon nature and living things with admiration and humility. However, in the course of social and economic development, this view has changed and nature and living beings have come to be seen as capital, as resources to be exploited, as means to be used, and in some cases as obstacles. This attitude has led to problems on a global scale that we cannot solve and to a lack of uniform recognition of the problems at world level.

Modern pedagogy was initially dominated by nature education (nature education or conservation education), with the main aim of protecting living things, and later on, habitat protection. At that time, man was still a defined actor in the biosphere, a moral man living in harmony with nature.

By the end of the 20th century, mankind had reached a stage of technosphere development where it had become quite distant from its former natural environment, the biosphere. With technological progress, it has been able to exert progressively greater and greater environmental transformations and degradations, first at local and then at regional level. By the 1980s, it had become clear that environmental degradation was not only regional, but global. The majority of the damage can only be calculated over a long period of time, and the problems involve natural, economic and social elements, requiring a complex approach.

Environmental education has been around since Rachel Carson's Silent Spring in 1962. The author's book raised awareness of the harmful biological effects of chemicals used in nature and the global nature of the problem. It is also seen as the beginning of modern environmentalism.

In 1972, the UN convened the first World Environment Conference in Stockholm, called the UN Conference on the Human Environment. The conference focused on the impact

of economic growth on the environment. The conference concluded that interdisciplinarity and the development of in-school and out-of-school forms of environmental education should be introduced into the international environmental education agenda.

In 1975, the Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe stated that preventive measures are the most effective way of dealing with environmental damage and that the protection of the environment is promoted by the responsibility of all sections of the population, which requires continuous and intensive work of information and education, especially among young people.

Environmental education was defined in 1977 in the final report of the UNESCO conference in Tbilisi. "Environmental education is a process of raising a world generation that knows and cares about its wider environment and its problems. They have the knowledge, skills, attitudes, motivation and commitment to work individually and collectively to solve current problems and prevent new ones". Its recommendations included suggestions for adapting school curricula and developing materials to support environmental education.

Since the 2000s, the view has been accepted that the practice of environmental education, which encourages love and protection of nature, has broadened to include sustainable development and society. On this basis, pedagogy of sustainability means that environmental education also means changing attitudes and lifestyles, supported by the transfer of good practices, professional development of teachers and good education policies.

The World Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg in 2002, also stated that education is an essential tool for development, that sustainable development requires educated and active citizens, and that education plays a key role in this process, which requires increased financial and infrastructural support.

The period 2005-2014 has been designated by the United Nations as the Decade of Education for Sustainability, with the aim of integrating the core values of sustainability into all aspects of learning. Number of programmes, curricula and initiatives have

contributed to this goal, but overall attitudes have not changed at the societal level and have not been integrated into the system.

For the 21st century, one of the key issues in the pedagogy of sustainability has become the relationship between people and people, recognising the importance of cooperativity, the role of local knowledge and small communities, the need to combine individual and social responsibility, and the need for international cooperation. The solution, according to this principle, lies in the individual, the family, small groups of people who feel responsible for each other and for our environment.

It is now accepted that our global world is full of crises, whether social, cultural or environmental. Understanding these crises requires a holistic approach. And they can only be combated, or at least reduced, by aware and responsible people with a broad perspective.

This kind of holistic education includes the recognition that care and love for the environment only occurs when there is self-respect and care and love for other people. In contrast to material goods, the importance of joy, security, health, community is enhanced, and social capital, a resource hidden in the relationships between people, is valorised. This is also linked to the growing cooperation between the environmental profession, the green civil movement and the churches in recent years, and the launching of environmental awareness movements in the churches and their commitment to environmental responsibility.

1.6. Promoting sustainable behaviour among the population

Consumer behaviour is very complex and determined by many factors. In studying it, we look for characteristics such as what and how much consumers buy, who buys in a family and how they buy products, what their individual needs and feelings are, what information they have and where it comes from, or what they feel after having or acquiring a product. Based on this, knowing where consumers get each piece of information will help us to achieve more effective results by targeting messages through the identified channels. For example, promoting products with recyclable packaging, encouraging selective waste collection, raising awareness of the environmental impact of

eating meat, exposing hidden environmental costs or offering alternatives to environmentally conscious consumer behaviour.

In addition, the literature suggests that there are many motivations for greener behaviour. It can be due to tax or price increases, marketing effects, community power, internal attitudes or even the health of the individual and changes in health, among others. It can also be said that society and culture have a strong influence on people's behaviour. It is known that different relationships and group consciousness, for example, strongly influence the behaviour of individuals. There is research evidence that emotions have a greater influence on environmental behaviour than reason (e.g. environmental knowledge).

Consumer decision-making is also strongly influenced by family, friends, and other groups. "According to the so-called Easterlin paradox (or happiness paradox), relative income has a greater impact on our life satisfaction than absolute income, i.e. our satisfaction is more strongly influenced by how our relatives or neighbours live compared to us than by how much money we actually have".

We also know that comparing oneself to others can also lead to a form of follower behaviour (e.g. copying the behaviour of celebrities or respected people). In addition, some experts argue that to ensure that individuals do not spend their time according to the expectations of consumer society, community education is needed. It would be important to promote non-consumption activities such as socialising with friends, gardening, community activities, etc. However, in today's world system, this is a very difficult, long-term and often seemingly impossible challenge. Therefore, many researchers believe that being environmentally responsible is a responsibility that individuals cannot even manage on their own. They suggest initiating community-based activities rather than motivating individuals. Their research shows that community initiatives are often more successful because campaigns aimed at individuals fail to trigger the kind of community-based pattern-setting in people that communities can achieve.

