



A normal consumer: "That was SO good! They're an amazing actor/actress!"  
Me: "That was uncannily good. What does that say about the actor/actress as a person if they can play that role so well that it looks natural? Does that mean they're more like that character than we realize? And if they've played many different kinds of roles well (especially a villain), then do we ever really know who they are as a person?"

In short,

acting : disingenuousness :: good actors : deceivers/manipulators/chameleons/impostors (?)  
Adulthood is such a coloring stage of life, isn't it?

But then I realized maybe the pretenders are the ones with the real point of view?  
Maybe the reason behind their uncanny brilliance is something benign?

### Empathy

Britannica: "the ability to imagine oneself in another's place and understand the other's feelings, desires, ideas, and actions"<sup>1</sup>

This is what I knew empathy to be. Until I started watching people try to "teach empathy."

"I'm really sorry to hear that."

"That must be really difficult."

"I can see why you would be upset."

They weren't teaching empathy.

They were teaching how to act (em)-pathetic.

Breaking an emotion down into a formula (phrases, tone, body language) really

unbalances the equation of authenticity.

Empathy isn't a checklist.

It's an exercise:

Do not stop listening once something familiar is heard.

Self-Control

Knowing someone's story does not make us the expert of that story.

Narrative Humility

One part of the story does not make the whole story like someone else's.

Respect

Lean in more when the emotions and stories push beyond our purview.

Courage

When an actor/actress takes on a new role,

they immerse themselves in this exercise.

Armed with some semblance of empathy,

they orient themselves until

in the words of Susan Cain,

they "fake it until they [you] *become* it."

Et voila ... magic on the screen that stimulates our minds and tugs our heartstrings!

Empathy is not a faux gateway to speaking about ourselves again or promoting the applicability of experiences that detract from the experience in front of us.

It is re-centering the Self to think and feel as someone else, to remember that this is not about us or establishing our credibility to relate.

Empathy is not perfect understanding or neat answers.

It is genuine commitment to trying to understand and guide (albeit imperfectly).

Empathy is not a recipe.

It is a dynamic two-way street to an unknown destination.

Empathy is not about holding the weights of everyone in the world on our shoulders.

It is about shouldering some weight so that a person's world can feel bigger – even if only for a single moment.

Next time,

“I’m so sorry. ...”

“I know exactly how you feel/what you mean. ...”

A new challenge:

Dig a little deeper.

Sit awhile in the uncharted waters outside the (em)-pathetic zone.

Think. Feel.

Search the “thought experiment” for the words and actions needed.

Resonate if possible.

But don’t compromise respect.

Because the truth is:

We don’t *truly* know or understand.

But we should really try.

Orient.

Fake it at first if needed. But practice the exercise. Over and over again until ...

You *become* the exercise.

<https://www.britannica.com/science/empathy#:~:text=empathy%2C%20the%20ability%20to%20imagine,desires%2C%20ideas%2C%20and%20actions.> <sup>1</sup>

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