



Helping and Prosocial Behavior

Instructor Manual

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Prosocial behavior includes activities such as helping, donating, cooperating, and sharing. Students will be interested in why people help in emergency situations, and they will be even more fascinated by why people don't help. The information in this module covers some of the basic issues, such as when people are more or less likely to help, who is more likely to help, and why people help. This instructor's manual includes discussion questions and activities to help engage students in the material, and it includes links to other resources that may help you design a great course.

Learning Objectives

- **Relevant APA Learning Objectives (Version 2.0)**
 - Describe key concepts, principles, and overarching themes in psychology (1.1)
 - Develop a working knowledge of psychology's content domains (1.2)
 - Describe applications of psychology (1.3)
 - Engage in innovative and integrative thinking and problem solving (2.3)
- **Content Specific Learning Objectives**
 - Learn which situational and social factors affect when a bystander will help another in need.
 - Understand which personality and individual difference factors make some people more likely to help than others.

- Discover whether we help others out of a sense of altruistic concern (for the victims), for more self-centered and egoistic motives, or both.

Abstract

People often act to benefit other people, and these acts are examples of prosocial behavior. Such behaviors may come in many guises: helping an individual in need; sharing personal resources; volunteering time, effort, and expertise; cooperating with others to achieve some common goals. The focus of this module is on helping—prosocial acts in dyadic situations in which one person is in need and another provides the necessary assistance to eliminate the other's need. Although people are often in need, help is not always given. Why not? The decision of whether or not to help is not as simple and straightforward as it might seem, and many factors need to be considered by those who might help. In this module, we will try to understand how the decision to help is made by answering the question: Who helps when and why?

Class Design Recommendations

This material can be covered in one 50-75 minute class period. If it is a 50-minute class period, some of the discussions will need to be limited for time. Please refer to the Noba PowerPoint slides and Lecture Framework below for specific details.

Overview:

- Introduction
- When do people help?
 - Pluralistic ignorance
 - Diffusion of responsibility
 - Costs and rewards
- Who helps?

- Men or women?
 - Agreeableness
 - Prosocial personality orientation
- Why help?
 - Evolutionary roots
 - Egoistic motives
 - Altruistic motives
- Conclusion

Module Outline

Introduction: The introductory paragraph to the lesson module asks students to search for episodes of “Primetime: What Would You Do?” and sets the stage for the main topic of the module. This module addresses the question: Who helps when and why?

When Do People Help?

- Defining the Situation: The Role of **Pluralistic Ignorance**
 - Some situations are ambiguous, and it’s not clear whether help is actually needed. We often look to other people to decide what should be done. Pluralistic ignorance is the term for relying on other bystanders to determine if help is needed; a person may be inclined to do nothing when no one else is doing anything.

Do I Have To Be the One To Help? Diffusion of Responsibility

- When you are the only one to see an emergency, the responsibility to act is all yours, in terms of helping. However, if many people see an emergency, the responsibility to act is spread out among those people. **Diffusion of responsibility** is the term for taking less

responsibility for a situation when other people are around.

- The lesson module gives an example of when diffusion of responsibility did not happen—with the bombing of the 2013 Boston Marathon. Lots of race officials did help, even though thousands of people were around. One of the factors that likely played a key role their actions to help was their official responsibility to the race and the runners.
- Overall, however, diffusion of responsibility and pluralistic ignorance negatively affect helping, in both emergency and non-emergency situations.

The Costs and Rewards of Helping: People apply a cost-benefit analysis—intentionally or not—to situations before deciding to help or not. What are the costs? Do they outweigh the benefits? If so, helping is less likely. However, if the benefits outweigh the costs, the likelihood of helping increases. The benefits of helping can include the social rewards people receive, or the guilt they avoid, by helping.

Who Helps?

- Who Are More Helpful—Men or Women?
 - There is no difference between men and women when it comes to overall helpfulness. However, a gender difference does emerge when considering the type of helping involved. Men are more likely to help in potentially dangerous situations, and women are more likely to help when there is no danger. A cost-benefit analysis might explain this finding, as the dangerous situation may simply be more risky for women. Socialization and gender roles might also help to explain this phenomenon—men being more often expected to help in risky situations, women being more often expected to provide care and support in personal relationships.
- A Trait For Being Helpful: Agreeableness
 - One of the Big Five personality factors, agreeableness, is related to helping. People who score high for agreeableness are more likely to be kind, considerate, warm, and sympathetic. They are also more likely to help others, compared to those who score low for agreeableness.
- Searching For the Prosocial Personality
 - Some researchers have identified the **prosocial personality orientation**. This personality has two characteristics, one emotional and one behavioral. People with

other-oriented empathy feel high amounts of empathy for those in need, and feel a moral obligation to help. People with the helpfulness characteristic have been helpful in the past, think their help is useful, and plan to help in the future.

