

## InterviewLive Text Chat here with Professor Simon Baron-Cohen

*"One of my motivations for writing this book was to persuade you that empathy is one of the most valuable resources in our world"*

*"Empathy is a universal solvent. Any problem immersed in empathy becomes soluble."*

*"Empathy cannot by definition oppress anyone"*



**Here on Sunday, July 31,**

10:00-11:00 AM, California PST

6:00-7:00 PM, London, UK Time

[And all time zones in between](#)

Simon Baron-Cohen is Professor of Developmental Psychopathology and Director of the Autism Research Centre at Cambridge University.

In his new book; ...

[Zero Degrees of Empathy: a New Theory of Human Cruelty](#) ( UK Title)

[The Science of Evil: On Empathy and the Origins of Cruelty](#) (U.S. Title)

Simon calls for a redefinition of Evil as the erosion of Empathy.

See more about his work at: <http://bit.ly/jlHrf7>

### Welcome



Welcome everyone to the discussion and Live Chat with Simon Baron-Cohen. The format of this talk will be a bit different. We are sharing this open google document page. Feel free to comment, ask questions, answer questions, organize and reorganize the material here. Hopefully we will come up with a final document that we can share with others. Only one rule, - try to put yourself in the shoes of other's here and try to deepen the experience of empathy. Feel free to get started now below. (If you can, try using different color of text so it's easier to identify yourself). **Simon's comments are in red.**

Warmly, Your host, [Edwin Rutsch](#)  
[Center for Building a Culture of Empathy](#)

Dear Simon, Our time is up. Thank you for joining and engaging in this dialog. I'm grateful that you make yourself accessible in this way and are willing to try out a new format like this shared Google doc. Your humanity and generous spirit comes across. I also find it so important that we have scientific data and results that show the importance of empathy in our personal lives and in our culture in general. Keep up the great work.

This document will stay open for ongoing dialog. Thank you to everyone for taking part and let's keep working on building a culture of empathy and compassion! Warmly Edwin Rutsch

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### 1) Links

1. **This pages URL:**
  - a. [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1TtsT4k4AZv5-aAVLvm4b8NbNQ-KpqutnLOT9d2hDid4/edit?hl=en\\_US](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1TtsT4k4AZv5-aAVLvm4b8NbNQ-KpqutnLOT9d2hDid4/edit?hl=en_US)
  - b. Short url: <http://bit.ly/nZP44n>
2. [Event Listing on Facebook: LIVE CHAT here with Simon Baron-Cohen:](#)
3. [See more about Simon and his fantastic work on empathy](#)

### 2) Pre Questions for Simon and his Answers? (10 max)

Simon will post answers to up to 10 questions before the live chat starts.

1. **Question:** [Edwin Rutsch](#): What are your ideas for how can we build a global culture of empathy? What would be a basic step by step blueprint for making this a reality?
  - a. Answer: Hi Edwin. Thanks for inviting me into this discussion. I would say that your website and your efforts are significant
2. **Question:** [Cheryl Bullock](#): Is psychopathy or low empathy hereditary **ant steps towards this important goal. Your messages about compassion are being noticed in many sectors of society and at many levels. Keep up this excellent work. Best wishes, Siry?**
  - a. Answer: Hi Cheryl. In my recent book I summarize some of the evidence for a genetic component to empathy (whether low, medium or high!). Genes are one component, but clearly there are many non-genetic influences too. Note that psychopathy should not be equated with low empathy, as not everyone with low empathy is a psychopath (though everyone who is a psychopath has empathy deficits). Thanks for the question. Simon
3. **Question:** [Karla McLaren](#) Is it possible that people on the autism spectrum actually have a near-neurotypical capacity for empathy, but are often overwhelmed and unable to organize incoming emotional and social stimuli ?
  - a. Answer: Yes, this is possible. We are only just beginning to understand this complex thing called 'empathy'. In my book I suggest it has 2 components (cognitive and

affective) though in the neural circuitry it looks as if at least 10 different brain regions may be involved. People on the autistic spectrum COULD have some of these brain regions working at a neurotypical level - this is something scientists could test. The idea that people on the autistic spectrum may be overwhelmed by emotional stimuli is also perfectly plausible. Thanks for putting forward a hypothesis that I hope will be testable. Simon

4. **Question: Julia Jamal:** Will Simon address the concerns that Rachel Cohen-Rottenberg and many others have about his claim that those on the autistic spectrum lack empathy? (it would be helpful if these questions and concerns were stated and phrased more clearly. I'm confused what the actual question is. Here are some related articles and links. thanks, Edwin)
  - a. Do people with personality disorders have 'zero empathy'?
  - b. Opposition to Simon B-C
  - c. As a person with borderline personality disorder, apparently I have no empathy.
  - d. Borderline "Empathy" Revisited | Psychology Today
  - e. and a dialog below with Diane Engster
    - i. Answer:
5. **Question: Edwin Rutsch:** What is personally your most important value and how did it become important to you? If that value is empathy, instead let me know what is your second most important value and how did it become important to you?
  - a. Answer: Thanks Edwin for this interesting question. I'm unsure if I agree that empathy itself is a value or (as I describe it) is a drive or a psychological process. Empathy can be the source of our values, but our values can derive from other sources. For example, one can hold as important the value of treating others fairly and with respect, but this could be a value that stems from a code of practice or from empathy. See you online later. Best wishes, Simon
  - b. thanks Simon, is your most important value respect? I wasn't quite clear. This is of deep interest to me, - how do the different values that people hold relate to empathy? I've started a project where I'd like to collect these values and systematically relate them to empathy. Just getting started with this .  
see <http://cultureofempathy.com/References/Values/>  
It will also be a core question in the empathy curriculum that we are developing. I asked my facebook friends, What is personally your most important Value? this is what they said  
<http://facebook.com/home.php?sk=question&id=189913911053279>
  - c. Hi Edwin. I think I'd probably rank respect as high up my list of values.
  - d. edwin: Simon, is that the top value or is there something still more important to you?
6. **Question: Edwin Rutsch:** One of our projects it to create a free online empathy curriculum? Do you know of any effective exercises, activities, lessons or curriculum for deepening empathy (for raising the empathy dimmer switch)? Especially ones that are more experiential versus cognitive or academic.
  - a. Answer:

7. **Question: Paul E. Greenberg:** The Wall Street Journal ran an Op-Ed today by Professor Nassir Ghaemi (*Depression in Command: In times of crisis, mentally ill leaders can see what others don't*, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424053111904800304576474451102761640.html>) suggesting that clinical depression is positively related to empathy. If true, is it possible that in our zeal to treat widespread depression in society, we have inadvertently diminished the supply of this universal solvent?
- a. Answer: Hi Paul. I'm not aware of any scientific evidence that clinical depression is positively correlated with empathy and if anything I would have predicted the opposite: a negative correlation. This is because as you become more depressed you tend to become more self-focused. Correspondingly, I would expect a depressed person to be less able to think about other people's thoughts and feelings, perhaps because they are overwhelmed by their own. Since depression can be so difficult for the sufferer, I would welcome efforts to alleviate it, especially through psychological treatments and through reducing the environmental risk factors for depression.
8. **Question: Rebecca Chesworth** How do you view the impact on society of congenital empathy deficiency vs lack of empathy based on cognitive overload. It seems to me that the lack of empathy in general life has a far more insidious effect than the occasional psychopath.
- a. Answer:  
Dear Rebecca. I think that whatever the cause of reduced empathy, the impact can be considerable for society. Hence the importance of the kind of discussion and debate the Edwin is organizing. Best wishes, Simon
9. **Question: Enock Othin:** What are the causes of apathy and its solutions. (and how does apathy relate to empathy? Enock, may I ask what your interest in apathy is? Edwin )
- a. Answer: Dear Enock. I believe Edwin's discussion forum today is specifically focused on empathy rather than apathy. But perhaps in your mind they are linked? Best wishes, Simon
10. **Question: Edwin Rutsch:** What is next for your work on empathy? What are the future directions of your work?
- a. Answer: Hi Edwin. I see my recent book as simply laying out a framework for trying to understand empathy and to illustrate that science can indeed study it. But the book simply hints at the many questions that lie ahead for future researchers, including my own research. I am particularly interested in the role of early sex steroid hormones such as testosterone in shaping brain development and how this influences a child's later empathy. Our work and others has only just begun to scratch the surface of this important topic. But biological factors like hormones and genes don't operate in a vacuum - how much empathy we each end up with is the result of our prenatal biology and our current neural circuitry interacting with a host of environmental factors, from affectionate relationships through to compassionate values (which your website is doing a huge amount to promote). Best, Simon

11.Question: Enock Othin-How can you tell that someone is empathetic?

### 3) Live Chat - Post Comments Below

Post your questions, comments, ideas and responses below. Feel free to help organize this document. --- Greetings to everyone; feel free to post any comments here about your interests and insights into the nature of empathy? Please introduce yourself here when you arrive. Edwin

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What do you think about this google doc format? I've been using it together with skype calls and find it a good way to jointly capture the contents of a discussion, not sure how well it works with a whole group of people. When Google+ came out, a group of 120 people worked simultaneously to create a manual for it. It seemed to work well. here is the document they created

<http://goo.gl/Jo38w> edwin

Not bad, page keeps moving down tho! :D A new experience. I'd have to trial it for longer than an hour to really see if it can work well or badly. Matthew McVeagh

I'd be interested in hearing from everyone what your most important value is and how it relates to empathy?

#### truth and integrity

My most important value is truth and integrity. Not sure how it relates to empathy. :) I think empathy is important between social sentient living things like human beings. My value of truth is per se more oriented towards the universe as a whole, i.e. I want to know how things really are. But there is also an issue of people being 'true' to themselves - that is integrity. I find integrity more important than surviving, fitting in, conforming, including the benefits that empathy brings to human society. In other words, if it is someone's true way to be unempathic and hence insensitive, harsh, hurtful etc. - as in the psychopathic tendency - I think we have to accept that. It is just that in looking out for ourselves and each other we want to spread empathy because it forms a world that is preferable to us. Matthew McVeagh (with AS diagnosis, which I suspect is relevant to the value of integrity)

Edwin rutsch: thanks Matthew

#### Fairness and Justice

Rebecca Chesworth: My most important value is fairness, a sense of justice, definitely not based on equality but on treatment which is fair to an individual. In relation to empathy I should think an individual basis for action is required.

Edwin Rutsch: there does seem to be a difference between a fairness based of balancing of needs and wants versus being connected through empathy and feeling our common

humanity. The US budget debate is based more on the balancing of fairness direction. To have a real empathy based budget solution, we would need to know what is important to each person (at a deeper values level) and for that to be empathized with by the other side. It's not really based on compromise but feeling our shared humanity and finding common values and building on them. I've seen this happen in conflict mediation.

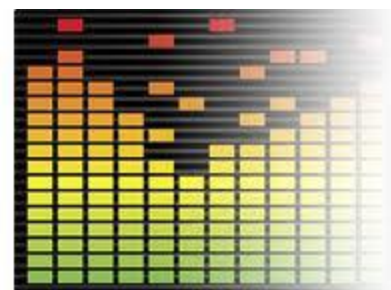
Rebecca Chesworth: yes a utilitarian approach to fairness is definitely not conducive to nurturing empathy. But a sense of injustice over the treatment of persons which induces suffering is very different I think.

