

Feeling what you don't know: Emotion and empathy in psychopathy

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Psychopath

THE PSYCHOPATH(S) IN THE MEDIA





PSYCHOPATHY

- Parasitic, “fast” lifestyle and impulsivity
- Inflated sense of self-importance and manipulative tendencies
- Criminal versatility
- Lack of remorse or guilt



PSYCHOPATHY

- 15-25% of convicted criminals meet diagnostic criteria
- 3-5% of general population displays elevated psychopathic traits

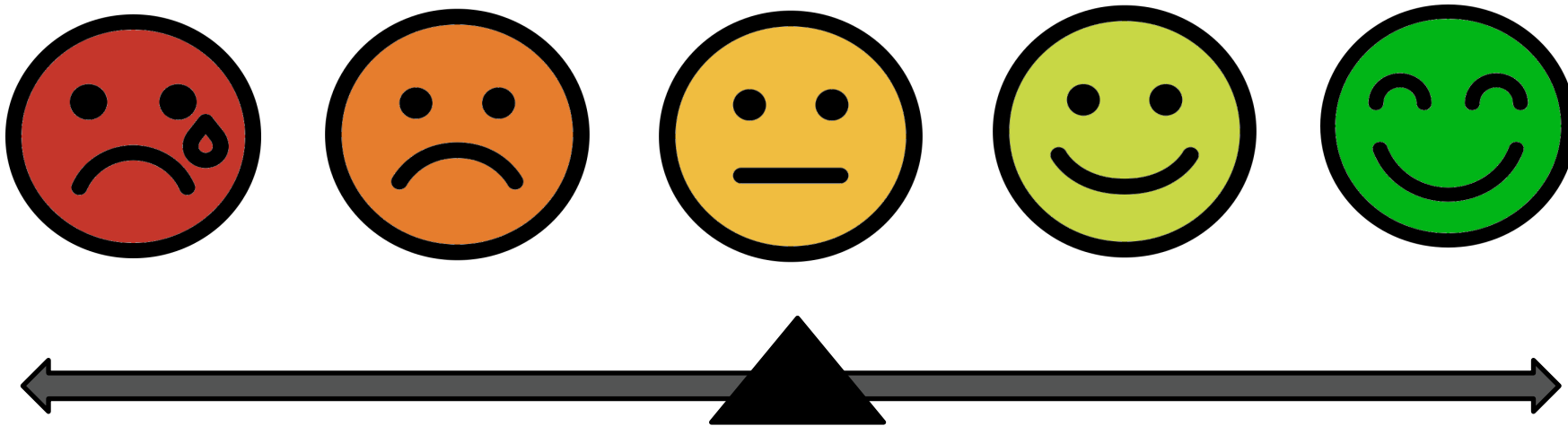
WHEN, WHY AND WITH WHOM DO WE EMPATHISE?

- When: in emotionally salient situations
- With whom: friends over strangers
- Why: promote prosocial behaviour (albeit not always)

Who feels empathy?

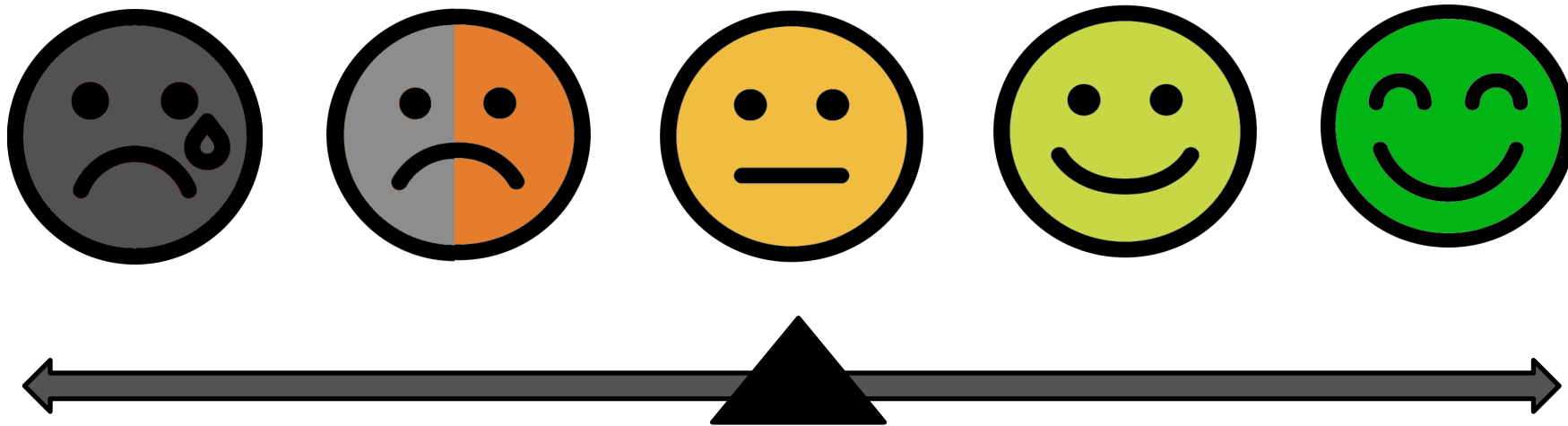
HOW ONE'S OWN EXPERIENCE SHAPES EMPATHY

- Self-to-Other Model of Empathy (SOME)



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HOW ONE'S OWN EXPERIENCE SHAPES EMPATHY

- Feeling an emotion and empathising share neural mechanisms
- Psychopathy linked to feeling less pain
- Higher pain tolerance also linked to aggression and antisociality

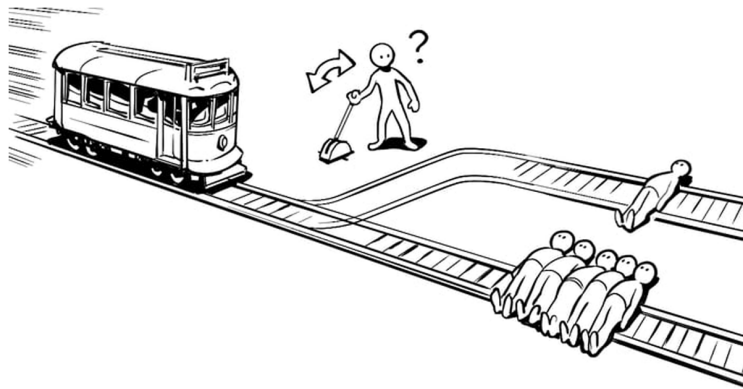




PAIN & PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS

- Do people with more psychopathic traits feel *less* psychological distress and pain?
- Does this determine the extent to which they empathise with the distress and pain of others?

PAIN & PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS



Myself



Another

Perspective

PAIN & PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS

- People with more psychopathic traits feel less pain and distress
- They also underestimated the pain and distress others felt



Reduced sensitivity to
pain/distress



Reduced empathy for
pain/distress



FEELING WHAT YOU (DON'T) KNOW

- Feeling less = empathising less
- Our capacity for empathy is rooted in our own emotional & bodily experiences
- Empathy as a function of lived experience
- Psychopathy: choosing to ignore one's pain or simply less able to recognise it?



FEELING WHAT YOU (DON'T) KNOW

How do we cultivate empathy in people with blunted or different lived experiences of emotion?

THANK YOU