Why Help?

- Evolutionary Roots For Prosocial Behavior
 - Based on evolutionary psychology, some researchers believe that we help based on the motive to have our DNA, or our family's DNA, survive in future generations. **Kin selection** is the favoritism shown for helping people who are related to us and share some portion of our DNA.
 - We often help people who are close to us even if they do not share our DNA. **Reciprocal altruism** is the term for helping people who help us. Evolutionary psychologists state that reciprocal altruism helps our survival, so it is useful in passing on our genes.
- Egoistic Motivation For Helping
 - Sometimes we help other people for our own benefit rather than theirs. If so, we have an **egoistic motivation** for helping. It's not about the other person; it's about ourselves.
 - The **negative state relief model** states that we help others to make ourselves feel better. For example, when we don't feel good, helping someone else can boost our mood.
 - The **arousal: cost-reward model** says that sometimes we help others to get rid of the negative emotions (arousal) that occur when we see someone in need. Helping, therefore, reduces our discomfort. This is done within a cost-reward framework.

Altruistic Help: Rather than focusing on egoism as a motivation, this section focuses on altruism as a motivation for helping. Altruistic motivations are focused on helping others as the primary goal.

- The **empathy-altruism model** states that when we take on the perspective of another person, we experience **empathic concern**, and are motivated to help for altruistic reasons—to reduce the other person's distress. As a result, we may help even if the cost to us is high.
- By contrast, the **empathy-altruism model** also states that even when we don't take on the perspective of another person, we experience personal distress, and are motivated by

egoistic concerns to reduce our own distress. To reduce our distress, we may help or we may do something easier (low cost), such as leave the situation.

Conclusion: This section summarizes the main points above.

Difficult Terms

Altruistic motives

Arousal: Cost-reward model

Diffusion of responsibility

Egoistic motivation

Empathic concern

Empathy-altruism model

Kin selection

Negative state relief model

Other-oriented empathy

Pluralistic ignorance

Prosocial personality orientation

Reciprocal altruism

Lecture Frameworks

Overview: Beginning the class with an activity about the costs and rewards of helping will help students understand and apply the topic. While introducing the topic, a cooperative learning activity that highlights the obstacles to helping will help students understand why people don't always help. Direct instruction with periodic discussion questions is an effective way to present the general topics of who helps, when they help, and why. A short video and an activity (with another video clip) will help engage students, and ending with a classroom assessment technique will help you assess students' knowledge after presenting the module's content.

- **Introduction**

- Some students may not know what "prosocial" means, so it's a good idea to start off the module with explaining that prosocial behaviors are ones that benefit other people, such as helping, donating, volunteering, sharing, and cooperating.

- *Knotty Problem Activity*: Show Slide 3 in the Noba PowerPoint, which contains a picture of a person lying on some steps in a public area. Have students break up into small groups and discuss the possible barriers to providing help to the person. After students have identified obstacles, have them discuss how to overcome those obstacles. The activity will help them identify how tough it is to actually help in a real-life situation, as well as create solutions to the problems.
 - It is likely that your students' answers will line up with some of the topics of this module. For example, it is not completely clear what is happening in the photo, which could lead to ambiguity. This type of ambiguity is one reason why people don't provide assistance, especially when other people aren't doing anything (pluralistic ignorance). Students' answers may also be influenced by potential danger perceived in the situation. You can further the discussion by asking, "What would you think if a lot of other people were around and they were ignoring the situation?"
 - This activity is a version of the Knotty Problem cooperative learning activity (see http://teachingcommons.depaul.edu/Classroom_Activi... for more info).
- **Direct Instruction—When Do People Help?** The lesson module outlines three factors that affect when people help: pluralistic ignorance, diffusion of responsibility, and costs and rewards. For the most part, this part of the module can be delivered via direct instruction (i.e., lecture), with a few discussion questions to help keep students engaged (see Noba PowerPoint).
 - **Direct Instruction—Who Helps?** The lesson module has three sections explaining who helps or not, according to what characteristics: men or women, agreeableness, and prosocial personality orientation. Much of this part of the module can be presented via direct instruction. There are some discussion questions pertaining to gender, and there will likely be an opportunity to connect students' answers to gender stereotypes and gendered socialization, if you have time.
 - **Why Help?**
 - This part of the module highlights three reasons for why people help: evolutionary roots (explanations), egoistic motives, and altruistic motives. Much of this part of the module can be delivered via direct instruction. Optional discussion points include topics such as whether we ever do anything for purely altruistic reasons.