Rebecca Chesworth: Having just read Simon's excellent response to Karla, it occurs to me that people exhibiting 'normal' degrees of empathy during questionnaires etc may be responding to 'quiet' time and in fact not display a significant amount of empathy when confronted with daily constraints and stimuli.

Hi Rebecca: I would like to see more research tease apart these different factors to understand the nature of empathy better. It may be for some people that empathy works well when there are no competing 'demands', whilst for others empathy is effortless even in a crowded room (e.g., in a party or in a school playground). Understanding what facilitates empathy and what can block empathy has far reaching implications for how we can support people with different learning or processing styles. Best wishes, Simon

Hi Simon..Yes I think such research would be invaluable and perhaps have far reaching implications for the direction of human society. kind regards Rebecca

Edwin Rutsch: Rebecca, have you ever seen the audio levels of music? they bounce up and down continuously.. I see empathy like that. changes on a minute by minute (maybe second by second) basis according to the incoming and internal stimuli, etc. The question for me is how to raise the levels. so we (our culture) is on the upper end of the range.



Rebecca: Yes good point Edwin, but would you say that in some cases it is possible that people know how they should respond whether that is true of them or not. As you might gather I am interested in cognitive load and I think that this is the biggest — barrier to

empathy.

Hi Rebecca: I like this idea but I wonder if the concept of “cognitive load” can be unpicked and tested? Best, Simon

Edwin Rutsch: cognitive load - is that stress?

Rebecca: I see cognitive load as the amount of competing stimuli at any given time (sorry computer playing up!) If the load is too great the first things to lose consideration are the ‘others’ on the same principle as in group bias. Its not necessarily that competing stimuli create stress but that the load being full can’t or won’t accept any more. We did some tests using distraction when people were asked to perform simple tasks but I’m sure there are much more complex methods to test the effect.

Edwin: so it relates to awareness and/or presence, we only have a certain amount and where does it go or where is it directed?

Rebecca: yes I guess that’s a helpful way to describe it. We only have the capacity to at least consciously juggle so much and empathy at least in part requires a ‘present’ person even if the capacity is innate...like you said the up and down of empathy...that’s based on momentary capacity...unless we reduce the constraints I don’t think empathy can flourish universally.

## New articles

Edwin Rutsch: Just saw there is a new article out The Science of Evil and Empathy  
<http://www.phdinparenting.com/2011/07/30/the-science-of-evil-and-empathy/>

“The front page of today’s *Globe and Mail* jumped out at me. “**Can science really explain evil?**” the headline asked. As an atheist and believer in the [principles of attachment parenting](#), I was intrigued by both the question and the double-barreled definition of evil that accompanied it”

[Patricia Grahame Steffens](#) Reading Simon Baron-Cohen years ago was my first effective understanding of ToM and....my adult Asperger's daughter ! Very, very grateful to Simon ! You have



no idea how many years I struggled with trying to "get" her !Labelled LD,in middle school, all I knew was that she was bad a math and spatially disabled ....what ?She is now 44, and I understand her so much better....again thanks to that book !

You're welcome, Patricia. Best wishes, Simon

### Empathy and Autism Related Questions-Comments-Ideas

1. [Julia Jamal](#) Will Simon address the concerns that Rachel Cohen-Rottenberg and many others have about his claim that those on the autistic spectrum lack empathy?

