

INTERPERSONAL CLOSENESS

COMM
318

HOW EMPATHY ENHANCES COMMUNICATION

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em • pa • thy

NOUN

The ability to step into the shoes of another person, aiming to understand their feelings and perspectives, and to use that understanding to guide our actions.

'Humans aren't as good as we should be in our capacity to empathize with feelings and thoughts of others, be they humans or other animals on Earth. So maybe part of our formal education should be training in empathy. Imagine how different the world would be if, in fact, that were 'reading, writing, arithmetic, empathy.'
Neil deGrasse Tyson



The Experimental Generation of Interpersonal Closeness

Arthur Aron, State University of New York at Stony Brook

Interpersonal Relations Lab

1997

Aron and his colleagues set out to examine whether intimacy between two strangers can be accelerated by having them ask each other a specific series of personal questions.



in·ti·ma·cy

'in(t)əməsē/

noun

close familiarity or friendship; closeness.

synonyms: closeness, togetherness, affinity, rapport, attachment, familiarity, friendliness, friendship, amity, affection, warmth, confidence; informal chumminess



Participants did the

EXACT SAME THING

as you have done tonight.

Control groups were given sets of questions revolving around small talk and non-intimate inquiries.

“One key pattern associated with the development of a close relationship among peers is sustained, escalating, reciprocal, personal self-disclosure.”

Aron, A. (1997)



RESULTS

In the original 1997 "fast friends" experiment, even before the hour was up, participants in the main group typically identified strong feelings of closeness with their partner, often exchanging contact details and indicating a wish to meet up again. This was far pronounced than members of the control group that paired up to engage in small-talk.

"We've used the method with cross-race groups, and other cross-group pairs like community members and police, with great effects -- not just at creating closeness within each pair, but that closeness extending to more positive attitudes towards the partner's group as a whole." Aron, 1997.

SD...

LET'S TALK ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE.