



Being a Sincere Friend When it Truly Matters



Goals of this seminar:

- Distinguish between empathy and sympathy.
- Develop active listening skills.
- Practice Sincere Friendship through empathy.

Fraternity Values:

- Sincere Friendship
- Personal and Intellectual Growth
- Honor and Respect

Suggested Facilitator: Vice President Member Experience

Room setup/materials needed:

- May need a projector depending on the options chosen within the seminar.
- Poster boards and markers will be needed. The number needed depends on the options chosen within the seminar.

- Members can be seated comfortably as the room allows. Room setup should allow space for members to pair up with a partner and have a conversation as suggested in the program.

Getting started:

- The facilitator should walk through this seminar prior to presenting it to make sure they're comfortable with the material.
- Talking points are indicated with normal font and in quotation marks. Please use these as speaking guidelines but be sure to make the presentation your own with your personality.
- Facilitation instructions are indicated with italicized font. These are hints you might find helpful when administering the material. Most importantly, have fun! The more excited and engaged you are, the more participants will be.
- If you are holding this workshop during a chapter meeting, or another time where cell phones aren't usually allowed, make sure you let participants know they will need them for this activity.

≡ Introduction: Being a Sincere Friend When it Truly Matters

≡ Part 1: Being a Sincere Friend When it Truly Matters

≡ Part 2: Being a Sincere Friend When it Truly Matters

≡ Conclusion: Being a Sincere Friend When it Truly Matters

≡ Participant Activities

Introduction: Being a Sincere Friend When it Truly Matters

What is empathy? Why is it important?

“ Today we'll talk about being a Sincere Friend when it truly matters. To do this, we'll examine empathy and learn how to use it to support our friends when they're going through something difficult or challenging. Before we get started, I want to talk about a few guidelines we should follow to respect our sisters today.

- Stories stay and lessons leave: there may be stories shared here today to help us better understand empathy. Those stories should not leave, but the lessons you learn from them should.
- Showing care for those speaking, whether that's the facilitator or someone sharing during discussion. Every voice is important.
- Brave Space: we should create a space that encourages members to be brave and share or engage how they choose.

I do want to note that some of the examples or scenarios used in the activities may bring up emotions. Please do what you need to today to care for yourself.

To start, I would like to hear what empathy means to you. What is empathy and how does it make you feel?”

Take 3-5 answers from members to gather the group's understanding.

“ Dictionary.com defines empathy as: the psychological identification with or vicarious experiencing of the feelings, thoughts, or attitudes of another.

From your experience, why is it important for someone to show you empathy when you are going through something difficult? What are the benefits?”

Take 3-5 answers from members.

OPTION 1: EMPATHY VS. SYMPATH...

DISCUSS EMPATHY VS. SYMPATHY

This option is better for a chapter with a TV or projector available.

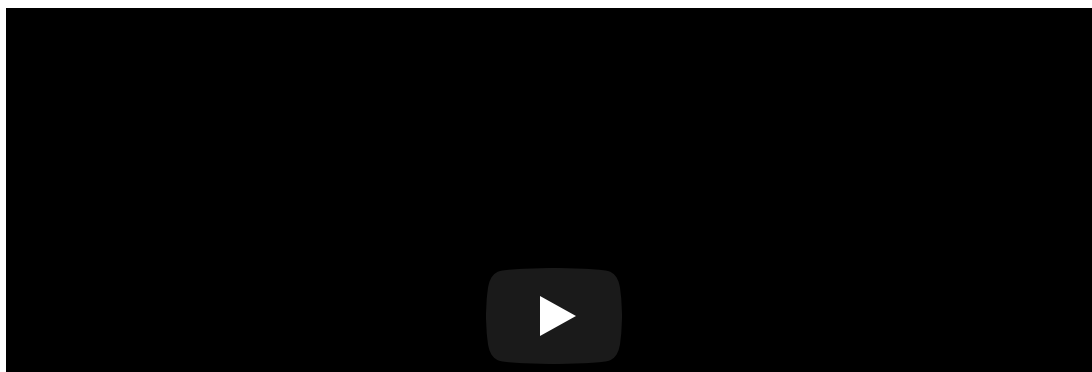
“ With this in mind, we are going to watch a short clip from author and researcher Brené Brown, who explains the difference between sympathy and empathy.”

Play video for participants.

“ A key piece here is when Brené said “Empathy is a choice, a vulnerable choice, because in order to connect with you I have to connect with something in myself that knows that feeling.” In order to support a person and hopefully help them feel better, we must connect with what they're feeling. If we are unable to relate, we must find a way to connect with a similar feeling to try to get a sense of what they are going through; sometimes this is even more difficult.

