

# Mimi Nicklin says we all have the power to change the empathy deficit

*These are the highlights of Mimi Nicklin's talk at the SingularityU South Africa 2020 Summit.*



Mimi Nicklin, author and empathetic influencer

Nicklin is an author and empathetic influencer. She started her keynote by asking the question, "What is the empathy deficit?"

The term, the 'empathy deficit' was coined by Barack Obama in 2006 when he said, "There's a lot of talk about the federal deficit, but I think we should talk more about our empathy deficit." This gap has been deepening since then.

We are facing economic, social and political crises in almost every corner of the planet. The result is that people are focusing on caring for their own instead of caring for the wider community.

Nicklin believes it doesn't need to be this way. We can make a change!

She believes that it has never been more important to exercise empathy. Empathy, at its most fundamental, is our ability to understand each other, stand in each other's shoes and understand each other's perspectives and contexts. It is incredibly

important.

The good news, according to Nicklin, is that empathetically-led organisations, where we have emotional intelligence, show that many business indicators including productivity, happiness, morale and loyalty go up. Things like absenteeism and staff turnover go down. Teams get closer together as they feel more heard.

Nicklin believes that as human beings, it is a fundamental need to feel seen and heard. Neurologically empathy makes us happier and more joyful.

In the past 30 years, empathy has been declining consistently. The impact on our society and organisations is huge. The World Health Organisation (WHO) states that 335 million people have depression. Anxiety is rising. Burnout has also been declared a formal health issue by WHO. Work is harming our people.

People spend 5/7 of their time at work. Yet, 85% of people in the global workplace today state they have no passion for their work (statistic by Deloitte). Suicide is on the rise and is the second biggest killer of our youth.

Empathy is not about people above all. It is about people beyond profit alone. Profit is still key. It is why we are in business. We can improve communities and people while we make money. People can thrive, instead of just surviving.

Nicklin explained that the good news is that empathy is contagious. When you start practicing it, others will follow suite. It is built into our subconscious. When you empathise with people, they do it back. There is a ripple effect. As leaders it is our responsibility to create that ripple.

## **Empathy can change your business**

Empathy is powerful. It can change your business and how your brain works. As soon as you make the decision to be more empathetic, you will be. We all have the power to change the empathy deficit. Culture starts at the top. The change starts with you.

Nicklin concluded by asking: “What will you do to stop the empathy deficit moving into the next decade, and impacting the health and wellness of our teams?”

*Mimi Nicklin's book, [Softening the Edge](#), is available to pre-order [here](#).*

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