Empathy plays a critical role in emotional and social functioning, having broad implications for interpersonal relationships, mental health and illness, maintenance of the social order, and responding to the plight of others. In this talk, Levenson will present research and theory on three aspects of empathy: recognizing the emotions of others (“see me”), feeling what others are feeling (“feel me”), and acting to help others in distress (“heal me”). The course these different aspects of empathy follow during normal adult development will be highlighted, along with recent evidence from studies of neurological patients showing that neurodegeneration in various brain regions profoundly shapes one’s capacity to empathize.

For more information, please visit events.psych.missouri.edu/lecture-series/

Levenson is professor of psychology at the University of California Berkeley where he also serves as the director of the Institute for Personality and Social Research, the Clinical Science Program and Psychology Clinic, and the Predoctoral Training Consortium in Affective Science. He received his doctorate in clinical psychology from Vanderbilt University in 1974 and subsequently held a faculty position at Indiana University. Author of more than 100 papers and book chapters, his research focuses on human emotion and the organization of physiological, behavioral, and subjective systems; the ways these systems are impacted by neuropathology and normal aging; and the role that emotions play in the maintenance and disruption of committed relationships. Levenson’s research has been funded by the National Institute on Mental Health and the National Institute on Aging, including a highly prestigious MERIT award.