

This week I worked a Cal Poly recruitment booth at World Ag Expo. On our busiest day, I would end up with audiences of 10-12 high schoolers wanting to hear about my major and it would be on constant rotation for hours. I definitely found myself becoming a robot in this. I was beginning to lose my voice from talking so much towards the end of the shift and I finally had a clearing to breathe, but there was an older gentleman standing in the center of our booth. No one else seemed to notice him so my quick little possible reprieve had to end and I have to admit I was frustrated with that. Anytime we get stuck with older people at these booths they want to ask me if I know 10 of their grandchildren that attend Cal Poly or give me stories of their time, and when you're their to recruit and have been busy for so long, its frustrating and feels like a waste of time. So I pretty quickly considered this guy a waste of my time especially with the new hordes of highschoolers starting to flock around. He asked me about our display jelly and BBQ sauce and wanted me to tell him how he can make it. I brushed him off with that's just a class that Cal Poly Students can make. I picked this experience for my journal because it hit me hard and made me feel like a real ungrateful jerk recruiter. We kept talking and I found out he was going back to school and was almost complete with his AA. He was genuinely looking for a school to get his bachelors in, but because he wasn't a teenager I had so easily dismissed him in my mind. I know it must have been hard for him to go back to school and very uncomfortable to talk to someone young enough to be his granddaughter about how to begin applying to universities. I know he must have been disappointed to not be noticed as quick as all of us recruiters do to the hundreds of teenagers and feel like he was shoved to a lower priority. I'm sure it hurt his confidence to not be warmly brought into the Cal Poly narrative, even though he should have immense pride in going back to school to get the degrees he had always wanted when he was younger.

My empathetical experience took place at the ECHO Shelter in Atascadero. I volunteered there for my sociology class, and it was an overall great experience. I volunteered to help with the kids during story time, and I had a very interesting conversation with one of the kids. He was reading Dragon Ball Z, and he started asking me some of my opinions about it. Having never read Dragon Ball Z, I was not able to answer the questions to his satisfaction. When I told him that I had never read Dragon Ball Z, he was appalled and then started trying to explain to me how to get a library card. It was a funny to me, but I could see where his passion was coming from. If someone has never heard of a musical artist that I am passionate about, I also get a little pushy because I want them to be able to experience what I have experienced.

To give some perspective before I dive into my realization, I work here on campus and sometimes I'm scheduled to close, which is from 7pm-11:30pm (sometimes later if we aren't efficient in our cleaning). I also live here on campus in PCV, so the walk is pretty long and poorly lit.

Last week I closed on Wednesday night. I asked my boyfriend to pick me up around 11:30 so that I wouldn't have to walk alone. Come 11:10, I texted him and let him know I was probably

going to get out early. Come 11:20 I was off and still hadn't heard from him. I tried to call 3 times but didn't get an answer. I was pretty upset. I do think it's part of my boyfriend's responsibility to keep me safe, especially since he had agreed to it. However, after thinking about it, I did tell him 11:30. He just wasn't looking at his phone prior to that. I also did get home safe as my boss offered to drop me off. So ultimately, nothing bad came out of the situation. He didn't intend to miss my calls or intend to make me walk home alone. He was just busy with other things. I think one of the most important foundations of any relationship is knowing that neither of you mean any harm to one another. Sometimes you do things that accidentally cause harm, but what's important is that you do not intend to do it and that you learn from the mistake.

I 'otherised' the woman at the pharmacy today. Everytime I go in there to get something, she always puts on an absurdly nice but phony personality. I usually think to myself, "This woman is so fake, nobody could be that nice." I otherise this woman probably everytime I go in there, but after today I realized that maybe she is doing it for several reasons. Maybe it's to make the customers feel safe and comfortable, or maybe she is in fact a kind spirit.

During the week and previous weekends I have noticed that my roommates tend to sleep at late hours, party with friends that they invite, drink, and/or do "other fun stuff." Within my room I thought to myself, "**they** are being quite loud at this time." That is when I noticed that, in their minds, they are having a lot more fun than me.

I'm that person that told himself that he wouldn't ever drink or do drugs, and I still hold that promise. I don't agree with them, in the sense of drinking and using vapes, but I let them have their fun and won't interfere. I say and do that in the comfort of my room, where throughout the whole day I'm quite bored. They are having a lot more fun, and they are enjoying their time here in college a lot more than me. They are hanging out with their friends in person, while I still don't have a close friend to hang out with yet.

This told me, in my opinion, one crucial fact, I need to step out of my comfort zone. This doesn't mean that I will drink and do drugs, but instead it tells me that I need to find something that I can really enjoy. I need to participate in my club's activities more or find another club, and as a bonus I can/make find friends that I can hang out with.