Dear Julia. A brief Q + A session that we have (just one hour) is probably not the forum to address all of Rachel Cohen-Rottenberg's concerns but perhaps I could make a few relevant remarks. First, my role as a scientist is to test hypotheses and gather evidence. The hypothesis that people on the autistic spectrum have empathy difficulties has been tested in many different studies, and the results consistently show reduced empathy. Note that these are group studies, so they say nothing about individuals. The autism spectrum group is compared to a typical group and on average, group differences are found. Take for example the Empathy Quotient (EQ). This usually produces a fairly normal distribution (the familiar bell curve) in the general population, and in a group of people with autism spectrum conditions the average is shifted over to the left to a statistically significant degree. That doesn't mean that all people with autism spectrum conditions "lack empathy". It simply means that as a group they score lower than a typical group, on average. The last two words are of course key. That also means that there will be some people with autism spectrum conditions who score at the high end for that group, and close to if not overlapping with a typical group. I hope this brief answer addresses at least one of the points Rachel makes. With thanks for your question. Simon

2. [Karla McLaren](#) Hi Edwin, thanks for setting this up. I have a question about the hypothesis that people on the Autism Spectrum lack empathy. I went into a job supporting college-aged Spectrum people, and I read everything I could get my hands on -- most of which follows Baron-Cohen's hypothesis about low empathy and incomplete or missing "theory of mind." From all these books, I thought I knew the kind of people I'd meet... But I didn't see a lack of empathy -- rather, I saw people who were overwhelmed by incoming stimuli and who had a very hard time organizing and understanding emotional cues. I've since worked with many Spectrum people, and I really think the theory is leading the data-gathering. So we all agree



that Spectrum people lack empathy;... therefore, we ascribe labels to their behavior that obscures deeper inquiry. Sadly, the idea helps people treat Spectrum folks as aliens. The lack of understanding I saw "neurotypicals" show for Spectrum people made me ask: "Who is the unempathic person here?" The video I posted, made by a nonverbal Spectrum woman, is an amazing and damning critique of neurotypical privilege and lack of awareness. Watch all the way through for a real lesson in empathy.

Dear Karla. You make an excellent point that empathy is a two-way street. So-called 'neurotypicals' need to make an effort to understand what the world must be like for people on the autistic spectrum, and how to make people with autism spectrum conditions feel valued. Certainly, the idea of portraying or treating people on the autistic spectrum as if they were aliens is abhorrent. I also think your point that people on the autistic spectrum are "overwhelmed by incoming stimuli" is very important, since the implications is that under the right conditions, people with autism would show no empathy difficulties at all, if the incoming stimuli were not overwhelming. On this view, any empathy difficulties might be secondary to difficulties due to the rate of information processing. I have some sympathy for this view, because I have met many adults with Asperger Syndrome who can cope with one-to-one relationships and are very caring within these, and only find it difficult when they have to process information in fast-changing social groups. Equally, I have met many adults with Asperger Syndrome who can display their excellent empathy when they have the "luxury" of considering all the facts "off-line", that is, when there is less time pressure creating demands to respond in real time. These ideas also suggest new lines of research that the autism research community could follow up. Best, Simon

- a. Edwin Rutsch: The question I'm seeing here is; 'Is it possible that people on the autism spectrum actually have a great deal of empathy and are overwhelmed by incoming empathic stimuli ? '
  - b. [Karla McLaren](#) Thanks Edwin, that's close. How about this: Is it possible that people on the autism spectrum actually have a near-neurotypical capacity for empathy, but are often overwhelmed and unable to organize incoming emotional and social stimuli ?
3. [Jane Strauss](#) Are you saying that Autistics, who supposedly lack empathy, are evil? I know many who are more truly empathic than so called normal people, I know fewer Autistics who are bullies (proportionally) than so-called normals.

Hi Jane. As Edwin points out, I take great pains in the book to say the opposite! I hope when you read the book this will become clear. Essentially I argue in the book that acts of cruelty presuppose low empathy (at the time of the act); but that it is not a symmetric relationship, because low empathy does not necessarily lead to acts of cruelty. The best evidence for this is in fact people with autism spectrum conditions, who despite struggling with empathy (in real-time social situations), don't tend to go on to hurt others or commit crimes at higher rates than in the general population. Indeed, in my book I point out how people on the autistic spectrum (despite their empathy difficulties) tend to be highly moral individuals, strongly concerned with issues like justice, fairness, and truth. Best wishes, Simon