Some have argued that choice-editing can address situations where people are not sufficiently environmentally aware and there is an urgent need for intervention. This could

be the case of government intervention to protect the environment, by introducing a new rule or imposing a mandatory service (e.g. mandatory selective collection, higher taxes on products with a proven high environmental impact).

But because people are reluctant to change their routines and avoid changes that involve sacrifice, they often reject regulations that they perceive as restrictions. Another group of experts therefore argues that creative, disguised solutions should be used to encourage consumers. Such methods include influencing consumer behaviour through information campaigns (social advertising) and good consumer behaviour, but also social communication (e.g. community marketing) or education.

An additional motivator for the uptake of environmentally responsible consumer behaviour can be to create the perception that consumers will benefit most from using green products, services or behaving in an environmentally responsible way. This is particularly important because some economic theories suggest that consumers seek to maximise benefits and make rational choices. So, if they perceive that the environmentally friendly activity (e.g. purchasing an environmentally friendly product as opposed to a conventional one) is the least costly and the most beneficial, they will undertake it and choose it from the alternatives available to them. And this perception can be achieved through a number of motivating factors (e.g. taxes, discounts, marketing, community impact).

In many cases, service development can also contribute to reducing the environmental burden on users. For example, in a suburb, if residents use a gardening service, they are acting in a much greener way than if they buy their own machines to carry out the activity in each household. This of course requires the availability of appropriate services. In addition, experts say that the shift from a consumer to a service society is key to reducing the environmental burden, while keeping GDP production constant.

It is therefore important to design and develop services that are environmentally friendly, yet also beneficial to consumers. Since consumer attitudes and available services are a major determinant of environmentally conscious action, it is in vain for an individual to have an environmentally conscious attitude if there is no infrastructure to support it (e.g.

he would sort but no organised collection or collection island; he would buy local produce but no opportunity to connect with local farmers - e.g. a local produce market). Experts argue that if a consumer is environmentally motivated but lacks the supporting infrastructure, the attitude is less likely to translate into real action. So, concrete solutions need to be given to individuals to translate environmental awareness into real action.

We also know that by sending positive messages, we reinforce in consumers the feeling that they can do something to protect the environment. Therefore, consumers should not be made to feel that their actions are useless, as this could undermine their awareness.

This brings us to the role of the media in promoting environmental awareness. However, the media currently have no interest in encouraging responsible consumer behaviour. However, by using different communication channels, using celebrities, well-known people and celebrities who are followed by many, and by creating a green trend, consumers who tend to follow the patterns of others could be encouraged. Stars and celebrities can help to set a good example to their fans and followers. As people tend to copy patterns of behaviour, the use of celebrities in an environmentally conscious campaign can be successful. One example is the so-called "got milk" campaign in the US, where celebrities promoted milk with a "milk mustache" on their portrait to promote milk consumption. In such campaigns, where individuals follow models who are perceived as attractive or prominent, the literature speaks of social learning.

It can be said that there is no single solution to reduce negative environmental impacts, but it is certain that individuals' choices have an impact on the environment. In summary, the following motivational tools can be used to motivate individuals to achieve environmental awareness and sustainability goals:

- improving the infrastructure of green services (e.g. accessible recycling service, gardening),
- green marketing strategies, tools,
- community marketing campaigns,
- legislation,
- community initiatives,

- other (e.g. education).

However, it is important to note that researchers believe that becoming a conscious consumer is a long journey, taking years and decades. In today's fast-paced world, this often seems too far away. Therefore, until this coveted goal is achieved for as many individuals as possible, methods and motivational tools are needed to promote faster results. Moreover, motivational tools do not always work as planned, and their impact is delayed or limited by a number of inhibiting factors. These are discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Inhibiting factors

The pressure of unrestrained economic growth, intensive agriculture, industrialisation and human activity without knowing the consequences have led to a state of our environment in recent decades that requires effective and powerful interventions. However, the overall goal in our world is still for many people unrestrained growth and consumption. Today, consumption is seen as the engine of economic growth, but the consequences of this have serious environmental impacts. Yet today, consumption in the welfare society provides a sense of comfort to which the individual living in it naturally clings.

According to Zsóka et al., "consumption contributes to the formation of our identity, our sense of identity, it defines our status in society, it is a means of differentiation. It plays a major role in maintaining social cohesion, in social and gender selection, in shaping the boundaries between sacred and profane, and carries both personal and collective meanings".

Consumption today is no longer a means of subsistence, but a means of comfort, wealth or self-expression. We have long since moved beyond the satisfaction of basic needs, and consumption has often become a form of entertainment.

On the basis of these findings, it can be argued that one of the obstacles to environmentally conscious behaviour may be intensive advertising that encourages consumption, and through it the whole culture of consumer society.

Thus, despite the wide range of motivational and incentive methods mentioned above, the dissemination and practice of environmentally responsible behaviour is not always successful. There are several reasons for this phenomenon other than consumer society. One of these is the situation where individuals face some kind of problem when following environmentally responsible purchasing behaviour. We know that purchasing (and other) decisions often require knowledge that the average consumer does not have and does not have the time or inclination to look up professional information. In addition, there is no universally valid logic or pattern of good, green behaviour. In such situations, even consumers who consider themselves to be environmentally aware can become uncertain and even make wrong choices. And those who are not committed to protecting the environment may simply not engage in problematic decision-making processes.

