

## How to develop empathy in adolescents with behavioural problems?

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**Abstract.** Ability to communicate and well-developed empathy are necessary for professional self-determination, confident behavior in various situational roles and building interpersonal relationships. The bond between empathy among adolescents with deviant behavior and the level of the development of their communication skills has been investigated. The test of V.F.Roschakhovsky and the test of I.M.Yusupov and also the method of determining the level of empathy of A.Megrabian and N.Epsteinin, Y.A.Menzheritskaya adaptation ("the scale of emotional response") were applied. It appeared that the bond between empathy and the level of the development of communicative abilities among these adolescents is in linear (straight line) dependence. Teenagers with the developed ability to empathy, can reach understanding in communication more quickly, and thus adapt in the society more harmoniously.

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### Introduction

Change in social and economic conditions sets a modern school and teachers the task to bring up a creative, active, socially responsible, intellectual, highly educated, professionally competent, and capable to find the place in the society personality.

In this case possession of communicative skills and well-developed empathy are necessary for professional self-determination, self-confident behavior in various situational roles, building interpersonal relationships, as friends, social acceptance, personal interests, family, future profession play an important socio-defining role in the life of a teenager.

According to T.D.Karyagina, the task of empathy development has significance in terms of humanization of human relations and social institutions [1].

In order to determine the terminology it is necessary to appeal to psychological knowledge. In recent decades, there has been a gradual accumulation of productive theoretical works in the field of empathy (Y.A.Menzheritskaya, O.V.Tyutyayeva, I.M.Yusupov), but so far there are no concepts and theories in national psychology that are able to systematize and synthesize diverse empathic phenomena and events in their development "in the fullness and depth" [2].

Analysis of the large number of educational and psychological research has helped to make the conclusion that at present the problem of empathy development among adolescents has not been studied enough, knowledge of the empathy among children of different age groups have more fragmented, "mosaic" nature. And the question of empathy development among adolescents with behavioral

problems has not been practically studied in pedagogical literature. Therefore, the thesis of T.P.Gavrilova about the necessity of studying the genesis of empathy and the conditions of its formation has not lost its relevance until now [3].

Practice shows that the majority of teachers, either simply does not see the problem, or are not able to develop empathy properly in these adolescents, or are not trained enough in modern methods of diagnosis and organization of interaction with the above mentioned categories of teenagers. The negative impact of media, which carries a devastating effect on the formation of spiritual and moral sphere of the individual, leading to the fact that the relationship between people are characterized by selfishness, lack of understanding and inability to respond to the emotional experiences of the person can be also mentioned.

Empathy (from the Greek word *empathia* - empathy) is comprehension of the emotional state, entering to other person's feelings.

The term "empathy" was introduced by E.Titchener, who summarized within philosophical traditions the ideas on sympathy with the theories of empathy of E.Clifford and T.Lipps [4].

A huge influence on the development of a human being is made by parents, family, childhood. The first crucial years of life for the inception, development and formation are usually spent in the family. The family largely determines the range of his interests and needs, attitudes and values. Moral and social qualities of a child's personality are laid in the family. It is important for parents to remember that choosing the style of communication with a young member of their family they should form the child's focus on the others [5].

In fact, the intensity of mechanisms of adults' relations to teenagers is a mirror reflection of the intensity of teenagers' relations to adults. This clearly shows the presence of deep misunderstanding between these groups. What is important for teens is of no importance for adults, and vice versa.

Teenagers quite sensitively feel this misunderstanding and declare about it in the evaluation of difficulties in the relationship [6].

A. Beck and W. Stern in the early twentieth century suggested that the development and expression of empathy among children may be considered in connection with the formation of child's personality, the development of behavior forms and social adaptation [7].

A. Wallon in his works continues considering this issue in terms of the child's emotional development. The scientist notes that the child at the early stages of life is connected to the world through the affective sphere, and his emotional contacts are set by type of emotional infection. A small child has no experience in observing many reactions, and he is incapable of empathy, even based on the assumption. He understands vaguely what the pain is, when hurting the others, and can torture a cat or a peer, absolutely not empathizing the sufferings inflicted [8].

According to A. Wallon, during the second year of life the child enters the "situation of sympathy". At this stage the child is joined with the specific situation and communication with a partner whose emotional experience one shares. "The sympathy situation" prepares one for the "situation of altruism". At the stage of altruism (4-5 years) the child learns to relate oneself with the others, to be aware of other people's feelings, to foresee the consequences of the behaviour [9].

According to L. Murphy, empathy is the ability to emotional responsiveness to other people troubles, the desire to alleviate them or share the condition. And if the child has received the maximum trust, love, warmth in the family, empathy appears in adequate forms, adapted to the children's social lives. While L. Murphy pointed out that the evidence of empathy is affected by the degree of proximity to the object (a stranger or a beloved one), the frequency of communication with him, the intensity of the stimulus that causes empathy, previous experience of empathy. And what is more important, the development of empathy of a child may be associated with a change in his temperament (because of age), emotional excitability, as well as the influence of social groups in which he is brought up [10].

Considering empathy one of the most important sources of child development, E. Bordin

and H. Roche understand empathy as a combination of warmth, attention and influence. Since, according to the idea, the scientists rely on, a child development is a process of establishing a balance between the needs of the parents and the child. And the compliance of the balance of needs makes upbringing effective, if empathy defines the psychological climate of the child's learning the interrelation with other people [11].

A.A. Bodalev and T.R. Kashtanova works make their contribution in the problems of the empathy development among teenagers, who noted that a wide range of communication with peers positively correlates with the ability to empathize.

At the same time egocentrism and psychological discomfort (anxiety, aggression, depression, neurotisation) inhibit the empathy formation and manifestation. We should mention, in its turn, that it is very typifying for adolescents with behavioral problems. As well as the aim at blocking empathy: the desire to avoid unnecessary contacts, considering inappropriate to show curiosity to other personality, be indifferent to the feelings and problems of others.

A.P. Vasyilkova gives the results of her research, according to which, gentleness, kindness, commutability, emotionality, high intelligence, is a characteristic of highly empathic people and isolation characterizes people with low empathy.

For the most empathetic people it is typical not to blame the others for adverse events, but to show leniency.

Our research in the group of adolescents with deviant behavior (we will note as I.M. Yusupov) showed that adolescence is a unique period of marginal socialization.

A teenager with deviant behavior is as if in the interim, between different social and age groups, which has a certain effect on the human psyche and can be expressed by increased anxiety, uncommunicative behavior, aggression, self-centered personality, as well as to be shown in reactions of emancipation, compensation, grouping with peers, etc. [12].

Foreign researchers of teenage empathy talk about the deep connections between empathy and moral behavior. Moral norms, learned during the earlier stages of age development, begin to appear in the actions and judgments [13].

Empathy is a special way of understanding the other person, which is a desire to respond emotionally to his problems, so empathy can be described as affective "understanding" [14].

Mechanism of empathy is the ability to put oneself to another's place, to see things from his point

of view; however, it is not necessary to identify oneself with that person [15].

Development of empathy is the process of formation of involuntary moral motives, motivations in favor of another person. With the help of empathy comes familiarization of a teenager with behavioural problems to the world of other people's experiences, the idea of an other person's value is formed, the need in the welfare of others is developed and retained. As the mental development of a teenager with deviant behavior and structure of his personality grows, empathy becomes a source of moral development.

Empathy arises and forms in interaction and communication. Violation of emotional contact with parents, absence of emotional acceptance and empathic understanding seriously hurt the psyche of a teenager, has a negative impact on development and formation of personality.

For the full development of the ability to empathize, sympathize and help another person, one needs a family atmosphere of friendly relations. Only in a harmonious type of parental relationship (emotionally positive attitude towards the child, showing interest to his thoughts, feelings, desire to help him in a difficult situation), a linear relationship between empathy of teenagers and their parents is revealed, namely the higher level of empathy a mother and father have, the higher level of empathy development their child has.

Children often learn not only positive but also negative behavior patterns from their parents. If the elders in the family call for honesty but lie, ask for patience while being themselves hot-tempered and aggressive, then a teenager must make a choice, and he will always protest in these conditions against the requirements to behave well, if the parents in their turn do not.

Experiments of T.P. Gavrilova [16] in a group of adolescents showed a tendency to spontaneous decrease of empathetic reactions with age. Research of empathetic potential of 14-15 year old rural adolescents, held by I.M. Yusupov [17], allows speaking about a constant tendency to reducing the growth of empathy and compassion and altruistic behavior.

I.M. Yusupov conducted a research among a group of teenagers who were serving sentences in the correctional labour colony and had been previously members of asocial groups. As a result, he received data that the majority of teenagers had experienced a sense of "selfish satisfaction" at the sight of victim's suffering. Along with this, the author notes that "such emotional states are not specific for asocial oriented teenage informal groups" [18].

It is noticed that empathy is not necessarily expressed by the person through words. Having enough time, people can create so called "empathic relationship", in which understanding is expressed with the help of variety of different and sometimes subtle, nonverbal ways: a single glance is enough to transfer the depth of understanding; a hand embracing a defeated man's shoulders, can transfer support and empathy. People with empathic relationships express empathy through actions.

### Methods

To determine the level of empathy in adolescents with behavioral problems, we conducted a research. The objects of our study were 44 Kazan aged 12-15 teenagers with behavioral problems. They comprised two groups - test and experimental.

We have assumed that there will be a linear connection between empathy in adolescents with deviant behavior and the level of development of their communication skills.

The study used: 1) test of V.F. Roschahovskiy "determination of the communicativeness level"; 2) test of I.M. Yusupov to check the existing empathetic trends; 3) method of determining the level of empathy of A. Megrabian and N. Epstein in the adaptation of Y.A. Mendzheritskaya ("scale of emotional response").

### The main part

At the first stage of our research we have identified the levels of communicative abilities and empathy of adolescents with deviant behavior. The results of both groups were about the same.

During the second stage some extra-curricular activities for the development of communication skills were conducted in the experimental group for a few months. The classes have been specifically designed for adolescents with behavioral problems [19].

The group, which we worked with, included 8-12 adolescents of about the same age. This made it possible to avoid the suppression of younger by seniors.

Obtaining the parents' and guardians' approval of preventive, corrective and experimental work with a teenager is obligatory, as training classes are not part of the educational process. Parental consent implies sufficient awareness of the work purposes, forms of interaction of a psychologist and members of the group, as well as teenagers with each other and expected results.

Each lesson lasts 2 academic hours, twice a week and is structured in accordance with a common plan:

1. Greeting; 2. Warming-up; 3. Exercises; 4. Information part; 5. Group discussions; 6. Role-playing (training); 7. Reflection.

Upon completion of training, we measured the levels of communicative abilities and empathy in the test and experimental group once again.

As a result of our study the following indicators of empathy were identified. In the test group, the majority of adolescents with behavioral problems have low and average level of communicative skills development of empathy with a tendency to low. We did not identify someone with a high level of communication skills and empathy, which, in our opinion, may indicate an underdeveloped emotional and moral sphere. In the experimental group, there is a tendency to indicators' increase of the communicative skills development level as well as empathy.

### Conclusion

So, our assumption has been confirmed. It has been found that upon increasing the level of communicative skills, the level of empathy increases. So far as to reach understanding in communication, adolescent with deviant behavior must have communicative skills, and empathy is primarily a skill that allows you to make the interlocutor understand your vision of the world. Hence, it is possible to learn or teach it.

### Summary

Thus, we can draw the following conclusions:

- empathy arises and forms in interaction, in communication. Violation of emotional contact with parents, absence of emotional acceptance and empathic understanding seriously hurts the child's psyche, has a negative impact on children's development, the formation of the child's personality;

- empathic, confidential interaction of family members with each other mostly defines the harmonious development of personality. For the full development of the ability to empathize, sympathize, to help another person, one needs a family atmosphere of friendly relations;

- empathy among adolescents may be shown in relation not only to real people, but also to fictional characters, which means the ability to consciously or unconsciously put oneself in the place of another whom there is a definite idea of;

- empathy has a significant impact on the nature of the relationship of personality to the outside world, to oneself, to others, regulates the entry of the individual into the society;

- for successful communication the crucial ability is to understand oneself and to understand nonverbal behavior of other people;

- teens with the developed ability to empathize, can reach understanding in communication quicker, and therefore they enter society more harmoniously.

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