- a. [Edwin Rutsch](#) have you read the book? you can see a large collection of articles and videos by Simon here. <http://bit.ly/jlHrf7> it would be good to hear the full extent of his ideas first. Simon is actually trying to do away with the word evil.
- 4. [Diane Engster](#) I've mentioned it before that the basic premise of his book is extremely offensive to people with certain psychiatric labels including borderline personality disorder and autism spectrum disorders. I find it as offensive as the recent article that was written about why women of African descent aren't beautiful. Promoting discussion of his book is very unempathetic to people with these diagnoses. Psychiatric diagnoses are very unscientific and political as anyone who has been reading the revision of the DSM knows. Calling people with these labels "evil" or "lacking in empathy" is like engaging in racial profiling and not at all compassionate. Why is this book being promoted?
  - a. [Edwin Rutsch](#) have you read the book? you can see a large collection of articles and videos by Simon here. <http://bit.ly/jlHrf7> it would be good to hear the full extent of his ideas first. Simon is actually trying to do away with the word evil.
  - b. [Diane Engster](#) Yes, I got that from the article but substituting the word or concept of "evil" with psychiatric labels does little to improve human relationships. How would you feel Edwin, if you were in one of the "unempathetic" categories? These labels are used to oppress, marginalize, and discriminate against people. After I read the article, I read a critique of the book by someone who is labelled asd and had read the book. He also knew quite a lot about this author and his research with people who are autistic. He was very critical of the research and had much more understanding of research and autism than I do. He did not appreciate being labelled as not having empathy and nor do I. I really don't see how such a book promotes empathy and compassion. I do know quite a bit about borderline personality disorder and know many people with this diagnosis. None of them lacks empathy.
  - c. [Edwin Rutsch](#) one of the points is that empathy is not an on or off switch but more like a dimmer switch.. We are all on a scale of empathy.. some days I'm low some higher. when I'm stressed I go lower.

I hope these scientific explanations are actually used to deepen understanding and empathy. If we understand that stress and fear can lower our or my empathy, then we know it's important to reduce stress to raise empathy. We know we don't want children growing up in stressed environments.

It's important that everyone is heard, so I appreciate you voicing your concerns on this. I'm hearing you don't want people to be judged and demeaned in any way. I think it's important to fully hear out what Simon has to say by seeing all the videos talks, articles, radio shows. etc he has on that page. Empathy is deepened by hearing everyone to the full extent of what they have to say. Until everyone feels fully heard.

- d. [Diane Engster](#) Yes, I agree with the concept that empathy is like a dimmer switch and can be affected by stress but what I read in the article is that some people in

certain categories like autism or borderline personality disorder are unempathetic categorically or at least fall at a below average level on the scale Baron-Cohen developed. What I disagree with is labelling people by category.

This is what we do to demonize people who are different; we put them in a category that is supposedly far different from the category we happen to be in. This, as I'm sure you know, can be done by race, religion, gender, culture, sexual preference, disability, income, etc. Then we stereotype the people in the category. It's this process that makes empathy more difficult.

- e. [Edwin Rutsch](#) I hear you saying that by creating categories we don't see our common humanity and that you value staying connected to an awareness of our common humanity.
- f. [Diane Engster](#) That's partially correct. But, additionally I don't want to see people suffer needlessly by demonizing them. I have seen many people in the mental health system suffer incredibly because of inhumane actions taken against them like seclusion and restraint, forced ect, forced drugging, forced institutionalization, poverty, the withholding of medical care, segregation in the community, shunning, bullying, homelessness, humiliation, name calling and on and on. I have also seen that it is this stigma and discrimination that has led people to suicide, not just their mental illness. Because I have been advocating for people with mental illness for forty years, witnessing this has been extremely painful to watch and very painful to experience myself. This isn't just an academic exercise to me. I think that some of the views in this book will only add to this suffering. Thank you for engaging in this discussion. I have to get to bed though since it's after 1:30 am. Maybe I can post more another time.
- g. [Edwin Rutsch](#) Diane- Seems to me that creating a category and demonizing the category are 2 very different things. There's a category that people call themselves American, others call themselves German. There's not an inherent demonization there.