At the end she said, “Rarely can a response make something better; what makes something better is connection.” In a few minutes, we'll discuss ways to make those connections so we can better support a friend who may be going through something difficult.

If you'd like to watch this talk or others from Brené to learn more, you can find it on Brenebrown.com.”





OPTION 1: EMPATHY VS. SYMPATH...

DISCUSS EMPATHY VS. SYMPATHY

This option is better for chapters without video capabilities. The facilitator will discuss the information presented in the video for the participants.

“ Empathy is different than sympathy, and to explain this I'll use information and examples from a talk by author and researcher Brené Brown.

“Empathy fuels connections, sympathy drives disconnection”
Brené cites Theresa Wiseman who came up with 4 qualities of empathy:

1. Perspective taking
2. Staying out of judgement
3. Recognizing emotions in other people
4. Communicating

Let's stop here. Can I have one person explain each of these qualities, starting with perspective taking?”

Review 1-4 and have one or more people explain each, then continue.

“ Brené uses this simple example to explain. Imagine someone is in a dark hole, and they say, “I'm stuck, it's dark, I'm overwhelmed.” If you climb into the hole with them and say, “Hey, I know what it's like down here and you're not alone,” this is empathy. Sympathy is saying “Ooh, yeah, its bad. Anyway... you want a sandwich?” If you were in that hole, which response would help you feel supported? As Brené said, “Empathy is a choice, a vulnerable choice, because in order to connect with you I have to connect with something in myself that knows that feeling.” In order to support a person and hopefully help them feel

better, we must connect with what they're feeling. If we're unable to relate, we must find a way to connect with a similar feeling to try to get a sense of what they are going through.

A key thing Brené touches on is that an empathetic response should not start with the words "at least". This is a way of putting a silver lining on the problem, when whatever the person shared with you is very difficult. While we are trying to make things better, this does not help. Brené says, "Rarely can a response make something better, what makes something better is connection." In a few minutes we'll discuss ways to make those connections so that we can better support a friend who may be going through something.

If you'd like to watch this talk or others from Brené to learn more, you can find it on [Brenebrown.com](https://www.brenebrown.com)."

CONTINUE

Part 1: Being a Sincere Friend When it Truly Matters

Showing Empathy vs. Sympathy

“ Now that we understand how empathy differs from sympathy, we'll look at a group of scenarios and determine if the response shows sympathy or empathy. ”

OPTION 1: PARTNER DISCUSSION

OPTION 2: LARGE GROUP DISCUSS...

This option is better for medium- to large- sized chapters where a group discussion may be harder to execute.

“ Turn to a person near you and pair off so we can start the activity. ”

Work with participants to make sure everyone has a partner. List of examples should be printed, displayed in the room, sent ahead of time via email/GroupMe or viewed in the Leading with Values Seminar module. Send them the link to this seminar and direct them to the "Participant Activities" tab on the left side. There, they will find the examples below.

“ As a pair, decide if the response shows sympathy or empathy and talk about how you determined that. ”

If you are conducting this seminar virtually, this activity can be done in small groups of 5-7 using breakout rooms on Zoom. Be sure to give participants enough time to work through the examples together and then bring everyone back to the group to discuss.

Examples:

1. Example A: I worked hard to do well in my classes this semester, I spent a lot of time studying, but I just got my midterm back and failed the test.

- a. Response A: Well at least it's just the midterm and you still have time before the final to bring your grade up.
2. Example B: My mom lost her job last week because of cutbacks and now I'm not sure how I'm going to pay for dues next semester.
- a. Response B: I'm very sorry to hear that. I can't imagine how tough this is for you and your family. I am here for you.
3. Example C: I posted a picture on Instagram and someone posted a really derogatory comment about me. I'm very hurt.
- a. Response C: I'm so sorry someone feels the need to comment like that. What they said is not true and I hope you know that no matter what someone posts.
4. Example D: My family dog is sick and at the animal hospital.
- a. Response D: I'm so sorry, I'm here for you and will be thinking of your family.
5. Example E: I applied for a leadership position on the exec board and didn't get it; they selected someone else.
- a. Response E: They should have picked you for sure, but at least you still have another year for them to choose you.
6. Example F: I had to miss work again to take care of my siblings for my Dad and they let me go. I really enjoyed my job and I'm going to miss it.
- a. Response F: I'm so sorry, that's a terrible situation. It's so great how much you care for and support your family.
7. Example G: I'm just crushed. I really didn't think our relationship would end like this. I don't know how I'll find someone else who makes me feel that way.
- a. Response G: Yeah, that does suck, but I know your person is still out there and honestly you could do even better!

