



Oxfordshire Adult Autism Diagnostic and Support Service



# Empathy Workshop



# By the End of this Workshop



By the end of this workshop, you should:

- Be able to describe some feelings
- Know what empathy is
- Know when empathy should be shown
- Know how to show empathy (even if you do not feel empathy)



# Feelings and Emotions



There are many different words that people use to describe how they are feeling.

Some are positive and some are negative.



# Good/positive feelings



- Amazed
  - Brave
  - Considerate
  - Compassionate
  - Funny
  - Smiley
  - Successful
  - Articulate
- \* Relieved
  - \* Thankful
  - \* Helpful
  - \* Fair
  - \* Thoughtful
  - \* Happy
  - \* Kind
  - \* Calm

Can you think  
of any others?



# Bad/negative feelings

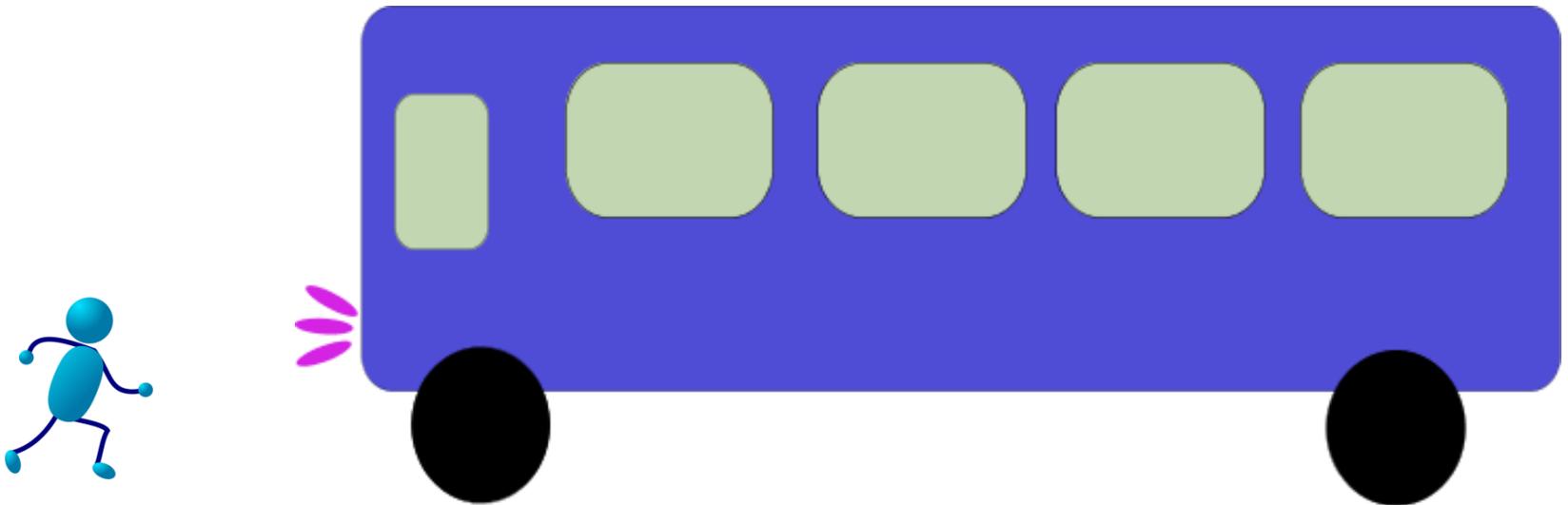
- Afraid
- Angry
  - \* Scared
- Annoyed
  - \* Selfish
- Anxious
  - \* Lonely
- Bad
  - \* Thoughtless
- Confused
  - \* Irritable
- Envious
  - \* Sad
- Excluded
  - \* Worried
  - \* Hurt

Can you think  
of any others?



# Describe the Feeling

How would you feel if you missed the bus?



# Describe the Feeling

How would you feel if it started raining and you had forgotten your umbrella?





# Empathy



- Empathy is about how 'others' are feeling.
- If someone told you that they had been burgled, and lost a lot of money, how do you think they would be feeling?
- If someone told you that their favourite pet dog had died, how do you think they would be feeling?



# Empathy



- If someone told you that they had won the lottery, how do you think they would be feeling?
- If someone told you that they were pregnant and expecting a baby, how do you think they would be feeling? – this can be a negative or positive set of feelings



# Empathy



- How did this make you feel to imagine that someone you cared about was upset/really happy?
- This feeling is called empathy. It is likely that you (but even more so for 'neurotypicals') are feeling similar feelings to the friend with the dead dog, or the friend expecting a baby.



# Practical Activity



- In pairs, choose who will speak first.
- Think about a **good** experience you had. For the next 5-10 minutes, speak to your partner about the experience you had and how it made you feel.
- Change over and do the same.
- How did it make you feel, listening to your partners positive experience?



# Showing Empathy



If someone is sharing a positive experience, it may be necessary to show empathy.

- How could you show that you are empathetic?
- What could you do or say?



# Empathy



If you felt positive feelings after hearing the positive experience, you were feeling empathy.

If not, don't worry – a lot of people with autism struggle to, or do not feel empathy; but it helps to understand how 'neurotypicals' feel, so you know how you 'should' feel and respond to sound empathetic.



# Practical Activity



- In pairs, choose who will speak first.
- Think about a **bad** experience you had. For the next 5-10 minutes, speak to your partner about the experience you had and how it made you feel.
- Change over and do the same.
- How did it make you feel, listening to your partners negative experience?



# Empathy



If you felt negative feelings after hearing the negative experience, you were feeling empathy.

If not, don't worry – again, a lot of people with autism struggle to, or do not feel empathy; but it helps to understand how 'neurotypicals' feel, so you know how you 'should' feel and respond to sound empathetic.



# Showing Empathy



If someone is sharing a negative experience, it may be necessary to show empathy.

- How could you show that you are empathetic?
- What could you do or say?
- What should you avoid doing?



# Why Show Empathy?

When we  
empathize...

We think  
about how  
we make  
others feel...

This makes  
us change  
our  
behaviour...

To improve  
relationships!



# Strength of Empathetic Response



Your response should vary depending on the strength of the experience the other person is describing.

If they said 'I fell down the stairs earlier, but I'm fine', you're not going to respond with an 'OMG. That's awful. Do you need to go to the Drs?' What could you say?

Similarly, if someone said 'My dog died this morning', you wouldn't just shrug it off and say 'oh well'. What could you say?



# Empathy



Empathy is all about ‘walking in someone else’s shoes’, so to speak.

- It means pretending to be them to feel the same way they do in a situation, so you can respond compassionately and appropriately.



# Changing Behaviour



If more people tried to be empathetic to others, do you think the any of the below would change, and why?

- Bullying
- Rumour spreading
- Gossip
- Robbery
- Vandalism
- Racism
- Sexism



# End of Workshop

