

Prosocial Relations

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WHAT'S COVERED

This lesson will help you identify and discuss aspects of prosocial behavior. You will also note how understanding prosocial behavior supports your self and social awareness skill. You will do this by covering:

1. Defining Prosocial Behavior

Consider your own personal behaviors. Have you ever helped another person without regard for a reward of any type? If you have, this could be construed as **prosocial behavior**. Prosocial behaviors are voluntary actions intended to promote social bonds via helping others. Considered to be rooted in evolutionary processes, prosocial behavior is a component of human survival.

Below are some examples of prosocial behavior:

- Sharing – Posting recipes online for others to utilize
- Donating – Knitting blankets to give to a local homeless shelter or donating clothing to a charitable organization
- Helping – mowing the lawn for an elderly neighbor
- Volunteering – becoming involved in a community cleanup after a local storm
- Obeying society's rules – Paying taxes or driving the speed limit

Often confused with prosocial behavior, **altruism** involves one's motivation to help without expectations of personal gain. This differs from prosocial behaviors which denote patterns of activity.



TERMS TO KNOW

Prosocial Behaviors

Voluntary actions intended to promote social bonds via helping others.

Altruism

One's motivation to help without expectations of personal gain.

2. Norms for Helping

Social exchange theory describes a belief that social behavior results from an exchange process between people where you are maximizing benefits and minimizing costs. In these situations, when your risks are greater than the related rewards, you will often end the relationship with other people. In this theory, a **reciprocity norm** relates to returning something of similar value to what you have been given by another person. Culture influences how this is interpreted, and thus, is guided by the norms of a given society.

Bystander intervention occurs when a person recognizes or is involved in a perilous situation for someone else and then selects a response that could positively impact the outcome of the situation. The **bystander effect** is a phenomenon in which the greater the number of individuals present, the less inclined people are to help in an adverse situation. One famous case of bystander intervention was that of Kitty Genovese in 1964. Attacked and raped outside of her Queens apartment, several people heard her assault but failed to become involved in preventing her murder.

There are explanations for the bystander effect. One is the **diffusion of responsibility** in which the presence of others encourages a lack of involvement; people assume someone else will handle the situation. Another explanation is social observation. People have a need to behave in socially appropriate ways. When others fail to respond, it signals to an individual that a response is unnecessary or inappropriate.



TERMS TO KNOW

Social Exchange Theory

A belief that social behavior is resultant of an exchange process in which benefits are maximized and costs are minimized.

Reciprocity Norm

Returning something of similar value to what you have been given by another person.

Bystander Intervention

When a person recognizes or is involved in a perilous situation for someone else and then selects a response that could positively impact the outcome of the situation.

Bystander Effect

A phenomenon in which the greater the number of individuals present, the less inclined people are to help in an adverse situation.

Diffusion of Responsibility

The presence of others encourages a lack of involvement by an individual.

3. The Psychology of Attraction

In what ways can romantic love be initiated? What influence does psychology have in such intimate connections? What influences the interests that lead to couples falling in love? How do personality, physical appearance, familiarity factor into this?

Answers to these questions can be uncovered within social psychology. We will examine three topics to approach these answers: proximity, attractiveness, similarity.

3a. Proximity

Relationships are sparked via geographic closeness. Although not a guarantee for liking, relationships often develop due to nearness (living in the same neighborhood, working at the same office, being in class

together, etc.). This is due in part to factors associated with the **mere exposure effect**. When repeatedly exposed to novel stimuli, one's liking for it increases.

➔ **EXAMPLE** A child may not initially like a food such as broccoli, but over time through exposure and consuming broccoli in other foods, the child may come to like it.



TERM TO KNOW

Mere Exposure Effect

When repeatedly exposed to novel stimuli, one's liking for it increases.

3b. Physical Attractiveness

Consider the factors that impact first impressions. Often, it's a person's physical appearance. Research has shown this to influence the frequency of dating, self-esteem, and initial impressions of the personality of others. It can influence perceptions on job interviews. Physical attraction is rooted in cultural norms and these ideals evolve over time. Examples of this include America's acceptance of wearing tattoos among both genders.

3c. Similarity

The more similar people are, the more inclined they are to like each other for enduring periods of time. In this respect, opposites do not attract.