Facilitation Answers:

- *A- Sympathy*
- *B- Empathy*
- *C- Empathy*

- *D-Empathy*
- *E- Sympathy*
- *F- Empathy*
- *G-Sympathy*

OPTION 1: PARTNER DISCUSSION

OPTION 2: LARGE GROUP DISCUSS...

This option is better for small- to medium- sized chapters who may be able to have a large group discussion and come to conclusions together.

Show the scenarios on the screen, large enough for the entire group to read. If there is no screen available, participants can use the online Leading with Values module to swipe through each question. Send them the link to this seminar and direct them to the "Participant Activities" tab on the left side. There, they will find the questions below.

“ Can I have two volunteers, one person to read the scenario and one person to read the response? Once each is read, please raise your hand and explain to the group if the response shows sympathy or empathy. ”

Examples:

1. Example A: I worked hard to do well in my classes this semester, I spent a lot of time studying, but I just got my midterm back and failed the test.
 - a. Response A: Well at least it's just the midterm and you still have time before the final to bring your grade up.
2. Example B: My mom lost her job last week because of cutbacks and now I'm not sure how I'm going to pay for dues next semester.
 - a. Response B: I'm very sorry to hear that. I can't imagine how tough this is for you and your family. I am here for you.
3. Example C: I posted a picture on Instagram and someone posted a really derogatory comment about me. I'm very hurt.

a. Response C: I'm so sorry someone feels the need to comment like that. What they said is not true and I hope you know that no matter what someone posts.

4. Example D: My family dog is sick and at the animal hospital.

a. Response D: I'm so sorry, I'm here for you and will be thinking of your family.

5. Example E: I applied for a leadership position on the exec board and didn't get it; they selected someone else.

a. Response E: They should have picked you for sure, but at least you still have another year for them to choose you.

6. Example F: I had to miss work again to take care of my siblings for my Dad and they let me go. I really enjoyed my job and I'm going to miss it.

a. Response F: I'm so sorry, that's a terrible situation. It's so great how much you care for and support your family.

7. Example G: I'm just crushed. I really didn't think our relationship would end like this. I don't know how I'll find someone else who makes me feel that way.

a. Response G: Yeah, that does suck, but I know your person is still out there and honestly you could do even better!

Facilitation Answers:

- A- *Sympathy*
- B- *Empathy*
- C- *Empathy*
- D- *Empathy*
- E- *Sympathy*
- F- *Empathy*
- G- *Sympathy*

If you are conducting this seminar virtually, this activity can be done in small groups of 5-7 using breakout rooms on Zoom. Be sure to give participants enough time to work through the examples together and then bring everyone back to the group to discuss.

Example A: I worked hard to do well in my classes this semester and I spent a lot of time studying, but I just got my midterm back and failed the test.

Sympathy: Well, at least it's just the midterm and you still have time before the final to bring your grade up.

Example B: My mom lost her job last week because of cutbacks, and now I'm not sure how I'm going to pay for dues next semester.

Empathy: I'm very sorry to hear that. I can't imagine how tough this is for you and your family, and I'm here for you.

Example C: I posted a picture on Instagram, and

Empathy: I'm so sorry someone feels the need

someone posted a really derogatory comment about me. I'm very hurt.

to comment like that. What they said is not true, and I hope you know that no matter what someone posts.

Example D: My family dog is sick and we're not sure if she'll get better.

Empathy: I'm so sorry, I'm here for you and will be thinking of your family.

Example E: I applied for a leadership position on the exec board and didn't get it; they selected someone else.

Sympathy: They should have picked you for sure, but at least you still have another year for them to choose you.

Example F: I had to miss work again to take care of my siblings for my Dad, and they let me go. I really enjoyed my job and I'm going to miss it.

Empathy: I'm so sorry, that's a terrible situation. It's so great how much your care for and support your family.

Example G: I'm just crushed. I really didn't think our relationship would end like this. I don't know how I'll find someone else who makes me feel that way.

Sympathy: Yeah, that does suck, but I know your person is still out there and honestly you could do even better!

“ Looking back at the examples, were there any situations you wouldn't be able to relate to? I'll give you a minute to look at them again, and if you see one you're unable to relate to, please raise your hand. Give participants time to do so. Once everyone is done reading and looking up, you can move on.

Look around. There may be times when the situation your friend is going through is something you can't relate to, but it is still important to show empathy.

What can get in the way of showing empathy when your friend is going through something you can't relate to? ”

Possible answers are cognitive bias, dehumanization or victim blaming.