Some surveys suggest that another barrier to the spread of greener behaviour may be a lack of consumer trust in companies and their supposedly green products. This implies that trust is a key factor in shaping environmental attitudes and behaviour (too). It is important to underline that consumers' distrust is also reinforced when they perceive that the state or organisations are not environmentally conscious enough. In the long term, the aim is therefore for the government (also) to set a good example in terms of environmental awareness and for companies to operate according to truly green values. It would also be important that companies that create the appearance of environmental awareness for purely commercial reasons are properly sanctioned for misleading consumers.

It is also common for consumers not to choose the most environmentally friendly products because the time and energy invested in selecting them is part of the cost of consumption. It is therefore important that the benefits of green products are greater than those of conventional products. This is best achieved through targeted taxes and rebates. In practice, this means that sales of environmentally friendly products should be subsidised by discounts and lower taxes, while products with a negative environmental impact should be taxed more heavily.

It is well known that, in general, consumers make a rational choice, i.e. they seek to maximise utility by choosing the most favourable of the available alternatives. However,

consumers cannot always be considered as rational, as their knowledge of the available information and alternatives is not always complete. This is called information imperfection or asymmetry. Based on this theory, it can be argued that consumers demand a wider choice of environmentally friendly products. It is also important that consumers receive detailed and understandable information about green products, including their environmental benefits. This will increase the level of information and facilitate decision-making.

However, some researchers argue that the rational choice model is incorrect because consumers are not able to assess the exact impact of their actions. In fact, consumers prefer to shift environmental responsibility to businesses and government. It is pointless for individuals to have a high level of environmental involvement if they look to government for solutions. The overall objective is therefore that consumers themselves want a cleaner and more liveable environment and are willing to pay for it (e.g. through lifestyle changes, taxation).

Unfortunately, many consumers not only pass the buck, but also do not feel that they have a significant role to play in achieving environmental goals and therefore do not feel a responsibility to behave in an environmentally responsible way. The phenomenon of how important consumers feel their own role in protecting the environment is called perceived consumer efficiency. This level needs to be raised if consumer involvement and active engagement is to be achieved.

As already mentioned, consumers often lack accurate information about the real impact of their behaviour on the environment. This can lead to a situation where some actions are often over-valued and others under-valued. This suggests that expertise plays a very important role in green consumer choices. This can be interpreted as meaning that without information, a certain amount of learning and investment of energy, it is not possible to make the right decisions for those who follow green principles. For example, if consumers feel that it is right to buy organic (eco) products even if they are imported from the other side of the world, they are merely deluding themselves. These misconceptions must be replaced and corrected by professional knowledge.

Many people believe that improving production efficiency is enough to achieve sustainability, but many experts believe that it is not enough and that negative consumption patterns must also be changed. It has been shown that higher efficiency can lead to overconsumption. A good example of this is when the money saved on energy-saving equipment is spent on newer, more efficient machines or when efficient machines are used much more. In the end, the overall environmental burden only increases. This phenomenon is called the rebound effect.

In summary, some experts believe that individuals know they need to act, they know the risks, but avoid taking action for various reasons. Others believe that people's knowledge of environmental problems is very low and needs to be improved. Furthermore, it should not be overlooked that environmentally conscious behaviour needs to be supported by artificial means (e.g. taxes, services) in order to steer consumers' decisions in the right direction.

Ethical issues

When we talk about environmental awareness, we cannot ignore the fact that people in developing countries want to live at the same standard of living as people in developed countries. However, this goal would place an additional heavy burden on the environment. People in developed countries already have an ecological footprint larger than the Earth's carrying capacity. The main reason for this is the consumption patterns associated with higher living standards. We also know that the Earth reached its limits in 1986 and we have been overusing our resources ever since. Moreover, despite all efforts, the ecological footprint in developed countries now seems to be increasing. This ecological deficit will only increase if the inhabitants of developing countries also live the wasteful lives they aspire to. As the world's population continues to grow, so too will the impact on the inhabitants of developing countries, which will collectively further increase the environmental burden

The question arises whether developed countries have the right to restrict the inhabitants of developing countries. And there are also ethical questions about whether the inhabitants of developing countries have the right to reach levels that further strain the

earth's carrying capacity. It is also clear that while many people on earth are struggling to make ends meet and live from one day to the next, they cannot be motivated to give up the desire to consume more.

It is important to note, however, that some experts believe that people in developing countries feel more responsible for their own environmental impacts than people in developed countries. They are also more likely to take real action to protect the environment.

Of course, it is also true that the current lower ecological footprint in a developing country or region is possible because people living there can afford to consume less on a much lower income. This does not have the same ecological footprint as the lifestyle of developed countries.

It is important to see, however, that coercive and environmentally conscious behaviour are not equivalent. The removal of coercion can lead to a preference for a lifestyle with a negative environmental impact and a lower environmental impact. Therefore, it is of paramount importance to educate consumers in developing countries who do not overburden the earth even out of necessity. Developed countries have a duty to help the less developed economies to spread clean, environmentally friendly technologies and to socialise their inhabitants in a sustainable way.

However, it is also important to know that it is a scientifically proven fact that the top few per cent of society in terms of per capita income is responsible for the vast majority of consumption.

