The Empathy Rating Scale

(Ivey, Ivey, & Simek-Morgan, 1993, p. 27-28)

Instructions: Before rating a candidate’s statement for its degree of empathy, it is critical that the context of what the client has been saying be considered as well. Therefore, examine what the client has just said, and also what is the client’s next reaction to the candidate’s statement, before determining how well the candidate is “tuned in.” Rate each candidate’s statement on the following seven-point scale for degree of empathy. It is also possible to examine several candidate’s statements or an entire interview segment and rate that for empathy. The word “counsellor” is used in this scale, because it was originally used with counsellor training.

Level 1: The counsellor is overtly destructive to the interviewing process. He or she fails to attend (sharp body shifts, major topic jumps) in a way that sharply disrupts client flow or attacks the client or discounts information.

[Level 1 is essentially the same as an extreme Level 1 response of the Carkhuff (1969) Empathy Scale.]

Level 2: The counsellor may be implicitly and subtly destructive, even though overtly trying to be helpful. The distinction between levels 1 and 2 is a matter of degree and sharpness. The disagreement or lack of attention doesn’t seem as unusual here and is seen in the daily life of most people in some form. (Also see level 5.)

[Level 2 is essentially the same as a Level 1 response of the Carkhuff (1969) Empathy Scale.]

Level 3: At first glance, the session appears to be moving normally. However, on deeper analysis, one sees that the counsellor is detracting slightly from what the client has been saying. The paraphrase is close, but still misses the client’s meaning. Much of our daily conversation fits this pattern. As a result of the interaction, the client is not damaged and has been listened to minimally, but counsellor responses take away from what the client says or minimise the value of client’s statements.

[Level 3 is essentially the same as a Level 2 response of the Carkhuff (1969) Empathy Scale.]

Level 4: Considered by many the minimal level for counselling, level 4 responses are interchangeable with what the client is saying. An interchangeable response is best exemplified by an accurate reflection of feeling, paraphrase, or summary that catches the essence of what the client has said.

[Level 4 is essentially the same as a Level 3 response of the Carkhuff (1969) Empathy Scale.]
**Level 5:** In addition to an accurate paraphrase or reflection of feeling, the therapist adds a mild interpretation or a probing question or interpretation that not only catches the major meanings of the client, but adds something new to facilitate growth and exploration. The interpretation may be subtle in that it may be stated as a reflection with cognitive content or a paraphrase with interpretation imbedded in the statement.

Generally speaking, level 5 may require the use of influencing skills or open-questioning techniques (except during the audio or videotape in ECC 601 or 602). Ineffective use of these questioning, influencing, or confrontation skills at this point, however, may return the counsellor to level 2. As one employs the influencing skills, the possibility for error increases.

[Level 5 is essentially the same as a Level 4 response of the Carkhuff (1969) Empathy Scale.]

**Level 6:** The counsellor is truly becoming an intentional person. Attending and influencing skills are used in combination with the many qualities of empathy (concreteness, immediacy, and so on) to provide a more effective and facilitating level of counselling. Patterns of movement symmetry and movement complementarity often are shown during the session.

[Level 6 is essentially the same as a Level 4+ to 5- response of the Carkhuff (1969) Empathy Scale.]

**Level 7:** The highest level of counselling is one that relatively few counsellors attain. In addition to solid, effective, intentional demonstration of the many microskills and qualities of empathy, the counsellor is totally “with” the client, yet apart and distinct. For some this can be termed a “peak experience” in a relationship. Direct mutual communication is shown at this stage in its full dimensions.

[Level 7 is essentially the same as a Level 5 to 5+ response of the Carkhuff (1969) Empathy Scale.]

**References:**