- One way to present the material is to show a video about the evolutionary reasons we are kind to each other (*We Are to Be Kind*, see the Noba PowerPoint). This is a 4 ½ minute interview with Dacher Keltner, which emphasizes the evolutionary advantages of helping others, and it is a generally positive, upbeat video, which can be helpful while teaching more negative aspects of human behavior, such as bystander apathy.
- *The Hunger Games* Activity
 - This activity is outlined in Activities/Demonstrations below, and there is a slide in the Noba PowerPoint outlining the activity. Students watch a short video clip from *The Hunger Games* in which Katniss volunteers to take her sister's place in the Hunger Games. Discussion questions are designed to get students thinking about issues of altruism and kin selection. For example, would Katniss have volunteered if her sister were not the first girl chosen for the Hunger Games? Students will likely be engaged in this discussion, based on the popularity of *The Hunger Games*, but the activity can still work for students who have not read the book or seen the movie.
- **Conclusion**
 - It may be helpful to end the module on a positive note, especially if the material you cover contains a lot of information about how we do not help each other.
 - You could highlight positive examples from the Carnegie Hero website (<http://www.carnegiehero.org/>). This is a website with stories of people who have received the Carnegie Award, which is given to people who have risked their lives in extraordinary ways to help others. Much the information in this module is how we don't help others unless we think it benefits us, and that can be distressing for students to learn. Highlighting stories from this website can give other examples of people helping when we would not expect it. You can also stress that we cannot predict exactly when people will help and when they will not (connecting the discussion to research methodology and how to interpret results).
 - One example from the website:
 - "Merlin Harn saved a boy from being struck by a train, Menasha, Wisconsin, September 1, 2007. An unattended 3-year-old boy was observed walking on a railroad track by Harn, 40, facilities technician, and his wife as they drove by. They stopped at a crossing near the scene and called authorities. As they waited for police to arrive, the crossing's lights, bell, and gates were activated, and the whistle of an approaching

train sounded. Harn immediately exited his vehicle and, without looking back to the train, ran to the boy, having to cover the 90-foot distance on the ballast of the track bed. Meanwhile, when the 13,000-ton train, which was traveling at about 35 m.p.h., rounded a bend, its locomotive crew saw Harn running and then saw the boy. The engineer immediately engaged the train's emergency brakes. In a continuous motion, Harn grasped the boy under the arms and lunged away from the track with him seconds before the front of the train passed them. Although the train had decelerated, it continued for about a quarter-mile past the scene before stopping."

- **CAT—One-minute Paper:** It is helpful to end a class with a classroom assessment technique (CAT). The one-minute paper is a CAT, which asks students, "What was the most important thing you learned during this class?" and, "What important question remains unanswered?" Students answer the questions quickly, and you collect their answers. Go over their responses after class, and answer any questions at the beginning of the next class period. For more information on CATs click here: <http://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/cats/>

Activities & Demonstrations

Activity—*The Hunger Games* and Altruism: This activity connects the topic of altruism to a movie and storyline lots of students know (and love), *The Hunger Games*. Even for students who don't know the story, the short clip from the movie will give them enough information to answer the questions about altruism, as well as present a concrete example to discuss. The discussion will include the topic of altruism (and whether any action can be truly altruistic), and kin selection.

- Time: 15-20 minutes.
- Materials: <http://warmupsfollowups.blogspot.com/2013/02/the-hunger-games-altruism.html>
 - This activity is also presented in the Noba PowerPoint on Slide 18.
- Directions: The video is 8½ minute, but you can stop it after approximately 3 ½ - 4 minutes. This activity involves watching the scene from *The Hunger Games* in which Katniss volunteers to take her sister's place in the Hunger Games. The website includes questions about whether this is altruism, and whether students think Katniss would have volunteered if Prim were not her sister. Some questions might include:

- Is Katniss' decision to volunteer an act of altruism? Why or why not?
- Do you think Katniss would have volunteered if an acquaintance had been chosen instead of a family member?
 - If not, does that make her decision less altruistic?

