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Home > Vol 10, No 2 (2009) > Gerdes

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A Social Work Model of Empathy

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Abstract

This article presents a social work model of empathy that reflects the latest interdisciplinary research findings on empathy. The model reflects the social work commitment to social justice. The three model components are: 1) the affective response to another's emotions and actions; 2) the cognitive processing of one's affective response and the other

ASW Vol 10, No 2 (2009)

TABLE OF CONTENTS


Reading Tools

A Social Work Mod...

Gerdes, Segal

Review policy
Indexing metadata
Notify colleague*

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CLOSE

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person's perspective; and 3) the conscious decision-making to take empathic action.

Mirrored affective responses are involuntary, while cognitive processing and conscious decision-making are voluntary.

The affective component requires healthy, neural pathways to function