4. Stages of Romantic Love

Romantic love can be viewed as an evolutionary adaptation that increases your chances of passing genes on to future generations. People often seek romantic partners with qualities that are construed as beneficial, like attractiveness or wealth. It can be a uniting force that sustains a relationship despite adversity. Romantic love can be defined in three stages.

| Stage | Description |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Stage 1: The Honeymoon Period | This primary stage of the relationship entails falling in love and presenting to our partners the most positive side of our personal attributes. This stage can last for months or a few years and usually involves passionate love. Unfortunately, this stage is temporary and leads to stage 2. |
| Stage 2: The Individuation Stage | This secondary stage is one of realization in which the couple encounters the work necessary to maintain the relationship. Reality and conflict are common components of this stage as this is where a longer term, companionate love develops. Companionate love is the love required to develop and maintain a companionship over time. It is in this stage that a couple is most likely to separate if the challenges of conflict and real life prove to be too difficult. |
| Stage 3: Mature Love | After the couple succeeds in surviving the individuation stage, the relationship in mature love is characterized by greater stability and reduced conflict. The couple has often developed a realistic understanding of each other, trust between one another, and appropriate and equitable expectations of each other. |



TERM TO KNOW

Companionate Love

5. Peacemaking and Promoting Peace

The concept of **peacemaking** involves efforts for relationship restoration and conflict resolution via the use of productive and cooperative processes. Douglas Noll views peace as occurring in both a negative and positive fashion. Negative peace generally involves coercion as opposed to cooperation. Negative peace results in the absence of violence but does not resolve conflict, rather suppressing it.

➔ **EXAMPLE** As an example, consider that Sandra likes Emily's bracelet and so Sandra takes it from Emily. When caught, a fight ensues between both girls. Sandra is later ordered to return the bracelet to Emily and apologize. Peace has been returned, but the underlying conflict has not been addressed.

Positive peace encompasses both reconciliation and restoration utilizing a creative transformation of conflict. Using our same example, Sandra and Emily could discuss their feelings surrounding the theft of the bracelet and why the actions of each girl occurred. Then, a plan can be devised in which each girl speaks individually about her feelings and listens to the other's perspective. The goal is for both girls to take responsibility, experience growth, and allow for forgiveness to occur.

In peacemaking, it is important to avoid self-fulfilling prophecies—positive or negative beliefs that influence another person's behavior in a manner that leads expectations to become a reality.

The promotion of peace can occur through effective communication, positive contact (non-competitive contact between groups of equal status), cooperation, and/or conciliation. An example of conciliation would be Graduated and Reciprocated Initiatives in Tension-Reduction (GRIT). GRIT is a method created by Charles Osgood in 1962 which can be used to extend lines of reciprocity and highlight mutual interests. One side in a conflict provides a concession to the other side, in order to re-establish communication and efforts to negotiate a peaceful resolution.



TERM TO KNOW

Peacemaking

Efforts for relationship restoration and conflict resolution via the use of productive and cooperative processes.



SUMMARY

Prosocial behaviors can be defined as behaviors we engage in voluntarily to help other people, like donating to a charity or sharing a recommendation for your favorite restaurant with a coworker. Social exchange theory helps explain how ideas of reciprocity create social **norms for helping** and how and when we tend to help other people.

Attraction to other people and the **psychology** of how it works helps explain the existence and performance of prosocial behaviors. **Proximity**, **physical attraction**, and **similarity** drive much attraction between people. The **Stages of Romantic Love** explain how attraction can lead to a particular form of lasting mature love as a form of prosocial behavior.

Peacemaking and promoting peace occurs when an individual makes efforts to resolve conflicts or

restore relationships that have been strained or broken. Prosocial behaviors represent an important element to building self and social awareness in your workplace and around your lifestyle broadly.

Good luck with your learning!

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TERMS TO KNOW

Altruism

One's motivation to help without expectations of personal gain.

Bystander Effect

A phenomenon in which the greater the number of individuals present, the less inclined people are to help in an adverse situation.

Bystander Intervention

When a person recognizes or is involved in a perilous situation for someone else and then selects a response that could positively impact the outcome of the situation.

Companionate Love

The love required to develop and maintain a companionship over time.

Diffusion of Responsibility

The presence of others encourages a lack of involvement by an individual.

Mere Exposure Effect

When repeatedly exposed to novel stimuli, one's liking for it increases.

Peacemaking

Efforts for relationship restoration and conflict resolution via the use of productive and cooperative processes.

Prosocial Behaviors

Voluntary actions intended to promote social bonds via helping others.

Reciprocity Norm

Returning something of similar value to what you have been given by another person.

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A belief that social behavior is resultant of an exchange process in which benefits are maximized and costs are minimized.