So this past weekend me and some friends drove up to Lake Tahoe to go skiing. Very long story short, it ended up taking us 26 hours to do a drive that should have taken 6. We were stuck on the same road and moved a total of 4 miles in a 14 hour period. Needless to say we were restless and annoyed. By the time we finally got to the chain check area we almost angrily addressed the police officer directing traffic asking him what the hold up had been and how dangerous it was to have thousands of people in a single road who haven't slept in a day. His response was simply "ma'am we are just trying to save your life. That's my job". The only thing I could respond was "and we thank you for your service". It really caused me to put things into perspective that just as much as we were stuck in a car trying to get to our cabin and ski this man was standing outside for probably hours on end getting yelled at by hundreds of people when it was simply his job to protect us all from the avalanche that we didn't know at the time had occurred and that hundreds of other people were in my same situation.

I was trying to get a charger and a usb cable from my friend's single room so I could watch a basketball game last Tuesday night but he had left and locked the door. I was pissed because he was using my usb cord in his own room

and watching TV. But I looked at the situation in his eyes and thought about it. He has a reason to lock the door and I did know that he was leaving and that the cord was in there too so I should've thought ahead. He has a lot of valuable stuff in the room so if a robber were to come in, him and all of us wouldn't want that to be stolen. I learned to think this whole thing through, look through other peoples lenses/perspectives so that my story is not just one sided. I felt better about the situation, not mad and just decided to watch it on my computer. The slightly smaller screen was no problem!

Empathy Reflection: A Classroom Full of Superheroes

As I look over the empathy examples, those who are "otherized" by the narrator always possess a negative characteristic or commit an unpalatable act in the narrator's humble opinion. However, my empathy piece is dedicated to those who we admire because of their natural ability to outshine everyone they come into contact with. Whether it's their leadership skills, emotional intelligence, grade point average or simply them being better than you, we put these individuals on a pedestal. I like to call these people superheroes because trying to keep up with them feels like trying to fly with Superman. No matter how hard you train, you'll always be anchored to the ground, miles below the unbothered superheroes.

It's easy to be mesmerized by superheroes, however one should not erase these individuals humanity, and forget that they face their own challenges. For example, I otherized my fellow board members for the club I'm apart of. Currently, we're planning a club banquet, and I was assigned the least amount of tasks to complete. The board knows that I have a job, a full load of classes, and a few other extracurriculars that I participate in, and they don't want me to feel too overwhelmed. Last quarter the board witness me have a panic attack and found out I go to therapy, and I feel like they've been walking on eggshells around me ever since. I appreciate the sentiment, but everyone else on board is also very busy. I feel guilty and embarrassed, that I'm the only one struggling. However, in the midst of my emotions, I forgot to consider how the unequally distributed work would affect my friends. I presume they would be able to handle the work, and didn't advocate to take on more task.

Within the next few days, I saw a change in one person in particular. She was quiet and reserved and didn't carry that confidence that I always admired. One evening, she texted me and asked how she could get a therapist. She confessed she was stressed and overwhelmed with both her academic and personal life. I was completely shocked and didn't expect someone as amazing as she could need help. After informing her about the process to schedule a appointment with a local therapist, I realized that superheroes didn't really exist. It was a nasty combo of anxiety, catastrophizing, and low self-esteem that gave me a false perception of myself and others. Instead of glorifying my fellow board members and demonizing myself, I decided to empathize with the struggles we all faced. I took up more responsibility for our club banquet and urged my other board members to be more honest about their mental health

Robin and I were playing BananaGram... it's kind of like Scrabble, except each player builds their own set of words so it goes as fast as you can make them... She usually crushes me. We were in the heat of the game, when Neil finally came for dinner (that we had finished long before because he couldn't pull himself away from the computer). Neil "found" an extra tile that I never use because it has a hole in it and we all know what it is. He knows I don't use it and he threw it into the pile. I took it out and put it aside while he grabbed my arm and tried to prevent me from removing it. He hit me... not hard, but he did it because he was mad and it triggers something for

me. I told him it was unacceptable to hit me and that he was not playing in this game, so it was none of his concern which tiles we used. Robin was mad at me for allowing this to become a conflict. Her position is that I'm the adult and he requires extra care. It was a crappy evening after that. After Neil went to bed, Robin pointed out that he arrived while we were already playing and he wanted to be included. Neil really doesn't like to be alone or left out... more so than any child I know. I can see how he comes to the two of us and wants to be with us. He is excluded and provokes me to be noticed as kids often do. I am not accommodating... I don't take his "bid" for inclusion. He reacts from abandonment rage... and is sad and feels more left out. Then I reprimand him. For Robin, this is the child she loves, and wants so much for family harmony. He holds him accountable for his actions, but at the same time wants me to be gentle. She's disappointed... not necessarily (just) in me, but in the evening... in general.

