

1970's
✓

LURRI

A systematic program
for improving interpersonal
communication

© r v peavy
psychological foundations division
faculty of education
university of victoria

LURE I

1 The term 'LURE' stands for listening/understanding/response effectiveness, a series of brief, systematic programs to improve interpersonal skills. The first program, LURE I, consisting of this booklet together with a cassette tape, is specifically designed to teach the user:

- . how to listen with understanding
- . how to respond in a way which demonstrates understanding

2 Putting the 'listening' and 'responding' together we are able to show that important communication skill called EMPATHY.

3 The person who is skillful with empathy is able to really 'stand in the other's shoes - see how the other person thinks and feels - and is able to show to the other that he in fact does understand. He can do this without guesswork.

4 Empathy is a learnable skill. This program will provide you with

- i. a concept of empathy,
- ii. examples of empathy,
- iii. a means of evaluating empathy,
- iv. exercises to practice empathy.

5 What empathy is not. First, empathy is not sympathy. Empathy is a way of listening and responding which demonstrates understanding. Sympathy is showing feelings for another person. Sympathy is given to reassure. The empathic listener says "I hear your message, accept that it is real for you, and can return the meaning to you so that you so that you know I understand." ~~The sympathetic listener says "I hear your message, it is true for me, I know how you feel because I feel that way, too."~~

6 Empathy is not projection, either. Projection is 'telling' the other person what he thinks or feels because from your point of view that is what he 'should' think or feel, i.e., that's what you think or feel.

7 Empathy is not interpretation. To interpret is to explain to another person what he thinks or feels, what you believe he 'must' think or

feel, or what you 'imagine' that he thinks or feels.

8 Sympathy, projection and interpretation are all sources of error in empathy.

9 Other common sources of error in empathy are:

- i. Judgment (rightness versus wrongness)
- ii. Disinterest (the listener doesn't care what the speaker is saying)
- iii. Trying to impress (pretending)
- iv. Cultural differences (insensitivity to nonverbal signals)
- v. Stereotyping (or labelling)
- vi. Lack of familiarity (with the experiences being expressed)
- vii. Need to be right, correct, or superior
- viii. Argumentativeness (tendency to debate rather than understand)

10 The main elements in using empathy are:

- i. willingness to understand
- ii. ability to pay attention
- iii. ability to withhold one's own opinions, thoughts and feelings long enough to 'hear the other fully'
- iv. ability to respond effectively to demonstrate understanding

11 In other words, the skillful empathizer is able to say:

- "I intend to understand"
- "I am able to pay undistracted attention"
- "I am able to withhold my own reactions"
- "I am able to show you that I understand"

EXAMPLE: EMPATHIC INTERCHANGE

STUDENT: "Boy, was Bob rotten to cut me down that way in front of the rest of the class ... I felt like punching him out ... I was really mad ... but I didn't."

TEACHER: Sounds like you were really hurt and angry by what he said but you managed to keep hold of yourself.

[this response demonstrates that the teacher heard what the student felt and meant]

BUT ...

The teacher could have replied non-empathically; for example:

"You probably deserved it"	[This response is hurtful and demonstrates no understanding of the student's meaning.]
or	
"Well, he's a bum anyway, what can you expect"	[This response expresses 'now, don't feel so bad' (sympathy) but no empathy.]
or	
"I know just how you feel, you should ignore him"	[This response is sympathetic and advice-giving, but is not empathy.]
or	
"That Bob - you almost hit him - hmmm"	[This response does catch some of the student's meaning ("You almost hit him") but leaves out the most important part of the student's message ("I was really mad ...") However, "That Bob" from the Teacher sounds like sympathy. This response is mixed: Some empathy, some sympathy.]

- 12 Benefits of empathy. Empathy establishes understanding. Even the telephone operator who simply repeats the number you have given her is using the empathic response to demonstrate that she has understood you accurately. Empathy helps people get in touch with one another. Empathy creates trust and confidence. Empathy reduces threat, hostility and defensiveness. Empathy helps people to share information and feelings with each other. Empathy helps you to 'be with' another person.
- 13 Evaluating empathy. Empathy can be rated by levels: from no empathy to accurate empathy. In rating we use 3 levels: no empathy; partial empathy; accurate empathy as shown in the following rating guide.

