

Social Psychology

Lesson 12: Prosocial Behavior

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TOPICS

- ▶ Types of helping
- ▶ Gender and Helping
- ▶ Theories of Helping
- ▶ Factors in Helping
- ▶ How to Increase Prosocial Behavior

EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES

- ☑ Define prosocial behavior and distinguish between egoistic and altruistic helping.
- ☑ Describe gender differences in helping tendencies.
- ☑ Compare the major theories explaining why we help others.
- ☑ Identify key factors that influence helping behavior.
- ☑ Suggest practical strategies to increase prosocial behavior.

PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR

- Behavior designed to help another person
- It is a positive form of social action



Egoistic Helping

Helping others with the expectation of receiving something in return
Motivated by self-interest.

Altruistic Helping

Helping others with NO expectation of return.
Motivated by genuine care and concern for another person's well-being.

TYPES OF HELPING

1 Casual Help

Giving directions or small everyday assistance to someone in need.

2 Substantial Help

Lending money or providing significant resources to support another person.

3 Emotional Help

Listening and offering comfort and support during difficult times.

4 Emergency Help

Saving someone from danger or responding to a crisis situation.

GENDER & HELPING

- Men help strangers more — especially in emergencies
- Women seek & receive more help (medical, counseling)
- Differences strongest in emergencies & non-routine tasks
- Women help more in long-term nurturing roles

These gender differences are greatest

- when there is an audience.
- when there is potential danger involved in helping.
- when the person in need is female.

WHY DO WE HELP?



- A. Evolutionary Perspective
- B. Socio-cultural Perspective
- C. Learning Perspective

WHY DO WE HELP?

A. EVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVE



- **Kin Selection:** We help relatives to pass on shared genes
- Parents prioritize children's welfare above all others
- Helping close kin increases genetic survival across generations

STUDY: BURNSTEIN, CRANDAL & KITAYAMA (1994)

Method: Hypothetical scenarios — choose who to help when only ONE person can be assisted.

Life-or-Death Scenarios

- Help given more to CLOSE KIN
- Help given more to YOUNG
- Help given more to HEALTHY Help given more to WEALTHY

Everyday Favor Scenarios:

- Kinship matters LESS for routine help.
- Help given more to VERY YOUNG & VERY OLD
- Help given more to SICK
- Help given more to POOR

WHY DO WE HELP?

B. SOCIO-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

1

**Norm of
Reciprocity**

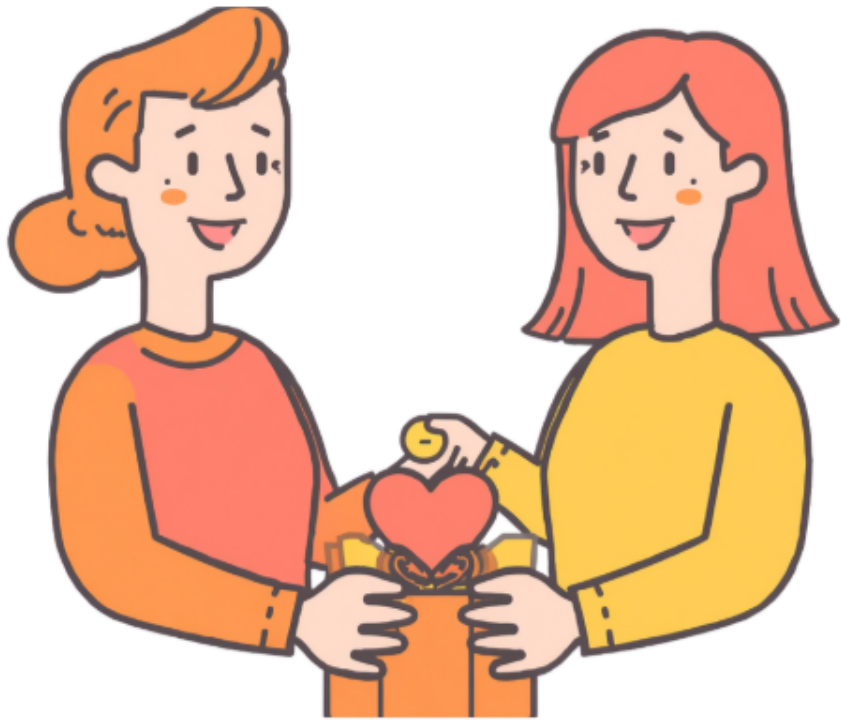
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**Norm of
Responsibility**

3

**Norm of
Social Justice**

1. NORM OF RECIPROCITY



- People usually help others who have helped them.
- Doing a favor for someone increases the likelihood of getting that favor returned.
- The benefit to the recipient must be high and the cost to the helper must be relatively low.
- Roles likely to be REVERSED