Two days I was heading to the gym and was looking at my phone and ran into someone, of course by accident. I said "sorry" to them, but they gave me an angry look and went on their way. This incident was completely an accident and I apologized right after, but they were still angry which I thought was very rude. I then realized that I had come up with a judgment just a mere second after the situation occurred. The person could have already been angry because of something that had happened during the day, so they may not have been in a bad mood just because I accidentally ran into them. If they were already upset before I ran into them, they could have become more annoyed because of the incident. I still believe that the person acted in a poor manner to the situation but I can't base my judgments on this person by one incident and behavior that occurred.

I found this intervention pretty hard. I always try really hard not to judge people or think anything negative about them if I don't know them or if we just cross paths or something like that. But like all people I am not totally perfect at this. Currently I am taking a philosophy class to fulfil one of my GE's and there is another student in the class who always seems to ask the most convoluted and confusing questions. He also seems to have a lot more enthusiasm for philosophy than most other students in the class and often gets into debates with the professor. I caught myself thinking of him as other when, last Tuesday, my professor told us we had two midterm options, one on the Thursday of last week or the Thursday of this week. The majority of the class agreed to put off the midterm as long as possible but not him. After my professor had decided to put off the midterm until this Thursday, the student raised his hand and gave a whole list of reasons why he thought it would be best to have the midterm last Thursday. I thought he was selfish and annoying for asking to move the midterm up, I thought just because he's doing well in the class doesn't mean he has a right to decide when our midterms are.

Looking back on it though, he definitely had other motivations for wanting the midterm to be moved up. Perhaps he has a midterm this Thursday and didn't want to deal with two midterms on the same day, maybe he feels really confident in the material he has learned and is eager to show the professor how much he knows, or maybe he is just really excited to get to our final book in philosophy. There are a whole bunch of reasons why he might've wanted to have that

midterm earlier than me. When I first judged him as being a teacher's pet, or an A+ student, I was only thinking about how he acts in that class and not about how he might totally be as a student or person. Why do I have a right to judge him when I'm judging him for doing something I don't think he has a right to do? I think the biggest thing I learned from the intervention was not to judge people for who they appear to be in one small setting.

When I had learned that we would be completing this sort of self-intervention, I found myself growing very excited because I feel like this is something we should be implementing into our daily lives. To be self-aware of how we are thinking and why we are thinking the way we are is very important to me.

When I was a senior in high school, my literature teacher showed us this video that would forever change my everyday life. It was a YouTube video interpreting David Foster Wallace's commencement speech, "This Is Water". In this video, we can see simple tasks such as grocery shopping and driving home, along with the frustration that accompanies these simple tasks.

For example, the grocery trip can easily become a frustrating moment when you find yourself stuck in long lines behind a short-tempered woman with a declining card and a crying baby. This is exactly what a couple of my friends and I went through during a Thursday night grocery trip. At first glance, a wave of irritation and annoyance came over me. Why wasn't she prepared for this? She was holding up the line, why couldn't she just find a better time to grocery shop and bring her baby? Then I remembered Wallace's speech. At this moment I realized that I had been objectifying her as an "other" and that I wasn't seeing her as connected to me in any way.

I tried to step out of my thoughts and be conscious of what I was thinking. I began to take a deep breath and realize that this thought of self-importance is NOT real. I find that is often so easy for us to fall into this mindset, like the world revolves around us and that nothing else matters except for our time and our agendas. Maybe, just maybe, that short-tempered woman with a declining card and a crying baby had spent all day missing work in order to try to find a new babysitter. Maybe, her card had declined because her bank had shut down for some odd reason, and maybe her baby was crying from hunger. While this whole situation is unlikely, it doesn't mean it's impossible.

When I imagine these things occurring to me, I can feel a sense of embarrassment coming over me. I feel as if I need to get away from everything in order to breathe again, and to some extent, I can feel the judgment radiating from the customers around me. Reimagining myself in this situation definitely puts my thoughts in a whole new perspective and helps me understand how it must feel to be going through what she is going through.

From this experience, I learned how important it is for us to recognize this automatic self-centeredness, this default-setting that makes us think we are the most important things in that moment. To me, understanding this would make life a little more enjoyable and worth it, because then every Thursday night grocery trip would become a painstaking and miserable task for us to do.