Consumption patterns are important drivers of food systems as well. We are already seeing signs of change. More and more consumers are becoming aware of their consumption habits. However, it is important not to focus only on the diets of a small group of people, but to ensure that healthy and culturally appropriate foods are available to all. It is unacceptable that those who cannot afford 'healthy' food are forced to buy insufficient or highly processed food. Everyone has the right to healthy and sustainable food and we must stand up for that right. Consumers, including the most vulnerable and younger generations, need our support in the form of education and accurate,

transparent information. They also need incentives to change their consumption habits. We also need to encourage and support change by taking a holistic approach to the food production system, encouraging the production and distribution of healthy and affordable food. Social protection measures are also needed to ensure that those in the most deprived situations can choose to buy healthy food themselves.

2. Empathty

Introduction

Our life management, which includes family, school and collegial relationships, requires a wide range of skills. One group of skills are measurable, demonstrable skills, such as 'hard skills', all of which we have on paper, for example, qualifications, competences learned and professional experience. This knowledge and experience are the individual's own personal, personal skills.

All these skills are developed in a particular community, which means that you have to fit in, you have to know how to behave. These are all social skills (soft skills) that we cannot put on paper, they are not immediately visible. Soft skills are a set of skills that are interpersonal (interpersonal = between individuals, personal) skills - the skill of relating to other people, how we communicate with others, how we interact with them. People are social beings, our relationships with ourselves and others determine our quality of life. And relationships are based on emotions, not on lexical knowledge and logic. By emotional intelligence we mean the ability of an individual to recognise, understand and manage emotions, both his or her own and those of others. These skills include empathy.

Empathy is one of the most important skills, a cornerstone of healthy human relationships and a driver of effective teamwork. It leads to greater personal and professional success and allows you to be happier.

2.1. The concept of empathy

The word empathy is of Greek origin, meaning strong emotion, passion, and originally meant understanding and empathising with works of art. Buda (1998) explains this on the

basis of Lipps (1903) in such a way that the attention of the art lover gradually becomes distanced from himself, self-reflection is displaced from the consciousness, instead the self merges with the object of the art experience, the picture or the sculpture, almost living into it.

The ancient Greek term has been given a new meaning by modern English terminology. In 1897, Edward B. Titchener, professor of psychology at Cornell University, while translating a work by the German psychologist Theodor Lipps, used the word empathy to render the term Einfühlung (empathy), and it became a scientific term (Buda, 1998).

The modern concept of empathy was developed by psychology, the psychology of the soul. It is the English term used by Alfred Adler in an English-language work published in the 1930s. Adler quotes from a text from the last century: "To empathize is to see with the eyes of another, to hear with the ears of another and to feel with the heart of another" (Buda, 1998).

In his psychoanalytic work, Freud considered empathy to be important for understanding the patient. According to him, at the heart of the process is the way in which attention, which has become detached from itself and forgotten itself, is given a new framework and content by seeking to fill in the subjective world of the other person's experience, the boundaries of experience. The capacity for empathy, which is at its core the flexible adaptation to the other's affairs, resonates with the psychological events of any other personality. In this way, the empathic personality does not dissolve in the other, but is able to evoke the other's emotional and cognitive states (Buda, 1998).

In the 1950s, when psychologist Carl Rogers developed his theory of personality using the methodology of the person-centred approach, the concept of empathy played an important role. In the development of psychoanalysis, empathy emerged as a significant concept in the 1970s and 1980s, since the effectiveness of therapy depends to a large extent on the empathy of the therapist.

The concept of empathy has been defined in many different ways, and we quote Béla Buda's definition:

Empathy is the capacity of the personality to empathize with the other person's state of mind in direct communication with the other person. The main means of understanding and intuition is the evocation of the emotions and various tensions of the other person through empathy. This can also be expressed in terms of the personality projecting itself into the other. The experience of the other person's state of mind can be expressed on an emotional-inductive level. Empathy becomes empathy when the experience is consciously processed and the context of the other person is named and interpreted for oneself.

2.2. Classification of empathy

We can distinguish three types of empathy.

1. Cognitive empathy

This type is the intellectual, mental understanding of someone else's feelings. It is the ability to help us to better understand the other person's point of view without feeling or experiencing them ourselves. For example, if a colleague loses their job, you can recognise the emotions they may be feeling. You can also understand how their emotions may be influencing their behaviour - but that doesn't mean you're experiencing anxiety. We can understand what he's thinking, we can articulate what he's feeling, but we don't experience the same emotions.

Cognitive empathy can be useful in negotiation, conflict resolution or persuasion.

2. Emotional (affective) empathy

People with affective empathy are able to empathise with other people's feelings, to feel what is happening to them. Although this is not always the case, it can include physical feelings that are consistent with such emotion. For example, if you see someone in great sadness after the loss of a loved one, you may also feel sad and experience chest or stomach pain while sensing this emotion in the other person.

Emotional empathy can be useful in any supportive situation, when giving feedback, change management.

3. Cooperative, social empathy

This type of empathy is about caring, about being helpful. We understand and empathise with the other person's situation and understand what they expect from us and are able to respond accordingly. That is, we care for them in the way they need to be cared for. We take concrete steps to help them in the way they want us to help them. That is why it is important to really listen to others and to respond to real needs when we want to help!

Social empathy can play a prominent role in leadership, in appraisal discussions and in strategic planning.

4. Motor empathy, mirror reflection

This is a process that is born in the subconscious and which causes us to automatically copy other people's expressions. In other words, it is not related to processing the emotions and feelings of others, but rather to the tendency to copy forms of non-verbal communication or another person's motor reflexes.