EXPERIMENT: REGAN (1971)

Study Setup

- 77 male undergraduates
- Confederate either gave participant a soda (favor) or gave nothing
- Later asked participants to buy raffle tickets
- Tested role of liking on compliance

Findings

- Favor recipients bought TWICE as many raffle tickets
- Effect held regardless of how much they liked the confederate

EXPERIMENT: DUNFIELD & KUHLMEIER (2010)

The Study

- Participants: 21-month-old infants
- Two actresses: a Helper (tried to give toy but failed) and a Non-helper (made no attempt)
- Infants later given a chance to help each actress
- Infants were significantly more likely to help the Helper actress than the Non-helper

Findings

- Infants showed early reciprocity — helping those who tried to help them
- Demonstrates that the norm of reciprocity emerges very early in development
- Suggests prosocial behavior has deep developmental roots, even before language

2. NORM OF RESPONSIBILITY

- Help given without expectation of return
- Moral & social obligation drives this norm
- Example: Donations to charity and social activism
- More likely when victim is NOT blamed for their plight
- Blaming victims significantly reduces helping behavior

JUST-WORLD BELIEF



- The belief that the world is fair and people get what they deserve
- People in need of help "must have done something" to deserve their plight.

3. NORM OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

- This norm states that people should help only when they believe that others deserve assistance.
- In North America, being deserving means either possessing socially desirable personality characteristics or engaging in socially desirable behaviors.



WHY DO WE HELP?

C. LEARNING PERSPECTIVE ON HELPING



Observational Learning in children:

- Can initially teach children how to engage in helpful actions.
- Talking about helpful behavior can have some effect.

Prosocial modeling in adults:

- Adults who act in a prosocial way can influence people to do the same.
- Adults' modeling of altruism can have a powerful effect on the altruistic tendencies of children that can last well into adulthood

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN HELPING



- Norm of reciprocity appears universal.
- Norm of social responsibility shows strong ingroup-outgroup distinctions in collectivist cultures, but overall the norm appears stronger in those cultures than in individualist societies.

RURAL VS. URBAN HELPING

Rural Areas

Stronger reciprocity norms
Tight-knit community spirit
Higher rates of helping
strangers



Urban Areas

Urban Overload Hypothesis:

Too much stimuli → city dwellers tune out, keep to themselves, and help strangers less.

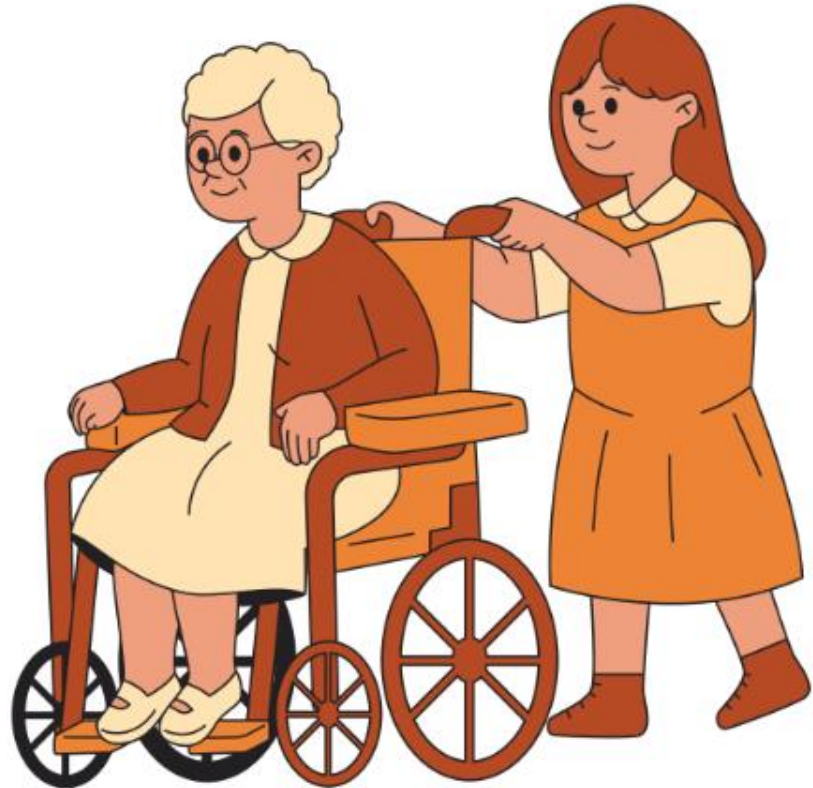




RESIDENTIAL MOBILITY & HELPING

- Long-term residents are **MORE** prosocial than newcomers
- Knowing your neighbors builds trust and reciprocity

INFLUENCES ON HELPING



1. Bystander effect
2. Time pressure
3. Attraction
4. Similarity
5. Mood

THE BYSTANDER EFFECT

*More people present =
LESS likely anyone helps*

- A. **Audience Inhibition:** Fear of judgment stops action
- B. **Diffusion of Responsibility:**
"Someone else will help"

The Elevator Study

- Researchers: Latane and Dabbs (1975)
- 1,497 elevator rides observed across multiple settings. Researchers staged situations where help was needed inside elevators .
- Help was given 40% of the time when 1 other person was on the elevator
- Less than 20% of the time when there were 6 passengers.