Guide To Rating Empathy

Level	Description	Key indicators
3.5		
3.0	A response conveying that the other is understood accurately at the level of meaning he is expressing. Feeling is accurately reflected. Content, when reflected, is accurate	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Main feeling accurately reflected2. Equal interchange of meaning3. Free from advice, judgment, interpretation4. Not a question
2.5		
2.0	A response conveying <u>partial</u> understanding of feeling and/or literal content. May be inaccurate. Is subtractive because it returns less meaning than was sent.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Subtractive2. Partial3. Inaccurate
1.5		
1.0	An irrelevant or hurtful response. Ignores feelings. Content may be reflected accurately but typically is distorted. Contaminated by advice-giving, judgmental response, question-asking.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Hurtful2. Irrelevant3. Subtracts a lot

EMPATHIC RESPONDING: THREE EXAMPLES AT LEVEL 3.0

#1. Empathic response to factual (content) statement

Statement: "Deliver it to 924 N. 4th St., in Vancouver."

Response: "That was 924 N. 4th St., Vancouver."

#2. Empathic response to feeling statement

Statement: "Wow! This is really exciting! I didn't expect everything to go so well the first time 'round."

Response: "You sound delighted with the way things are going so far."

#3. Empathic responding to feeling in normal conversation

Statement: "Boy, I've had it. What a day! I had to work late and then the phone's been ringing ever since I got in the door. I'm exhausted. Sure wish I could just curl up in the corner with a good book instead of going to that meeting tonight."

Response: "Sounds like you're edgy tonight. I bet you'd like some time just to relax by yourself."

FOR YOU TO FORMULATE AN EMPATHIC RESPONSE: (Make sure you let the person know you understand his feelings.)

1. "Isn't this heat awful. When it gets this hot out, ugh, I just get so tense and irritable ... I'm a real bear to live with."

Write your empathic response:

2. "Where has this week gone? I feel really worried about the project due on Monday. I don't know if I'm going to get it done or not."

Write your empathic response:

- 14 Perceiving empathy. Once we have a concept of empathy, as well as a concept of what it is not, and we understand that empathy can be rated by levels, then we are ready to practice perceiving empathy. This means being able to tell different levels of empathic response when we see them. The following exercise, complete with instructions will help you test out your own ability to perceive empathy.

PERCEIVING EMPATHY

Objective: To be able to rate responses on the Empathy rating guide, with an average discrepancy score of 0.5 or less.

Several responses are given to the other's situation. Rate each response on the Empathy rating guide. Place your rating (1.0, 1.5, 2.0, 2.5, 3.0, 3.5) in the blank to the left of each response.

Other Situation I

Male: "I've been looking forward to the senior dance all year, and now it looks like I won't be able to go. It boils down to a matter of money, since there is no way I can afford to rent a tuxedo and the dance is formal.

Responses

- _____ 1. "You've looked forward to it all year. Are you sure you have exhausted all means of getting a tuxedo?"
- _____ 2. "You feel left out because the money problem might cause you to miss the senior dance."
- _____ 3. "How unfortunate. Maybe you could borrow a tuxedo from somebody."
- _____ 4. "Why don't you talk to the manager of the tuxedo rental store and see if you could pay a little bit a week until it is all paid."
- _____ 5. "The dance really means a lot to you."
- _____ 6. "You are disappointed because you feel you can't afford to go to the dance."
- _____ 7. "Is there some way I could help you afford this? Are you working?"
- _____ 8. "What happened to all that money you made last summer?"

Computation of the average discrepancy score: The correct rating is given in the answer key (page 9). Find the difference, if any, between your rating and the correct rating. This number, which may have a negative or positive sign, is your "discrepancy score" for that item. Disregard the signs and add the individual discrepancy scores. Divide the sum by the number of helper responses, which in this case is 8. This gives your average discrepancy score--an estimate of your ability to perceive empathy.

A score around 1.0 is typical at this point in training. Look at the responses you rated incorrectly and refer to the Guide to Rating Empathy (p. 4) to determine why each was rated as it was. When you are confident you understand the use of the rating system for situation 1, rate the empathy responses to situations 2 and 3 (responses 9 through 23). Calculate a discrepancy score for each response, add those, and divide by 15 to get the average discrepancy score for that group of responses. Study those on which you were not accurate.

Other Situation 2

Tenth-grade girl to teacher: "There are times when I feel like school is not important to me. Since I'm not going to university, there isn't much use for me to waste my time here."