This weekend I was driving on the freeway and there was a big backup of cars to take an exit. Normally everyone waits in the far right exit lane even though both right exit lanes eventually take the exit, but then merge together. It is an unspoken rule of the road that you stay in the far-right lane and don't "cut in line." While I was driving, a big truck got out of the line and cut all the way to the front. It seemed very obnoxious and a little dangerous. Normally I would be mad, yell a couple road rage phrases, and

then proceed to move on with my day, maybe slightly grumpier. This time I decided to take a deep breath and attempt to do your assignment while sitting in the car. It would be easy to dismiss them as a loud, rude truck and ignore the fact that there is a person driving the truck with a life and reasons for being an asshole. How could I put myself in their shoes? Maybe they're rushing someone to the hospital. Maybe they overslept and needed to be at work in the next five minutes. Maybe they are really hungry and cannot stand to wait in a line of traffic any longer. Maybe they are rushing to see someone they love and are so full of excitement they had to go as fast as they could. Part of me was thinking, okay yes these are all valid reasons for speeding and being rude on the road. But to truly try to put myself in their shoes, what if they didn't have a valid reason? What if they are just impatient? I have plenty of days where I don't feel like waiting, where a long line of traffic is just another annoying thing and sitting there a second longer seems like torture. Maybe they just couldn't handle another setback in their day. Maybe they feel like the world is out to get them and forgot to think about how their act of douchebaggery affects others. Don't we all have moments where our inconveniences seem like the biggest issue? Maybe I just need to take a deep breath and realize that me being rude and honking or yelling something out the window will never make anything better. It would just be me adding more negativity to the world. Even if they don't hear me I'm at the very least adding more negativity to my world, if I allow this small encounter to change my mood. I'm going to try to incorporate this attitude in my daily life. Sometimes we don't have valid excuses for being inconsiderate, but we have all been inconsiderate before. A little empathy and giving people a break is sometimes okay.

One of my friends has recently fallen very sick. At first, I had no clue as to how sick he was. I am ashamed to admit that my friends and I had made jokes about him being "soft" without knowing how sick he actually was. After a few days without communication, he informed my friends and I as to his current situation. When I found out how bad his conditions were, I felt very guilty. I felt extremely bad for everything I had said. I now have a new perspective on the situation, where I vow to constantly check in on him and send him messages of kindness and hope. I will now no longer be so selfish as to not care about someone who is feeling bad. Whether it is physical or mental, all illnesses should not be ignored. From now on, I will always treat someone the way I want to be treated in my worst moments. A bit of kindness can mean the world to someone, and I wish to be the one who lightens people's days, not the one who brushes everyone off as being someone "other" than themselves.

Through my friend's eyes I really couldn't imagine what he must have been feeling. From being perfectly healthy to spending weeks in a hospital bed must have been a complete turn around. I assume he was just hoping to live and be able to go on with a normal life. The doctors hoped to cure his issues naturally, but did not have any luck so they had to do it the "hard way" as he called it. At this point, his mental state must have gone from bad, to worse. As of today, I believe that he is recovering and will be able to return to Cal Poly. I am very grateful that he is alright and I am sure that he feels great to be able to return. I do not know everything about his current position, but I believe he is in a better position than he was last week.

I feel guilty about my actions of brushing off his sickness as if it were no big deal. Although I did not say anything to his face, I still have the guilt of just pushing his life off as if it were sort of "his problem." After finding how severe his health issue was, I immediately began contacting him more about the issue just to show that I cared about him. I am ashamed that it took me so long to contact him, but I am glad that I learned a lesson.

Last Thursday, my water polo team went out to dinner after practice. We had a really large order at Buffalo Wild Wings for the whole team and our waiter forgot one of the platters. It ended up taking so long to arrive that we had finished our meal and already paid the check by the time it came. We were frustrated at staying so much later than anticipated and annoyed at the waiter. When doing this project, it's easy to understand where he may have made a mistake. It's a Thursday night—Valentine's day—and he's at work. He could be with friends or a

significant other, but instead he is dealing with a huge, complicated order from a big group of girls. He seemed young and could very possibly be a student at Cal Poly or elsewhere. On top of work, there are classes and school work to deal with. Additionally, everyone has personal troubles they need to make time for in their lives. Maybe he has something happening with his family that has him preoccupied. Maybe he didn't get a lot of sleep last night and now, at 10pm, he's ready to collapse from exhaustion. The bottom line is any number of things could be happening in his life and remembering our wings order is not the only thing on his mind.

I never really thought I had any problem putting myself in other people's shoes until I realized that I have a rather short temper when I am driving. This had never occurred to me before because my dad, the one who taught me how to drive, is the exact same way. I found that I get angry when older aged people drive at a much slower speed, but today I realized that they have good reasoning for it. Having a grandmother that drove until about the age of 90, I saw that she had slower reaction times than I do. Looking back on that, it made me think about how nerve racking driving can be when you have a much slower reaction time, so it isn't that they intentionally drive slower, it is just that they are trying to be very cautious drivers. Seeing this scenario through their perspective made me realize that there are a lot of other things that I can learn when putting myself in other people's shoes for many other things that may come up later in the future. It will help me grow as a person and make me a better person at large.