The definition may seem a bit complicated, but the reality is much simpler. It is mirror reflexion: we can pick up on another's mood, involuntarily reciprocate a smile, but it can also be observed, for example, when we yawn after seeing someone yawn. There is no emotional component (not even intellectual), we simply automatically imitate certain facial expressions of another person, as if we were a mirror.

But why does this happen?

The answer to this question lies in the way our mirror neurons work. Mirror neurons are the brain neurons that can control a process, such as an action or a sensation, and that are activated when we observe the same process in another person. Mirror neurons help us to understand the mood of others, to perceive their behaviour outside our awareness: without them there is no emotional understanding and empathy. The process of mirroring is simultaneous, involuntary and without any thought.

A good example of this can be seen in this video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E-iWZvdzeGM&ab_channel=FunnyVideos

2.3. Empathy or sympathy

The two terms are often confused and used synonymously. Synonym: a word with a related meaning that has the same or similar meaning as another word. When interpreting the word sympathy, it should be borne in mind that much of the material is written in English. In English, the term sympathy is not the same as in Hungarian. Sympathy in English means sympathy, while in Hungarian it means (a) instinctive attraction to another person; (b) sympathetic approval or support.

When someone is experiencing some kind of difficulty, the people around them are in some way emotionally connected to the problem, the emotional response can be empathy or sympathy.

In sympathy, we feel sorry for the other person, but keep our emotional distance. Comments made with sympathy tend to belittle the other person's feelings, urging them to hide their pain and bad feelings. When interpreting the word sympathy, it should be borne in mind that much of the material is written in English. In English, the term sympathy is not the same as in Hungarian. Sympathy in English means sympathy, while in Hungarian it means (a) instinctive attraction to another person; (b) sympathetic approval or support.

With empathy, we understand the other person's feelings and problems, see the world from their point of view and can help the other person cope with their problems. Empathy also requires us to stay away from judgement, all we need to do is to recognise and connect with the other person's emotions and interpret and understand the other person's experiences and feelings from their perspective. In this way, we show that the other person is not alone in their problem.

Theresa Wiseman, a clinician, and researcher, has outlined four things that are necessary for empathy, for an empathic response:

- The ability to see the world as the other person sees it
- A non-judgmental attitude
- Understanding the feelings of others

- Ability to communicate what we understand from the other's feelings.

Example:

"In recent months, my relationship with my boss has deteriorated. It's as if he's trying to make my job impossible. It's like he's trying to force me to work for him. I've been with this company for ten years, we've built up a lot together, and now this situation is making me feel completely insecure. Should I resign? "

1. Yes, I've been there myself, when my boss refused to sit down with me, then I stammered on for weeks, and then even colleagues plagued me with all sorts of problems. Those were difficult times for me.
2. How nice that you enjoyed at least 10 years in that job!
3. Sure, quit! Why do you bother with this question? You find a new job and that's it.
4. You're in a precarious position, even thinking about quitting, when this company could mean a lot to you personally. It must be difficult. The way I see it, it's not advisable.

Only the fourth of the answers is an empathic answer.

It is worth watching this animated video which highlights the difference between empathy and sympathy: https://youtu.be/1Evwgu369Jw.

"As the animated video illustrated, empathy is a conscious choice to immerse oneself in the painful emotions and feelings of another person. But this empathy does not in itself equal empathy. But if it is followed by a conscious processing and interpretation; if we take the trouble to understand the other person's experiences and feelings in context; if we put the other person's interests first and do not judge them, then we can talk about empathy, about genuine concern." - Helena Szilágyi

2.4. Empathy in our everyday life

Our daily well-being depends on many factors. From a life skills perspective, it is essential to develop skills that can help us thrive in the community. Such skills include tuning in to other people. The more we are able to tune in to other people, the more effectively we

can lead our own lives. This is no wonder, since empathy is in some ways about transcending the ego, about going a little beyond ourselves and recognising what connects us to others.

Ego (Latin): self, self-image all that which a person identifies with himself or herself, including the boundaries of his or her body.

Empathy in pedagogy

Quote: 'If you want your child's self-confidence to grow, please don't humiliate him, don't call him ignorant, stupid, unlucky, clumsy, or compare him to others at his expense. Rather, tell him that at his age you struggled with the same things he struggled with, stand by him, strengthen him in what he is good at! The message of modern psychology and pedagogy is to exude confidence! Look the child in the eye and say: I know you can do this! I know you can do this! Do you know what a magic phrase that is? Imagine someone saying it to you with complete confidence and love! It's such a healer of the heart and such a filling power that it's very worth using in adult relationships." Prof. Dr. Emőke Bagdy

https://neteducatio.hu/hogyan-segithetsz-pedagoguskent/)

The most important and indispensable tool of the teacher is empathy. Empathy enables the teacher to use the possibilities of emotional influence, to develop the non-verbal communication skills of the learners. If the teacher cannot "read" the mimicry of his/her students, the characteristic changes in their voice, or misinterprets these signals, confusion and tension can arise in the relationship. Often, the teacher will draw the wrong conclusion or discover hostile intentions from the student's facial expressions! Students should also know the codes of the teacher's expressions, because most children complain that they can't read anything in the teacher's expressionless face when they are being asked. This is a particular problem for the anxious student!

The basis of honest and authentic teacher-student communication is saying what we mean, consistency between our words and actions, between our verbal and metacommunicative communications, and the capacity for human warmth and compassion. We are not afraid of self-disclosure; we do not want to show emotions other

than what is inside us. If one can accept one's own feelings, one can relate to others. Self-acceptance, empathy leads to tolerance, to non-violent communication.