“ How can you show empathy when a situation is not something you can relate to? ”

CONTINUE

Part 2: Being a Sincere Friend When it Truly Matters

Skills to Be Empathetic

“ Now let’s talk about the skills we could use to create connection and show empathy.

We'll make a list of skills from our own experience and I'll (write/type) them for everyone to see. How would you show empathy in a conversation? ”

*Make a list at the front of the room, either on a posterboard/large paper or typed on the screen. Below is a list of methods of showing empathy that should be touched on if members do not add them to the list. This list is from the article *How to Practice Active Listening* by Arlin Cuncic and published on verywellmind.com.*

- Staying neutral and nonjudgmental
- Being patient (periods of silence are not "filled")
- Giving verbal and nonverbal feedback to show signs of listening (e.g., smiling, eye contact, leaning in, mirroring)
- Asking questions
- Reflecting back on what is said
- Asking for clarification
- Summarizing

“ These are all methods we can use to show empathy. Now please share some things you should avoid doing.”

Again, below is a list of things that should be touched on if members do not mention them. This list is from the article *How to Practice Active Listening* by Arlin Cuncic and published on verywellmind.com.

- Fixing the problem
- Providing a silver lining or positive spin
- Changing the subject
- Showing negative non-verbal behaviors (facial expressions, tone of voice, and other behaviors)
- Thinking about your response while they are still talking.
- Putting it into perspective or comparing to a worse situation.
- Rusing the speaker
- Becoming distracted
- "Topping" the story (saying "that reminds me of the time...")

Try to leave the skills on the screen or poster board for members to refer to during the next activity.

OPTION 1: PRACTICE WITH POP C...

OPTION 2: PRACTICE WITH PERSO...

This option is better for chapters who need a beginner's-level introduction to the conversation on empathy and would benefit from examples outside their personal life.

“ Turn to the person next to you. They will be your partner for this activity. I'll assign a number to your pair and then assign you a scenario based on that number. *Section the room into roughly three groups and give each section a number from 1-3.* You'll read your scenario and then take turns responding to the situation in ways that show empathy using three or more of the methods we just discussed.”

Here are three suggested scenarios. You have the option to come up with your own prior to the seminar to make them more relevant. If you choose to use the ones provided below, members can view them in the Participant Activities tab.

“ **Scenario 1:** Taylor Swift wins the Billboard Music Award for Best Female Video and Kayne West runs to the stage to tell the world it wasn't right that Taylor won. How do you show empathy to Taylor who is

receiving a lot of criticism in front of so many people?

Scenario 2: Justin Bieber and Selena Gomez have just broken up and Selena is very upset about it. How do you show her empathy to help her feel a little better?

Scenario 3: You are at the Academy Awards and Faye Dunaway just announced La La Land won for the best picture when they didn't actually win. How do you show empathy to Faye, who made a big mistake on an important and public stage? ”

If your chapter needs to execute this virtually, this activity can be done in small groups of 5-7 using breakout rooms on Zoom. Be sure to give participants enough time to work through the scenarios together and then bring everyone back to the group to discuss.

OPTION 1: PRACTICE WITH POP C...

OPTION 2: PRACTICE WITH PERSO...

This option is better for chapters who need an advanced level of conversation on empathy and would be equipped to engage in discussion surrounding their personal lives.

“ Think of a moment that went well for you. Maybe you passed a difficult class, made it onto a team you tried out for, got a promotion at your job, etc. Now imagine the opposite had happened, and you were really upset about how it turned out and needed support from a friend. Tell your “opposite story” to your partner. Your partner should respond back to you in ways that show empathy using three or more of the methods that we just discussed.”

Allow enough time for both members to explain their situation and practice giving a response. After this is complete, ask them to discuss the following questions with their partner. They can view these questions in the Participant Activities tab on the left side of this seminar.

1. What methods did you find easy to implement?

1. What methods did you find more difficult to implement?

1. Are there things you would like to avoid now that you understand more about showing empathy?

Bring the group back together and have 3-4 people share on each of the questions above.

If your chapter needs to execute this virtually, this activity can be done in pairs or small groups of 3-4 using breakout rooms on Zoom. Be sure to give participants enough time to work through their scenario together and then bring everyone back to the group to discuss.

CONTINUE

Conclusion: Being a Sincere Friend When it Truly Matters

Implementation

“ Now that we've had time to talk about what empathy is, I'd like to hear from you. Is showing empathy a form of Sincere Friendship and could we do more to show empathy to our sisters or friends?

I want to leave you with a quote by Brené Brown who we heard from earlier. “In order to empathize with someone’s experience you must be willing to believe as they see it, and not how you imagine their experience to be.”

