



Activity 2 –

The development of empathy happens over time.

Martin Hoffman (2000) has mapped empathy development across the following stages:

1. Emotion contagion and imitation- babies respond to other babies' distress by crying- they embody the other babies' emotions! Babies also imitate facial expressions and physical movements just a few hours after birth
2. Classical conditioning- creating conditioned responses by observing someone in distress at the same time a baby is distressed. For example, if a parent smiles and laughs with a baby when there is a positive stimulus, a baby associates the smiles/laughter with the happy stimulus and the happy feeling. Later in life, this baby turned toddler will be able to mentally associate smiles and laughter with happy feelings, which will happen without the toddler knowing.
3. Direct association- we then learn to associate cues in another's situation with similar past experiences we've had in our lives, and then feelings that fit the victim's situation are evoked
4. Mediated association- this is when we have reached the ability to understand another's emotion without seeing the person- we are able to hear about another's experience and feel their emotions because their words elicit emotions. For example, when you are reading a book and a character is ill, you are sad for that person even without being able to see or hear their distress
5. Role-taking or perspective-taking- this is the most advanced form of empathy and does actually require putting oneself in another's shoes. This requires cognitive processes, and can happen in 3 ways: Self-focused role-taking (imagining how you'd feel in the situation), other-focused role-taking (focusing directly on the victim and imagining how they feel), or a combination of focus. This means you don't have to have experienced the emotion before to feel the same emotion as the victim. You might be excited for a friend who got into an exciting summer camp for horseback riding even if you've never ridden a horse in your life!

Have a look at the following videos and see if you can tell which stage each child is in:

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7OqnL6fSEEQ>
2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ey7fPxMz9Ao>



3. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ijFPMrptrwE>

Come up with an example from your own life for stages 3-5:

1. Direct Association:

2. Mediated Association:

3. Role-taking: