

## M.L. Hoffman's Four Levels of Empathy

Empathy -- the emotional responsiveness which an individual shows to the feelings experienced by another person; the ability to identify with another's emotions and understand what they are feeling.

1. Global empathy -- In the first year children may match the emotions they witness (e.g., by crying when another infant is crying, but the emotion is involuntary and undifferentiated).

2. Egocentric empathy -- From the second year on children actively offer help. The kind of help offered is what they themselves would find comforting and is in that sense egocentric; nevertheless, the child at least responds with appropriate empathic efforts.

3. Empathy for another's feelings -- In the third year, with the emergence of role-taking skills, children become aware that other people's feelings can differ from their own. Their responses to distress may thus become more appropriate to the other person's needs.

4. Empathy for another's life condition -- By late childhood or early adolescence children become aware that others' feelings may not just be due to the immediate situation but stem from their more lasting life situation. Empathy may also be found with respect to entire groups of people (the poor, the oppressed, etc.) and thus transcend immediate experience.

*Source: Schaffer, H. R. (1996). Social development. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers.*