This quarter, I have two classes with a girl who was in my lab group from a class last quarter. Her and I never really got along and this week I found myself in a situation where I viewed her as an "other." She sat where my friends and I usually sit in our lecture and I was irritated and wondered why she would do that. I found myself thinking mean things about her in general. I realize that this situation was silly and that she was probably just taking whatever seat was available because our classroom is usually filled past capacity. This made me come to terms with the fact that she is another human being just like me who probably also cares about similar things, like doing well in her classes and being able to sit with friends in class.

Part of being a college student is having the opportunity to go to college parties. This past Wednesday, I took advantage of such an opportunity and went to a friend's house for a rat/cat themed birthday party. Why was that the theme you may ask? Well, that's because the birthday that was being celebrated was not for my friend but rather her pet mice. Being an Animal Science major is all sorts of fun.

Regardless of what animal I dressed up as, I'm using this experience for my self intervention because there were a lot of people at this party that I did not know. In such a setting, it's very easy to remain in your comfort zone and only interact with your friends. Initially, I saw these "other" people and, because I didn't know them, was not very inclined to talk to them; I saw them as completely detached from my life. But then, I noticed one of them talking to the friend of mine whose house we were at. I realized that even if I did not know this person directly and they didn't know me, we had a mutual friend in the owner of the house, and this made me recognize that we were actually more closely related than I may have initially

thought. I also empathized with these people and put myself in their shoes. In doing this, I imagined it was entirely possible that they could have looked at me and had the exact same thought process about me as I did about them. So, after this self-reflection, I ended up talking to a couple people I had not met before and had a true, quality conversation with one of them. College is all about meeting new people and there is no reason to be hesitant to do so, especially when you stop and realize that we all are much more connected than we may think.

Yesterday I noticed myself get pretty annoyed with my roommate for eating some of my food from the fridge and when I was told it was him I confronted him about it and he told me he was in a rush to meet his girlfriend and wasn't going to be home until very late night and needed food because he had no groceries. He knew I had other food so I wasn't going to be screwed if he ate my food and that he was planning to pay me when he saw me later that day, so I stepped back for a second and realized that our relationship was one of giving in most situations so he was not wrong to assume I would be fine with giving it to him if he'd asked and he really needed it. So, I let him know everything was fine and not to worry about it because we all have times of need.

I realized that for him it was not the response he was hoping for and that I was kind of rude in my approach and that I should work to be more open minded when handling situations I know little about.

The last couple of days I've been thinking about how to empathize with the people who do not share the same beliefs as me. I have never had a time in my life when I would choose anything but solar energy to power the whole country. I cannot imagine a time when I would need to enact my second amendment rights and purchase a firearm. I don't understand why universal healthcare is not the clear-cut solution to supplying all Americans with affordable, quality medical care. I knew that this group of people have their reasons to have different opinions and it would benefit me to attempt to understand their reasoning.

I tried to listen to their arguments and though I still do not agree with their opinions, I'm sticking strongly to my own, I have at least learned to understand their point of view.

For the most part, solar is not the leading energy supplier because of tradition and traditional businesses. The fossil fuel industry has existed for a long time in the United States and helped catapult innovation into the 21st century. Now the times are changing and this industry is threatened by the rise of renewable energies. It's the nature of business to attempt to stay in business, to continue making profit and supplying the demand. It's to our societal detriment that this industry has enough financial power to lobby themselves into maintain their position as a fixture of the American economy. Through their efforts they have created a debate where the health and prosperity of a future America is fighting with the short-term economic gain of today. We can't blame them for attempting to maintain the status quo – change is hard on any scale. It's to their disadvantage that climate change has been attributed to their effective product. It's high time for the painful transition to begin. It will be difficult for thousands of workers and many businesses will close and other will lose lots of money trying to work in a solar world. I understand that it is not as simple and clear cut as I once believed but I will always believe it is a necessary transition.

100 years ago, people were beginning to bring electricity into their homes. Now is the time to begin another energy revolution. We must seize this chance to once again bring ourselves into the new century. Enough is enough, it's time to greet the 21st century with renewable energy so that we can ensure we'll be ready for the 22nd century.