Activity—Rewards, Costs, and Helping: In this activity, students read a scenario: “One evening, just as you settle down to study for an important test, an acquaintance from down the hall in your dormitory enters your room. He/she asks for assistance with some homework, which is due the next morning. It turns out that you have already taken the same course for which your acquaintance needs help. How do you respond to the situation?”

- Time: 5-10 minutes
- Materials: Please see Slide 7 in the Noba PowerPoint for one way to implement this activity.
- Directions:
 1. Have students consider the scenario.
 2. Students then rate how likely they would be to help, as well as how high the costs and how high the rewards are.
 3. The overall goal is to get students thinking about how we weigh costs and rewards when we are deciding to help others. You can ask more probing questions that get at costs and rewards. For example, you might ask, “If you were studying for a very tough final for a class where you had to do well to graduate, and this was your only time to study, would this affect your decision?” or, “If you thought you could do well on the exam without studying much, and you would still have time to study even if you helped this person, would you be more or less likely to help?” Kerber, K. W. (1980). Rewards, costs, and helping: A demonstration of the complementary nature of experimental and correlational research. *Teaching of Psychology*, 7, 50-52. doi:10.1207/s15328023top0701_14

Additional Activities

Aknin, L. B., & Dunn, E. W. (2013). Wealth and subjective well-being: Spending money on others

leads to higher happiness than spending on yourself. *Activities for teaching positive psychology: A guide for instructors*. (pp. 93-97) American Psychological Association, Washington, DC. doi:10.1037/14042-015

- This activity has students think about a recent purchase made for themselves or someone else, and then rate their current happiness level. The activity is designed to replicate research that indicates spending money on others makes us happier than spending money on ourselves.

Myers, M. W., & Hodges, S. D. (2013). Empathy: Perspective taking and prosocial behavior: Caring for others like we care for the self. *Activities for teaching positive psychology: A guide for instructors*. (pp. 77-83) American Psychological Association, Washington, DC. doi:10.1037/14042-013

- In this activity, students get different perspective-taking instructions, read a story about a person, and then they rate their empathic concern, psychological closeness, and desire to help similar people. This activity connects perspective-taking to empathic concern and prosocial behavior. It would fit well in the discussion about the empathy-altruism model under altruistic motives.

Putting Positive Psychology into Action

- This website describes a service-learning assignment in which students volunteer for an organization. The students take quantitative measures of happiness and mood before and after volunteering, write journal entries about their experience, and write a 5-10 page application paper. There is data indicating that the students learn from the activity and have an increased positive mood after volunteering. The website also gives advice for instructors.
- Link: <http://www.socialpsychology.org/action/2010honor1....>

Social Exclusion and Prosocial Behavior

- Twenge et al.'s (2007) research found people who felt socially excluded were less likely to help others. Based on these findings, pages 7-8 of this online resource for teaching research methodology contain an activity about social exclusion and prosocial behavior. The activity focuses on the study's research methodology (including false feedback and deception), but it could easily be adapted to include discussion questions focused on the role of prosocial behavior in groups.
- Link: <http://teachpsych.org/resources/Documents/otrp/res...>

Discussion Points

1. Do you think we can do things for purely altruistic motives, or do we always benefit on some level when we help others?
 - This question is designed to get students thinking about the differences between altruism and egotism, as well as whether we can tell the difference.
2. How do you think you can encourage children to be kind, cooperative, and helpful?
 - This question brings up a practical application of the helping and prosocial behavior literature. Answers are very likely to highlight social learning theory.
3. Many people think volunteering is a positive thing to do, but few people volunteer. Why do you think that is? What might we do to encourage more people to volunteer?
 - This question highlights a practical complication of prosocial behavior: we tend to value volunteering, yet few people do it regularly. It also can connect to the topic of social influence, if you have covered that in your course.