The empathetic leader

Research has shown that our empathy is higher in private, family relationships. Psychologist Gábor Szendi explains this with Darwinian evolution, i.e. that people who are closely related - with similar genes - help each other to survive, the closer the relative, the more altruistic one person is to the other. When it comes to empathy, we tend to divide the workplace and the private sphere.

Darwinian evolution:

A world view according to which living things in nature compete with each other for survival, with the most productive individuals passing on their genes through natural selection.

In the modern world, however, working together is a prerequisite; everyone does their daily work and learning in some kind of community. It is becoming increasingly important for companies to employ managers who can manage the people in their workplace well, who can build a good team. In addition to the leadership skills they have learned, the empathy of the manager towards his or her subordinates is therefore increasingly important. It is not about agreeing with the way others see things, but rather about being willing and able to accept what others are going through. if a leader takes the time to understand the needs of subordinates and employees, he or she can support them to face challenges and overcome obstacles and, as a result, become a useful member of the work organisation. In this way, a manager can build trust and strengthen the relationship with the employee, thereby strengthening the work organisation and supporting the development of better cooperation.

Advice for empathetic, compassionate leadership:

1. Take a step back mentally and emotionally.

To avoid the trap of being too "empathetic", take a step back to see the situation and the person more clearly. Only with this strategy can we help. It may feel like an unfriendly step, but we need to create the emotional distance to help with the problems that arise.

2. Ask what he needs

When you ask this simple question, "What do you need?", you are already taking the initiative to find a solution. You give the person a chance to think about what they really need, and it is a great help to the person in distress to feel that their problem is being felt and listened to.

3. Remember that you don't always have to act!

Managers are usually good at solving problems as they arise. However, in such cases, it is often just a matter of listening to people so that they know they can tell you their problems at any time. Listening is often the most effective means of getting help.

4. Guide the person to their problem, provide them with a coach!

This advice is about people finding their own solutions to their problems in the first place. Instead of an immediate solution, they need to be coached and mentored. Maybe show them the way to find their own answers. A coach or, where appropriate, a manager with a coaching approach, can help them to do this.

5. Act consciously, listen to yourself too!

Leaders must find ways to create an atmosphere in which people can rely on them, find comfort and solace in their presence. But it is also very important that they can remain themselves. It is therefore worth practising 'self-care': taking breaks, getting enough sleep and food, cultivating meaningful relationships and practising mindfulness.

Coach, coaching:

A coach is someone who provides guidance to a client on their goals and helps them reach their full potential. A coach is a person who gives advice to a client on how to achieve their maximum potential.

Mentor:

A mentor is someone who shares their knowledge, skills and/or experience, to help another to develop and grow.

In a professional context, a mentor is someone who is available to advise a colleague. A mentor accompanies a staff member in his or her professional development and acts as a role model.

Brainstorming together - group method

Carl Rogers' "person-centred approach" methodology is well suited for use in education, but also proves successful in workshops on a variety of issues. It has proven to have a lot to do with building resilience and development capacity in individuals and organisations.

The work is carried out in small and large groups, without the subject leaders giving any prescriptions or rules for the content or the working method. The participants ask questions, answer questions, argue, first directed towards the subject leaders and then gradually addressing each other. The moderators let the discussion unfold on its own, starting from different threads, often with the result that it wanders back and forth, but then tends to converge around a point. Often, these ideas swell into a larger and more powerful stream and become increasingly intense and emotional. The theme leaders did not determine the steps of the debate, but they did catalyse (as they put it, 'facilitate') it to a considerable extent by occasionally speaking. Sometimes the debate was about an individual, sometimes about society, sometimes about the functioning of institutions. This kind of brainstorming allows people to open up, to think freely, to speak, to express themselves. This kind of discussion increases trust, often bringing to the surface ideas that had not been expressed or formulated before.

Rogers says that if we can create an atmosphere of non-judgement, acceptance and authenticity, people will open up, change and development will begin, or as they say in English, "growing". And this allows the group, regardless of its composition, to start thinking together, understanding each other, a process of deep, new thinking, even new thinking.

her is called projection and is rather the opposite of empathy.

2.5. Empathy and environmental awareness = ecopsychology

Becoming environmentally aware is a long process, the first step of which is to acquire environmental knowledge and awareness, in particular to ensure that people are aware of the state of the Earth in global terms, but also of their own environment and its environmental problems at local level. The next important step is to create an emotional attitude, i.e., to react sensitively to adverse environmental changes, which develops a disposition to act and reaches the ultimate goal of taking active action to preserve and protect the environment, to adopt environmentally friendly, thrifty behaviour and lifestyles. This includes the realisation that the solution cannot be expected "from above", but that everyone must act to protect the environment, because the solution depends on each individual, i.e., on us.

In our modern age, many of us are very much detached from nature, living in villages and cities, learning from books and through various media, acquiring knowledge and skills. All these are built, constructed, artificial conditions, conditions, and all result in our inability to deal with the threats to the balance of the planet, the living world. Yet our lives exist in partnership with and are influenced by nature. The important goal is to rediscover the beauty of nature, to feel the joy and excitement of discovery and to develop a sense of compassion, compassion, wonder and love. Let our learning be based on experiential learning, let us return to nature!