I am an intramural soccer referee. I found myself otherizing players of a game I was officiating. I did not understand why the players felt the need to play over the top aggressive during plays where that level of aggression is simply not necessary. However as a player the situation was seen completely different. The players were playing aggressive because they feel the need to win and in their mind being aggressive towards any chance at getting the ball is the only way to achieve that. Also, even though I see the aggression as out of control they feel that they have control over their shoves. Additionally, since I am not the one being pushed around I cannot tell how hard they are being hit, and I cannot see everything. In the players perspective they remember who hit them, maybe repeatedly, and come back with more force until I notice and see it as over the top and unnecessary.

week, after beginning to pay attention to empathy in my life, I realized there were many instances that I was able to put myself in someone else's shoes instead of judging them or making assumptions. I think the experience that had the biggest effect on me was with my roommate. She had been very irritable the past few days and had stopped doing her dishes and cleaning up after herself around the house. This annoyed my roommates and for a few hours I was annoyed as well until I realized that she may not be doing these things out of spite; that maybe something was troubling her with school or her home life. I decided to write a little note to her telling her to have a great day. The next day she told me that the note meant a lot and that she had been having some troubles with her boyfriend for the past few days and midterms had been causing her a lot of stress. I realized that assuming the worst in people will get you nowhere in life and that a little bit of empathy will help draw you closer to people.

I live in a house with six girls. Five of us have been close friends since our freshman year and we have a lot of things in common. We associate with the same social circle at Cal Poly, we come from similar hometowns and family structures, each of us are in the college of liberal arts, and we spend a lot of time together as we have similar interests. Our sixth roommate is sub-leasing for the quarter, and on the surface, she is very different from my other roommates and I. She comes off as very introverted and standoffish, and although I make an effort to be kind and welcoming, it has been difficult for me to forge a meaningful relationship with her.

I've noticed that I blame our awkward relationship on the fact that we are "different" from one another which makes it easy for me to dismiss her unfriendliness.

This assignment put into perspective that I might be "otherizing" my roommate, or contributing her behavior to external characteristics, which is likely resulting in wrongful attribution.

Although I don't necessarily agree with how my roommate copes with her discomfort, I am more aware of why she acts the way she does, and try to let her know that I want her to feel confident and satisfied in her home. I feel more aware of how "otherizing" somebody based on specific characteristics or unfavorable behavior can prevent a potentially wonderful relationship from blooming. My roommate and I are slowly developing an interesting bond that I am very grateful for, and I actually really enjoy trying to empathize with her.

Earlier this week as things were not going well, I realized that sometimes the individual we need to have empathy for is ourselves. When things do not go the way we want we tend to blame ourselves even when certain factors may have not been in our control. We sometimes objectify

ourselves as a “failure” when something didn’t go the way we planned. I realized this, earlier this week as I reflected on some personal matters and concluded that sometimes we need to feel more empathy for ourselves. That we need to be more understanding that not everything can possibly be of our own fault and that we cannot be too harsh on ourselves. And that sometimes the person that we need to feel empathy for, is the person we see in the mirror every day; ourselves.

While I was driving back to home for the three-day weekend, I noticed a red car began to tailgate behind me for a couple minutes. With cars next to me in the neighboring lanes, the red car behind me felt the need to pressure me to drive faster. Instead of giving in by accelerating, I remained in my current speed. Eventually cars on both sides were a little bit ahead of me. I checked my rear mirror and didn’t see the red car. I assumed the car had exited the freeway and I felt more relaxed without it tailgating behind me. As I shifted my gaze from my rearview mirror back to the road in front of me, a red car speedily switched lanes from my right side to in front of me. I immediately braked to slow down and prevent a crash from happening. As I watched the red car sped away in front of me, I felt a spark of rage and began yelling in complaint to my passenger. Looking back, I could have thought of the situation with a more positive mindset. The driver in the red car might have had to rush to arrive to their destination. They might have had an emergency and had to speedily drive in order to arrive to their situation. Instead of considering why the driver tailgated me and performed a dangerous stunt to pass me, I jumped to the conclusion that the driver was just another dangerous driver. This assignment allowed me to imagine myself in another person’s shoes and the situation they were in. It made me look from their possible perspective on why they had to drive so fast.

This last week I went to CVS to get a couple of things. I was in the store shopping and talking on the phone at the same time. A homeless man came up to me in the store while I was on the phone and interrupted me. He asked if I had any money I would be willing to give him. I just shook my head and walked away. It irritated me a little bit that he would approach me the way he did when I clearly had my hands full. I remember thinking that he probably just wanted money for drugs. However, after going through my “empathy self-intervention” I think I would see this situation in a different lens. At the end of the day the way he approached me was not the most appropriate. However, he is still a person who has a life that matters. I also realized I do not have the right to judge him even though he is homeless because I have no idea what he has gone through in life to get him to where he is today. I also just assumed that he was on drugs even though I didn’t know for sure.