Outside Resources

Article: Alden, L. E., & Trew, J. L. (2013). If it makes you happy: Engaging in kind acts increases positive affect in socially anxious individuals. *Emotion*, 13, 64-75. doi:10.1037/a0027761

Review available at:

<http://nymag.com/scienceofus/2015/07/one-way-to-get-over-your-social-anxiety-be-nice.html>

Book: Batson, C.D. (2009). *Altruism in humans*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Book: Dovidio, J. F., Piliavin, J. A., Schroeder, D. A., & Penner, L. A. (2006). *The social psychology of prosocial behavior*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Book: Mikuliner, M., & Shaver, P. R. (2010). *Prosocial motives, emotions, and behavior: The better angels of our nature*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Book: Schroeder, D. A. & Graziano, W. G. (forthcoming). *The Oxford handbook of prosocial behavior*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Institution: Center for Generosity, University of Notre Dame, 936 Flanner Hall, Notre Dame,

IN 46556.

<http://www.generosityresearch.nd.edu>

Institution: The Greater Good Science Center, University of California, Berkeley.

<http://www.greatergood.berkeley.edu>

News Article: Bystanders Stop Suicide Attempt

<http://jfmueller.faculty.noctrl.edu/crow/bystander.pdf>

Social Psychology Network (SPN)

<http://www.socialpsychology.org/social.htm#prosocial>

Video: Episodes (individual) of "Primetime: What Would You Do?"

<http://www.YouTube.com>

Video: Episodes of "Primetime: What Would You Do?" that often include some commentary from experts in the field may be available at

<http://www.abc.com>

Video: From The Inquisitive Mind website, a great overview of different aspects of helping and pro-social behavior including - pluralistic ignorance, diffusion of responsibility, the bystander effect, and empathy.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i2aVjU3F_t0

Evidence-Based Teaching

Beehr, T. A., LeGro, K., Porter, K., Bowling, N. A., & Swader, W. M. (2010). Required volunteers: Community volunteerism among students in college classes. *Teaching of Psychology, 37*, 276-280. doi:10.1080/00986283.2010.510965

- This research examines volunteerism, including the differences between individuals who volunteer freely versus those who feel compelled to do so. Topics include volunteers' internal motivation, external motivation, commitment, self-determination, time demands, and satisfaction. Nonrequired volunteers were more committed and satisfied, and they also had higher amounts of internal motivation, compared to required volunteers.

Miller, S. (1997). Self-knowledge as an outcome of application journal keeping in social

psychology. *Teaching of Psychology*, 24, 124-125. doi:10.1207.s15328023top2402_9

- This article describes an assignment in which students keep an ongoing journal that connects the content they learn in their social psychology course to their own experiences. This could be an assignment for the course. It could also be adapted for short in-class activities or assignments.

Links to ToPIX Materials

Books

<http://topix.teachpsych.org/w/page/39236320/Social-Psychology>

Music

<http://topix.teachpsych.org/w/page/54339452/Song%20List>

Videos/Audio

<http://topix.teachpsych.org/w/page/19981040/Social%20Video>

Teaching Topics

Teaching The Most Important Course

https://nobaproject.com/documents/1_Teaching_The_Most_Important_Course.pdf

Content Coverage

https://nobaproject.com/documents/2_Content_Coverage.pdf

Motivating Students

https://nobaproject.com/documents/3_Motivating_Students_Tips.pdf

Engaging Large Classes

https://nobaproject.com/documents/4_Engaging_Large_Classes.pdf

Assessment Learning

https://nobaproject.com/documents/5_Assessment_Learning.pdf

Teaching Biological Psychology

https://nobaproject.com/documents/6_Teaching_Bio_Psych.pdf

PowerPoint Presentation

This module has an associated PowerPoint presentation. Download it at https://nobaproject.com//images/shared/supplement_editions/000/000/175/Helping%20and%20Prosocial%20Behavior.ppt?1475877879.

About Noba

The Diener Education Fund (DEF) is a non-profit organization founded with the mission of re-inventing higher education to serve the changing needs of students and professors. The initial focus of the DEF is on making information, especially of the type found in textbooks, widely available to people of all backgrounds. This mission is embodied in the Noba project.

Noba is an open and free online platform that provides high-quality, flexibly structured textbooks and educational materials. The goals of Noba are three-fold:

- To reduce financial burden on students by providing access to free educational content
- To provide instructors with a platform to customize educational content to better suit their curriculum
- To present material written by a collection of experts and authorities in the field

The Diener Education Fund is co-founded by Drs. Ed and Carol Diener. Ed is the Joseph Smiley Distinguished Professor of Psychology (Emeritus) at the University of Illinois. Carol Diener is the former director of the Mental Health Worker and the Juvenile Justice Programs at the University of Illinois. Both Ed and Carol are award-winning university teachers.

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