

How to Develop Empathy as a Skill in the Workplace

What is Empathy? A Simple Definition

Empathy is the act of being aware of, understanding, and experiencing another person's feelings and thoughts. It's rooted in our ability to "step into the shoes" of another person, so that we can deeply connect to their feelings, perspectives, and experiences, and use this understanding to guide our actions.

How to Cultivate Empathy in Five Steps

CLOCK THE EMOTION YOU ARE WITNESSING

Ask Yourself:
What emotion am I observing?
How might this person be feeling?
Am I able to feel the emotion I am witnessing?

NOTICE YOUR REACTION

Ask Yourself:
What are my thoughts, feelings, strengths, and limitations as I interact with this person? What is coming up for me: connection, resonance, and resistance?

IMAGINE THEIR LIVED EXPERIENCE

Ask Yourself:
Can I adopt the subjective perspective of this person by imagining how they feel based on their own experiences? How can I put myself "in their shoes"?

DECENTER YOURSELF WHEN RESPONDING

Ask Yourself:
How can I manage my own emotions that are coming up in an appropriate way? How can I keep the focus on the other person as I offer them support?

COMMIT TO CONSCIOUS ACTION

Ask Yourself:
What does it look like to take (reasonable) action to support this person? How can I explore what actions might be most meaningful to them?

Resources

- Podcast: [Centering Empathy & Allyship In Support Of Others As We Grieve With Dr. Komal Bhasin](#) by Change Catalyst
- Article: [What Is Active Listening?](#) by Harvard Business Review
- Article: [How to Embrace Empathy Without Letting It Burn You Out](#) by From Day One
- Book: [Empathy \(HBR Emotional Intelligence Series\)](#) by Harvard Business Review
- Book: [Dare to Lead: Brave Work. Tough Conversations. Whole Hearts.](#) by Brené Brown

About Dr. Komal Bhasin



Dr. Komal Bhasin, MSW, MHSc, DocSocSci, is bci's Senior DEI Consultant and Mental Health Expert-in-Residence, a doctoral-trained mental health clinician and accomplished DEI facilitator, coach and strategist. Komal has extensive experience in creating and delivering programming in a range of DEI areas, including unconscious bias, cultural competence, mental health inclusion, psychological safety and allyship. She is passionate about driving transformational change in workplaces and has worked closely with bci clients — corporations, professional services firms, health care providers and educational institutions — to embed cultures of DEI within their organizations.

About Ritu Bhasin

Ritu Bhasin, LL.B. MBA, is an award-winning speaker, author, consultant, and internationally recognized expert in DEI, leadership, belonging, and empowerment. Since launching [bhasin consulting inc.](#) in 2010, Ritu has worked with hundreds of top organizations around the world and, as a professional speaker, she has presented to hundreds of thousands of people globally. Ritu is a certified cultural competence and neuroscience strategies coach who has personally coached over a thousand people, as well as a yoga and mindfulness teacher, and very shortly she will complete a trauma professional certification program. Ritu has written two bestselling books: [We've Got This: Unlocking the Beauty of Belonging](#) (2023) and [The Authenticity Principle](#) (2017).



About bci

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