Also after this “empathy self-intervention” I thought about what he could have been going through that day. He could have been really concerned because he didn’t know where his next meal was going to come from. He was also probably very tired because he probably slept somewhere on the floor the previous night. As he was walking around asking strangers for money he probably felt lonely, vulnerable, desperate and abandoned. For him to be living on the streets is a good indication that

he doesn't have friends or family that he can turn to. Asking others for help can be hard to do sometimes so I can see how it could have been hard for him going around and asking people for money. I realize now that I should not judge someone's situation before I actually know their full life story.

Generally, a pet peeve of mine is people walking slow in front of me, especially when they fan out and take up the sidewalk. Therefore, those people always become "them" that I later complain about to friends. Thursday after class, I found myself walking behind three girls walking slowly next to each other, seemingly oblivious to their surroundings. I was annoyed for a bit when I noticed the middle girl was slightly limping. They all had work-out clothes on, so I wonder if she over exerted herself and ended up hurting herself. I also wondered if she was walking as fast as she could, and her friends were being nice and walking her speed. I imagine it would be hard for her to get around since Cal Poly is a hilly campus. As someone who hurt my foot last quarter, I related to the difficulty of walking around campus injured. I also realized it was late at night so the Campus Health Center would've been closed if she wanted to get her foot/ankle/leg looked at. Plus, we were walking to Yakitutu so she was likely a freshman with no car, so getting to a medical center off campus would also be challenging. Further, without good insurance, getting a check-up could be pricey so she could be seriously injured and not know. Within walking from dinner to my dorm, I felt bad for her and wanted to offer her my crutches I kept in my dorm from last quarter. However, I didn't know her so I didn't know if she just walked that way or was already aware of her injury and didn't need help. Nonetheless, I learned not to be too harsh feeling towards people in front of me walking their own pace.

When I was walking around campus the other day, I saw an african-american student walking the other direction and I immediately thought that he must be a football or basketball player. Then I started thinking a little deeper about myself generalizing this person into this stereotype. I think I may have been subconsciously thinking that the only way he could have gotten into this school would be because he got a scholarship because he was an athlete. I was disgusted with myself that I would even be able to think something so racist, but it happened. I was thinking about it for the rest of my walk home and how I don't really know this person and he could be one of the smartest men on this campus and I just automatically thought that he was intellectually a lesser person than me simply because of his appearance. I think that too often we judge people immediately by their appearance when an individual is so much more than his/her appearance. I have tried my hardest throughout my life to always treat people with respect no matter what they look like or who they are, but for some reason I feel that I have recently been deviating from that respect. I am not sure why this is, but I think it may have something to do with the fact that I do not have someone keeping me in check. But I don't want to need a person to keep me in check. I do not want to be the person that generalizes minorities right off the bat. I am definitely going to work on my respect and not generalizing people that look different than me because if I was in that man's position I would never want to be treated like that.

There was one day when I was sitting at a table in the library alone preparing for a midterm. A few minutes later, another student sat at the opposite end of the table. Since there was space I didn't think anything of it. Although, a few minutes later a group of people came to sit with him. This made me feel awkward and made me feel like I was being kicked off the table. I wanted to make it seem like it didn't bother me but it did. Not to mention they were really loud. I stayed for a few minutes and then moved to another table. Looking back on this moment I realized that there were not very places available to sit. This person saw an open table with one person and felt that there was space for him and his group to sit at, which he was not wrong about. It was the best option that he had. And I also believe that it was selfish of me to believe I couldn't share the table as well. When first thinking about this experience I was annoyed but now I understand the situation.

On Wednesday, I was looking for a place to study in Baker. I found a table in a quieter part of Baker and quickly got to work. Within the first ten minutes I'd sat down, a group of three super loud, talkative students came and sat a foot or two away from where I was. They were chattering about the importance of soil and expressing how shocked they were when they heard a student in their class question the significance of soil's role in society. Their conversation began to annoy me so much to the point where I was about ready to shoot them the classic "are you serious?" face. Though I didn't know the context of the situation, I didn't think it was right of them to bash on that one student who questioned soil's significance. Plus, all they really did during their conversation was make – and I mean this very sarcastically – "bold, mind-blowing" statements like, "Soil is so important. People just don't understand that." Or, "Man, I feel bad for that kid". At that point, I didn't think I could bear much more of this conversation which was distracting me from getting my work done.

Then, I remembered about the Empathy Self-Intervention assignment and thought this would be the perfect opportunity to reflect on what I'm feeling. To summarize my reflection, I found that though this conversation may seem silly to me, it means something to these other people. I could tell they were getting very passionate during their conversation and having a good time; so, then I guess who I am to judge them if they're enjoying themselves? I'm sure they genuinely are knowledgeable about the environment. Also, perhaps they just didn't consider asking themselves what caused the one student in their class to question the significance of soil. I think if they completed an Empathy Self-Intervention evaluation, it'd give them a chance to explore new mindsets and view the world in a way they never thought they would.