There is the category of dogs and cats and it's not demonization.. People can say dogs are terrible, and demonize them through judgment. So maybe what you are objecting to is the judgments and demonization itself.

The other part I'm hearing is that you are concerned about the suffering of people and you would like to avoid their suffering or help alleviate that suffering?

- h. [Hi Diane.](#) I agree with both Edwin AND you in this discussion. You make an important point that psychiatric diagnostic categories have not always been based on rigorous science and that the labels can sometimes do more harm than good. Hence the need to question both the categories and the labels we use. However, as Edwin points out, using categories need not be inherently stigmatizing. Ideally, the categories in medicine should serve the "patient"'s interests. Your specific point was about those with Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD). I certainly don't want to

“demonize” them or anyone. In pointing out that they too have empathy difficulties, it is to draw attention to the kinds of help they might need. People with BPD also help us understand the importance of early environmental experience in loving parental relationships in the formation of empathy, since some 80% of people with BPD sadly suffered emotional neglect and abuse in childhood. Best wishes, Simon

i.

## Empathy and Psychopathy Related Questions-Comments-Ideas

1. [Tina Bush](#) I worked with a person for years who was pure evil, researched and found out she was a psychopath. She had no empathy, so am I correct when I say it's impossible for her and other psycho/sociopaths to get empathy?

Hi Tina. As you will discover, in my book I urge readers to stop using the term 'evil' since it doesn't really explain a person's behaviour. If the woman you worked with was a psychopath, then the more useful explanation for her behaviour might be in terms of low empathy. You ask if it is possible to acquire empathy if a psychopath has never had it, and the answer I hope is 'yes'. But that reflects my optimism. Certainly I know of therapists who share this view, though no one suggests it's easy. Best, Simon

2. [Cheryl Bullock](#): Is psychopathy or low empathy hereditary?
- 3.

## 5) Notes - freewheeling comments..

In response to Karla above: “In my book I suggest it has 2 components (cognitive and affective)”

This is a very important point Simon, and one which I have thought of myself. I think it makes the difference between the way autistics lack empathy and the way psychopaths do. Autistics relatively lack awareness (or 'knowledge' which is more to do with 'cognitive') of other people's feelings; psychopaths can be very aware of them, but don't care. A lot of the discussion above concerns whether autistics have an underlying capacity to empathise even tho they often don't perform/show it. It is often the case that once they have been got to understand how they have affected someone they can be very sorry. Thus response to autistic lack of empathy might profitably be based around processes allowing autistics to gain empathy. The question is how that can be done - in my experience we tend to learn major things 'the hard way', i.e. thru harsh experiences, rather than the 'easy way' of being told and taking things on board. We can often be told repeatedly and fail to understand, but come to do so when we suffer a reversal or unexpected blow to our familiar world. Matthew McVeagh

Thanks Matthew. Very good suggestions. Sorry that time is almost up. Best wishes, Simon

## **The End**

**Dear Simon, Our time is about up. Thank you for joining and engaging in this dialog. I'm grateful that you make yourself accessible in this way and are willing to try out a new format like this shared Google doc. Your humanity and generous spirit comes across.**

**I also find it so important that we have scientific data and results that show the importance of empathy in our personal lives and in our culture in general. Keep up the great work.**

**This document will stay open for ongoing dialog. Thank you to everyone for taking part and let's keep working on building a culture of empathy and compassion.!**

**Warmly**

**Edwin Rutsch**

And a big thank you to you, Edwin, for your inspirational work in striving to find new ways to use the new media to promote empathy-based values. Best, Simon

Thanks to both ;)