

Controlling Facial Mimicry

Increase your awareness and experiences of facial mirroring:

Observing and controlling your smiling reflex:

1. On your next trip to the grocery store, see how many people you can catch smiling in response to your smiling at them. As you walk down the aisle and check out, purposely smile and notice how people respond.
2. During an average day or outing, count how often you smile in response to a smile from another.
3. Then, on several more outings, practice not smiling reflexively in response to some strangers smile – warning: this may be harder than you think, so don't be discouraged if it takes you several tries to get the hang of it.

Controlling your facial mimicry of athletes and actors:

1. While either watching television ,or at the movies, pay attention to your facial expression when an athlete or actor is expressing a strong emotion.
2. Identify which expressions are the most habitual for you to copy.
3. Practice not copying those expressions during subsequent television programs or films.

Controlling your facial mimicry of people you are helping:

1. When you feel comfortable with awareness and control of your facial expression, begin to control your facial mimicry with the people you are helping.
2. Put something in your line of sight to remind you to reflect and manage your facial expression.

Adapted from Rothschild (2006). Helper for the Helper: Self-Care Strategies for Managing Burnout and Stress