Whenever the topic of empathy is brought up, my first reaction is to think to myself, "oh yeah *empathy*, I'm nice to others so I'm very empathetic." I identify myself with that word a lot, that I even wrote my college essay about how I developed empathy through my experiences. However, this self-intervention activity helped me realize that I may be some kind of hypocrite and not be so much empathetic at all. I reflected upon my circumstances when I "otherised" someone, and I realized I'm very quick to judge those who disagree with me, and not empathize at all. The truth is, I have been cheating with empathy. I lied to myself thinking empathizing was to understand others who are going through the same as I am and who agree with me, instead, it is completely the opposite.

Looking back at the first few weeks of the quarter, I stumbled upon an instance where I was quick to judge and not empathize with someone, that I got frustrated instead of trying to understand them. This was when working on a group project for my surveying class. One other student and I had been working hard to finish the project, while the other student did not participate much. He said he had to finish some homework for one of his classes that he had no time to help us with the project (which was also due that same day). My first reaction was to judge him and label him as selfish since myself and the other student also had other assignments and midterms to worry about but were still prioritizing the project and working toward finishing it. I was really frustrated. However, once I got to know him more, I learned that he was busier than I thought, taking hard classes and finishing projects and labs for those, working late and early morning shifts at the rec center, attending track practices and struggling with his housing situation. I look back and hope I hadn't judged him as I did. I now empathize with him and have been trying to do so with everyone else that I have judged before, because after all, we all have our own problems to worry about, and in order to overcome them we need to work together, empathize and collaborate. We are social beings and if you take a look at our society, even amongst this individualistic capitalistic economy, we all work together to help each other in some way and there's no such thing as "every man for himself".

During this past week I have had to experience an altercation with one of my roommates. My roommate has had a history of being very inconsiderate toward my housemates and I, but I made an attempt to be empathetic toward his feelings. He had covered our entire counter with his dirty dishes for the past week and a half, leaving my housemates and I with no room to cook or place anything in our kitchen, which made most of us livid. I took this as an opportunity to empathize with him and realized that he has a lot going on outside of the house (midterms, etc.) and I just need to be more patient with him. I realized being mad at him wasn't going to solve the issue, being mad would only make relations worse. His schedule at this point was out of his control and I can completely understand where he was coming from. After looking at the issue through this lens, I believe that being empathic helped ease tensions almost entirely.

This week, I entered one of my classrooms as the students from the class before were leaving. Our professor had brought his dog to class that day, so when he left to go to the bathroom, his dog stayed in the class with us. One of the students seemed to be obsessing over a worksheet we could take home as she stood in the doorway with the door open. The dog saw the open door and the student didn't even try to stop the dog from leaving or try to get it to come back into the classroom. When I was watching this all happen, I kept thinking about how dumb the girl was to just let the dog leave and not even care about trying to get it back. But then I later saw her crying at office hours a couple times, and I was reminded that everybody is going through something. Maybe she really isn't doing well in the class and was so focused on doing well on the worksheet, or maybe she has family issues, so she wasn't focused on the world around her.

This week I found myself objectifying my roommate as an "other" when I found the sink full of her dirty dishes. I was upset at first, thinking she was being careless, but then I considered the few times that I left dishes in the sink when leaving in a hurry or feeling overwhelmed with homework. I realized that she didn't mean anything negative by leaving her dishes, but maybe there was something else going on in her life. I learned to be more understanding in situations like this.

I've thought of the concept of Sonder a lot and it really has helped me not "otherise" people very often anymore. It honestly feels kind of gross to "otherise" people after a while. One of the most beautiful parts of life is that we all have the ability to experience living in it as conscious creatures and in a way looking at everybody else and thinking of them as background characters is unfair to everybody else who has their own life, full of beauty and struggle. We should aim to learn about and from everybody else and not use their actions (which barely change your life in anything more than the very short term) to dehumanize them. We are all unique in the universe because we have been given the ultra rare opportunity to live in it with advanced social constructs and the least we can do is attempt to live together without hating one another. With that in mind, I think a fair realization I have had is that maybe people have a reason to be unempathetic and have had experiences far from my own which have led them to lose trust in empathy but that does not make them lesser for not trusting in the understanding ways of it. Many of us are blessed to have had lives which allow us to be empathetic and we should be grateful for that.

Everyday when I come home to my apartment, my roommate's stuff is everywhere. It gets frustrating having to move stuff out of the way to comfortably sit down on the couch, and I get slightly irritable about it. But, I realize that like myself, they are also busy people who go to school and work and don't always have the time or energy to be constantly cleaning. Because of this, I will try from now on to be more empathetic towards them, and instead of getting angry, suggest that we clean up our apartment together over the weekend.