The (re)development of an emotional relationship with nature is facilitated by ecopsychology, which examines the relationship between man and nature through the lenses of ecology and psychology, and thus (re)develops the emotional relationship between man and nature. An important characteristic and starting point is the systems approach, according to which humans are deeply and inextricably integrated into natural systems, as we are part of the global circulation of matter and energy flows, and our biorhythms are determined by natural changes.

Empathy is the way to develop environmentally conscious behaviour. As we learned earlier, empathy is a relationship between people, a way of experiencing the emotions of

others. The same empathy can be developed with nature, through empathy we can (re)connect with nature. As long as we think and see ourselves as completely separate from the natural environment, we see it and treat it as an "external group". Direct contact with other living beings as individuals provides an opportunity to experience empathy, to experience the similarity inherent in uniqueness.

How can you practice empathy with nature?

- Recall a special place in nature and the experience that made it special for you!
- What makes you feel connected to the whole world?
- What was the most transformative experience you had? What was your trigger?

About climate change

We all know that our planet is in bad shape, we hear daily news of unusual weather patterns, we notice the effects of global warming, we feel the changes in wildlife. We are aware of the process (except for those who choose denial), but because the mass of frightening information that assails us threatens our self-image, we are unable to emotionally absorb it, we deflect, we become defensive. We live a double life, we know there's trouble but we can't deal with it. This emotional baggage gives rise to what is known as climate stress, which is becoming more and more common.

Researchers and environmental organisations - including Zselyke Moholy - say: "The speciality of the symptom is that it is not necessarily a 'cure', because it is not a delusion, the threat is real. Rather than trying to drain people of this tension, we seek to transform its energy into concrete action."

..... maybe that's enough then?

2.6. Developing empathy skills

Human society is based on cooperation, mutuality, and altruism. These concepts overlap to some extent, but they have in common that people tend to cooperate with or help others in the absence of direct reward.

Altruism is an interaction between individuals within a community, whereby an individual helps a fellow individual even at the expense of himself. The prevalence of the behaviour is roughly proportional to genetic similarity and is most often manifested between individuals in the same family.

How do we know if someone needs help? Or, in the case of cooperation, how do we know, even half verbally, who to approach, how to coordinate the work? In the course of evolution, empathy and the ability to read minds have evolved as a direct trigger for these behaviours. The two phenomena are related but not identical. Empathy is the capacity to experience the feelings and thoughts of others, in parallel with observing our own feelings and thoughts, and to respond to them in an appropriate emotional-behavioural way. Empathy helps us to recognise that others are in distress and need help.

In the absence of empathy or with low levels of empathy, a person lives in constant disconnection and misunderstanding with his or her fellow human beings. Such people are often inconsiderate because they cannot sense subtle differences, say or do hurtful things, and then, even shortly afterwards, pretend that nothing happened because they really did not realise the seriousness of their words or actions. Often they do not get the joke, they do not understand the expectations of the relationship or the situation.

In our modern and results-oriented society, we are taught and conditioned to use our problem-solving skills rather than our empathy. Society rewards problem solvers who provide tangible solutions rather than those who provide emotional care. This reward system conditions people to exhibit solution behaviour as opposed to empathic behaviour.

According to psychologist Keith Oakley, the ability to see and experience events through the eyes of others allows us to imagine how we would behave in a similar situation.

If you develop empathy, you can:

- you will better understand the needs of the people around you
- see more clearly the image you create of yourself in others through your words and actions

- understand the unspoken layers of communication
- better understand the needs of your clients and colleagues
- have fewer problems to deal with in personal conflicts at home and at work
- predict more accurately the actions and reactions of people you come into contact with
- learn how to motivate the people around you
- convince others of your position more effectively
- perceive the world with greater resolution by seeing it not only through your own eyes but also through the eyes of others
- you will be better able to cope with the negative attitudes of others because you will understand their motivations and fears
- you will be a better leader, a better follower and a better friend
- you are more likely to treat the people you care about the way they want to be treated

According to Elizabeth A. Segal, experiencing empathy requires a combination of three components, which requires using your head, not your heart. These are:

1. Detachment Awareness

You should not take on what others are feeling, i.e., you should not get so involved that you confuse it with your own feelings.

2. Emotion control

You must remain calm and balanced while assessing the situation. You must not let your emotions run wild.

3. Interpreting circumstances

Understanding the circumstances is important to broaden your perspective and to better understand what the individual is experiencing.

What characterises an empathic person?

1. Curious about strangers

People with high empathy are curious about strangers. They retain their childhood curiosity - which society is so cleverly trying to eradicate from us - and talk to the person sitting next to them on the bus. They find others more interesting than themselves, but they don't question them.

As a result of curiosity, we encounter people, lives and worldviews that are outside our usual social environment and thus increase our empathy. Developing curiosity does not mean talking about the weather but trying to understand the other person's worldview. We meet interesting strangers every day. The postwoman with the tattoo, the new colleague who always has lunch alone. Curiosity advocates urge us to gather a little courage and start a conversation with a stranger every week!

2. Focus on similarities rather than prejudices

We all have prejudices, we all use labels, e.g., Muslim fundamentalist, caring mother. People with high empathy look for what they are similar to others in, not what they are different in, so they break down preconceptions and prejudices about others.