Responses

- _____ 9. "Perhaps you could talk to the counsellor about why you should stay in school."
- _____ 10. "You know that the first thing an employer will want to know is if you are a secondary school graduate."
- _____ 11. "It sounds like you are thinking about dropping out."
- _____ 12. "I would be glad to sit down and discuss it with you sometime."
- _____ 13. "You really don't know what to do. Perhaps you'd like to graduate, but right now you are leaning toward dropping out."
- _____ 14. "It's frustrating to be caught in the middle of such a conflict."

Other Situation 3

Tenth-grade girl to teacher: "I just hate to go home after school. If I'm not fighting with my parents, they're fighting with each other. It's always so uncomfortable at home."

Responses

- _____ 15. "You are dissatisfied with your home life in comparison with school."
- _____ 16. "It's hard to cope with the constant fighting in your home, yet you don't know what you can do about it."

- _____ 17. "Why do you have trouble with your parents?"
- _____ 18. "It's upsetting not being able to feel comfortable at home with family fights every day."
- _____ 19. "You really hate to go home because you feel so uncomfortable as a result of all the fighting between your parents and yourself."
- _____ 20. "You're tired of being greeted in your home by harsh words and an unpleasant atmosphere. You'd just like to feel that you could go home and feel welcome."
- _____ 21. "The situation at home makes you feel uneasy."
- _____ 22. "Do you think it is something that will blow over?"
- _____ 23. "Why don't you threaten to move out?"

ANSWER KEY:

Perceiving Empathy

Other Situation 1

- 1. 2.0
- 2. 3.0
- 3. 1.5
- 4. 1.5
- 5. 2.0
- 6. 3.0
- 7. 1.5
- 8. 1.0

- 23. 1.0
- 22. 1.5
- 21. 1.5
- 20. 3.5
- 19. 3.0
- 18. 3.0
- 17. 1.5
- 16. 3.5
- 15. 2.0
- 14. 3.0
- 13. 3.5
- 12. 1.5
- 11. 2.5
- 10. 1.5
- 9. 1.5

Other Situation 2, 3

Formulating Empathic Responses

EXAMPLE STATEMENT:

STUDENT: "Its so great. I'm really turned on that my idea was chosen by the dance committee."

TEACHER: "You're really excited because the committee is using your (Empathic idea." Response)

Notice that the teacher:

- i. reflects the feeling "you're really excited ..."
- and
- ii. reflects the content "the committee is using your idea."

A complete, accurate empathic response reflects both the 'feeling' part of the statement and the content (factual) part of the statement.

In order to practice formulating empathic response which reflects both feeling and content we practice writing formula responses and then translating the response into a more natural one.

STUDENT: "Boy was Bob rotten to cut me down in front of class like that ... I felt like puching him out I was so angry ..."

Formula Response "You felt so angry, ^{feeling} like hitting, because Bob shot you down in front of everybody"

content →

When responding, we wish to reflect back the feelings and content the other has expressed. This shows the speaker that we have attempted to hear and understand what he said. Read the following situation, carefully, perceiving the surface and underlying feelings. Choose a word or two which best summarize the feelings and content, and fill in the blanks in the sentence below the situation. These responses tend to sound mechanical, but beginning this way will help you concentrate on choosing words that accurately reflect the feelings and content. With practice, it becomes easier to state the response with spontaneity and freshness. The formula

response and the natural response would technically get the same rating, but in practice we always strive for natural and stimulating ways to respond.

Write formula response for each following situation; then write a natural response for each. The natural response should contain the same elements as the formula response but should express them in conversational style.

Situations

1. Student to teacher after school: "We all like your class, but we seem to do the same thing every day. Class would be more interesting if you would do something besides lecturing."

Responses

formula: You feel _____
because _____
natural: _____

2. Teacher to teacher: "At every PTA meeting, only the parents of the good kids come. The parents I really need to see are the ones who never show up."

Responses

formula: You feel _____
because _____
natural: _____

3. Case aide to social worker: "I hate to be prejudiced in an interview, but those long-haired boys just turn me off. I'm afraid it is becoming obvious to the clients."

Responses

formula: You feel _____
because _____
natural: _____

4. Friend to friend: "I stay depressed all the time because it seems like my husband is always at work. We never have any evenings together."

Response

formula: You feel _____
because _____
natural: _____

5. Staff member to staff member: "I was hoping when I moved to this town I could make some new friends, but I've been home alone every night."

Responses

formula: You feel _____
because _____
natural: _____

6. Parent to teacher: "My son brings his math assignments home with him and asks me to help him. It looks like the kind of stuff you do in college, and he's only in the eighth grade. I think you're expecting too much!"

Responses

formula: You feel _____
because _____
natural: _____