To wrap up, let’s talk about a few key takeaways. ”

OPTION 1: GROUP REFLECTION

OPTION 2: INDIVIDUAL REFLECTI...

This option is best for chapters with a TV or projector available but it is not required. The final result can be viewed on a phone.

“ Please take out your phone for this activity. Using the link to Padlet, please share one takeaway you learned from this activity you'd like to use to show empathy the next time a friend is going through something. When you post, it will pin to the board here. ”

Once everyone has submitted, read through some of the posts, noting when there are common answers.

The website used for this activity is <https://padlet.com>. This should be set up ahead of time, with the link sent out for everyone to access at the end of the seminar. Use the Wall option. A screen or projector is ideal for this activity; however everyone will be able to view the responses on their phone.

If your chapter needs a virtual option, this activity could be done in Zoom with screen sharing.

OPTION 1: GROUP REFLECTION

OPTION 2: INDIVIDUAL REFLECTI...

This option works for chapter of any size!

“Please take out your phones. We'll use them to write down our individual takeaways. Use a note, an email to yourself or whatever method works for you. I'll give you a few minutes to write down 3-5 takeaways you'd like to implement moving forward. Then we'll come back to the group and I'll ask for 5-8 people to share. Give participants a few minutes until you feel everyone is ready. ”

Come back to the large group and ask for 5-8 members to share the top takeaway they would like to implement moving forward.

“ Thank you all for your participation in the seminar today. I appreciate you all being open to learning more about empathy together. I hope you were able to take away a few new tips on showing Sincere Friendship when it truly matters. ”

Survey

Provide the following link to four members of your chapter, one from each class. You and those four members will complete the Leading with Values seminar survey to provide feedback to Pi Beta Phi.

www.pibetaphi.org/lwvfeedback

References

Cognitive vs. Emotional Empathy (verywellmind.com)

What Is Empathy? (verywellmind.com)

How to Practice Active Listening (verywellmind.com)

Video: RSA Short: Empathy | Brené Brown (brenebrown.com)

FINISH

Participant Activities

Part 1 Activity

Instructions

Work with a partner to determine if the responses used express empathy or sympathy.

Step 1

Example A

Example A: I worked hard to do well in my classes this semester, I spent a lot of time studying, but I just got my midterm back and failed the test.

Response A: Well at least it's just the midterm and you still have time before the final to bring your grade up.

Step 2

Example B

Example B: My mom lost her job last week because of cutbacks and now I'm not sure how I'm going to pay for dues next semester.

Response B: I'm very sorry to hear that. I can't imagine how tough this is for you and your family. I am here for you.

Step 3

Example C

Example C: I posted a picture on Instagram and someone posted a really derogatory comment about me. I'm very hurt.

Response C: I'm so sorry someone feels the need to comment like that. What they said is not true and I hope you know that no matter what someone posts.

Step 4

Example D

Example D: My family dog is sick and at the animal hospital.

Response D: I'm so sorry, I'm here for you and will be thinking of your family.

Example E

Example E: I applied for a leadership position on the exec board and didn't get it; they selected someone else.

Response E: They should have picked you for sure, but at least you still have another year for them to choose you.

Step 6

Example F

Example F: I had to miss work again to take care of my siblings for my Dad and they let me go. I really enjoyed my job and I'm going to miss it.

Response F: I'm so sorry, that's a terrible situation. It's so great how much you care for and support your family.

Example G

Example G: I'm just crushed. I really didn't think our relationship would end like this. I don't know how I'll find someone else who makes me feel that way.

Response G: Yeah, that does suck, but I know your person is still out there and honestly you could do even better!

Be prepared to discuss your findings with the large group.

Part 2, Option 1 Activity

1

Scenario 1: Taylor Swift wins the Billboard Music Award for Best Female Video and Kanye West runs to the stage to tell the world it wasn't right that Taylor won. How do you show empathy to Taylor who is receiving a lot of criticism in front of so many people?

2

Scenario 2: Justin Bieber and Selena Gomez have just broken up and Selena is very upset about it. How do you show her empathy to help her feel a little better?

3

Scenario 3: You are at the Academy Awards and Faye Dunaway just announced La La Land won for the best picture when they didn't actually win. How do you show empathy to Faye, who made a big mistake on an important and public stage? ”

Part 2, Option 2 Activity

1

What methods did you find easy to implement?

2

What methods did you find more difficult to implement?

3

Are there things you would like to avoid now that you understand more about showing empathy?

Thank you for engaging in this seminar, today! Please fill out this survey to give feedback on this *Leading with Values* seminar: Being a Sincere Friend When it Truly Matters

[Click here to complete the Leading with Values survey.](#)

FINISH