TIME PRESSURE

More spare time = MORE helping
In a hurry = LESS likely to help

Experiment: Batson, Cochran, Biederman, Blosser, Ryan & Vogt (1978)

- 40 participants directed to an experiment in another building. On route, all encountered a confederate slumped on the stairs, coughing and groaning. Two IV manipulated:
 - Time pressure (late vs. plenty of time)
 - Importance to experimenter (vital vs. not essential)
- **Result:**
 - Plenty of time + unimportant appointment = HELP
 - Late + very important appointment = seldom help

ATTRACTION

Attractive people receive MORE help.

Experiment: Benson, Karabenick, and Lerner (1976)

- 604 participants found a graduate school application "accidentally" left in a phone booth — would they mail it?

Findings:

- Attractive → more help
- White applicants → more help (white helpers)
- Gender → no effect

SIMILARITY

We are MORE LIKELY to help those we perceive as SIMILAR to us.

Experiment: Levine, Prosser, Evans, & Reicher (2005)

- **Setup:** Manchester United fans were primed to think about their team identity, then encountered a jogger who slipped and fell.
- **The Variable:** The "injured" jogger wore one of three shirts:
 - Own team's shirt (in-group)
 - Rival team's shirt (out-group)
 - Plain unbranded sports shirt (neutral)
- Results: Likelihood to Help
 - **Own Team:** 92% helped
 - **Rival Team:** 30% helped
 - **Plain Shirt:** 30% helped

MOOD

FEEL GOOD, DO GOOD!

- Happy people help MORE.
- This effect occurs with both children and adults.
- Good mood makes us interpret events in a sympathetic way
- Helping another prolongs the good mood, not helping deflates it.
- Good mood increases self-attention.

EXPERIMENT: DOLINSKI & NAWRAT (1998)

- Fake "tickets" (actually ads) left on windshields to induce fear, followed by immediate relief.
- The Request: A researcher approaches the driver to ask for help with a graduate questionnaire.



Result:

- 62% compliance in fear-relief condition
- 32% compliance in control group

EXPERIMENT: ISEN, CLARK, & SCHWARTZ (1976)

The Study

Participants received free stationery (a gift) unexpectedly, then were asked to relay a phone message for a stranger.



Key Findings

Helpfulness peaked within 5 minutes, then declined as mood faded.

MOOD

FEEL BAD, DO GOOD!

- People who are guilty are more likely to help.
- Church-goers donate more money before confession than after.



Negative-state relief hypothesis:

- People help to alleviate their own distress caused by witnessing someone else's suffering.

The Role of Empathy:

- Witnessing suffering triggers empathy (both cognitive and emotional).
- Involves perspective-taking and genuine compassion.

DOES TRUE ALTRUISM EXIST?

EMPATHY-ALTRUISM MODEL

- Empathy drives us to help purely for selfless reasons, even when it is costly to ourselves.
- Driven by a desire to protect others, not selfish rewards.
- Helping is most likely when nurturing feelings are triggered.
- Protecting others can happen even when helping is costly to oneself.

SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY



- Human interactions are transactions that aim to maximize one's rewards and minimize one's costs.
- We don't consciously calculate costs and benefits, but these factors ultimately dictate whether we help.

REWARDS OF HELPING



1. Increases the chance others will help us in the future.
2. Reduces the personal distress of watching someone suffer.
3. Gains social approval and boosts self-esteem.

EMPATHIC CONCERN & PERSONAL DISTRESS

Empathic Concern

- Feeling warmth and compassion for others
- Person helps to relieve the other person's suffering.
- "They need help so I want them to be okay"
- Motivates truly altruistic helping.

Personal Distress

- Feeling anxious or distressed by others' pain
- Person helps to escape their own negative feelings.
- "I feel awful seeing this so I'll help so I stop feeling bad"
- Helping is self-focused, not other-focused

HOW TO INCREASE HELPING?



1. Modeling prosocial behavior
2. Education
 - **Enlightenment effect** – learning about psychology can bring about changes in behavior.

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IMAGES

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