The following story about racial conflict illustrates this. Claiborne Paul Ellis was born in 1927 to a poor white family in Darham, Southern California. He was a manual labourer, struggled for feed. Following in his father's footsteps, blaming African Americans for his hardships, he joined the Ku Klux Klan and over the years grew into the leader of the local KKK gang. In 1971, as a prominent local citizen, he was invited to a community meeting aimed at resolving racial strife in the schools. He and a black activist he despised, Ann Atwater, were appointed to head one of the committees. Their work together overturned her previous prejudices about African Americans. He realised that they faced the same difficulties as he did. He began to see blacks as people, to shake hands with them. "It was like being born again," he said in a later recollection. On the last night of the meeting, he stood up and tore up his Klan membership card in front of the thousands of people present. Ellis later became a member of a 70% black organisation and remained friends with Ann for the rest of her life. There are few better examples of how empathy can override hatred and change the way we think.

3. Gain experience

Is rock climbing or hang gliding an extreme sport? Empathy building based on experience should be tried. This is the most challenging but probably the most rewarding way to increase empathy. There's an old American saying - "Walk a mile in someone else's moccasins before you criticize." People with high empathy skills follow this and gain direct experience of others' lives.

We can all make such an experiment. If you are a believer, try attending mass of another religion. Let's spend the next summer volunteering in a remote village in a developing country. Take it from the philosopher John Dewey - All real knowledge is gained through experience.

4. An empathetic interlocutor has two qualities.

One is the mastery of genuine listening. Marshall Rosenberg, the father of non-violent communication, says - The most important thing is to be able to be truly present, to understand in the moment what is going on in the other person, what they are feeling, what they need.

But listening is never enough. Another important skill is to be able to be vulnerable. We must be able to take off the mask and show our feelings to the other person, because this is essential for a close empathic connection. Empathy is a two-way street based on mutual understanding, where we share our core beliefs and experiences.

5. Inspires others

We mostly think of empathy as something that happens at the individual level. But it can also be a mass phenomenon that can lead to fundamental social change.

Think of slavery in the 18th and 19th centuries. Journalist Adam Hochschild reminds us. The abolitionists did not believe in the teachings of holy books, but in human empathy. They did everything they could to make people understand the suffering slaves endured on the plantations, on the galley ships. It was empathy born out of a shared sense of oppression among industrial workers that gave birth to the International Trade Federation. The enormous social solidarity seen in the Asian tsunami of 2004 was also born out of empathy for the victims, inspired by the shocking videos.

Empathy can best spread if its seeds are planted in childhood. The Canadian Roots of Empathy programme is one of the most successful pioneers in this field. Half a million children have already participated. Its unique curriculum focuses on teaching emotional intelligence from infancy. As a result, there has been a significant reduction in playground violence and improved school performance.

Beyond education, the big challenge is how to harness the power of empathy through social media for large-scale social change. How can Twitter persuade us to address the problems of distant strangers (e.g. African farmers fighting drought) or the future generation who will bear the consequences of our current environmentally insensitive lifestyles? This requires that these sites not only disseminate information but also empathetic connection.

6. You have ambitious dreams

People with high empathic skills empathise not only with those with whom we generally empathise, but also with those with whom we disagree, or even oppose in some area. If someone is campaigning against global warming, it is worth putting yourself in the shoes of an oil company executive to understand their thinking and motivations. This will help you to develop a more effective persuasion strategy to push them towards recyclable energy sources.

Empathising with your opponent is also a way to build social tolerance. This is what Gandhi advocated in the Muslim-Hindu conflict that led to India's independence in 1947 - I am a Muslim. And Hindu, and Christian and Jew.

Organisations should also strive for empathetic thinking. The father of 'social entrepreneurship', Bill Drayton, says that in an age of rapid technological advances, the way to survive in business is to master empathy. This contributes to leadership success and helps teamwork.

2.7. How do you improve yourself?

Read more

Read as many novels as possible. People who read novels regularly have been shown to have better empathy skills than non-readers. Novels help us empathise with others and understand their feelings.

Kindness

Let's be kind! Kindness in itself enhances empathy. Being kind to someone makes us involuntarily feel more empathy for them and our feelings towards them become more positive. Kindness also helps us to feel more comfortable in our own skin and more accepting of ourselves while being kind to others.

Understand: from your point of view, everyone is absolutely right

It is worth starting from this very simple truth. If we look from here, we can quickly work out what considerations are probably driving the other person's thoughts and what feelings those thoughts are generating in them. It's worth a try.

Exercises:

- Observe the expressions, looks, gestures, movements of those around you, don't just focus on what you are saying.
- Wait until the other person has finished speaking, don't form an opinion before the other person has finished, and especially don't start your own by interrupting them. Let us be aware that if we interrupt someone, we are certainly not listening to them.
- Always wait a few seconds before answering. And if possible, ask back to understand even better how the other person is feeling, what motivates them. This also buys time to respond in a more thoughtful way (e.g., less hurtful or less defiant).

The following questionnaire can help you identify where your empathy is high and where you need to improve. For each of these areas, decide how good you are at it, how average you are at it, or how weak you are at it.

EMPATHY QUESTIONNAIRE

1. You don't interrupt people.

2. You ask others how they feel.

3. You handle other people's anger or negative feelings well.

4. You don't mind silence.

5. You recognise when others are uncomfortable.

6. You ask the other person to express their feelings.

7. You accept the other person's feelings.

8. You notice and understand the other's body language.

9. You can easily make close emotional and physical contact.

Where you have rated yourself as average or poor, set a priority ranking - choose 3 specific things that you will practise in the next 3 weeks. After each passing day, think about whether you have improved in that area. After 3 weeks, complete this questionnaire again to see the positive change! If there are again points where you have not marked a 'good' rating, you can continue practising!

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