

Lecture # 15

Altruism

Presented by
Clinical Psychologist
SADAF SAJJAD



Why do people help?

Prosocial Behavior

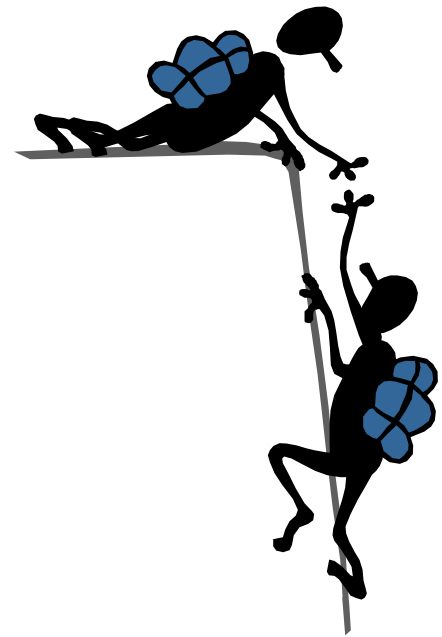
Any act performed with the goal of benefiting another person.

Altruism

The desire to help another person even if it involves a cost to the helper.

Altruism

- ◆ Rooted in the Latin word *alter* – meaning other
- ◆ Altruism – means “living for others”
- ◆ Key component – selflessness – an unselfish regard for the welfare of others



Altruism

- ◆ **Altruism** refers to an individual acting in a way that will decrease its own survival chances, but improve the survival chances of another individual.
- ◆ The Darwinian perspective emphasising ‘**survival of the fittest**’ gave the impression that selfishness was the norm.
- ◆ Pioneering work involving the study of animals living in social groups in fact revealed that co-operation and altruism are just as ‘natural’ as selfishness.

History of Altruism

- ◆ The French philosopher named August Comte coined the word **altruism** in 1851 and it was added to the English dictionary two years later.
- ◆ However, all human kind has been demonstrating altruism since the world's beginning.
- ◆ Altruism is studied today by psychologists, biologists, theologians, anthropologists, political scientists, economists, sociologists, mathematicians and more.

Yesterday and Today

- ◆ Most societies acknowledge the importance of altruism in that it benefits a community as a whole.
- ◆ Societies also understand that it is imperative to cooperate with one another rather than strive on conflict. Thus, it helps avoid war and instead, instills peace.



Examples of Animal Altruism.

- ◆ Vampire bats will regurgitate and feed blood that they have collected from their prey to a hungry conspecific.
- ◆ Ground squirrels will warn others of the presence of a predator, even though making such a call may draw the attention of the predator to itself



Three Characteristics of Altruistic Behavior

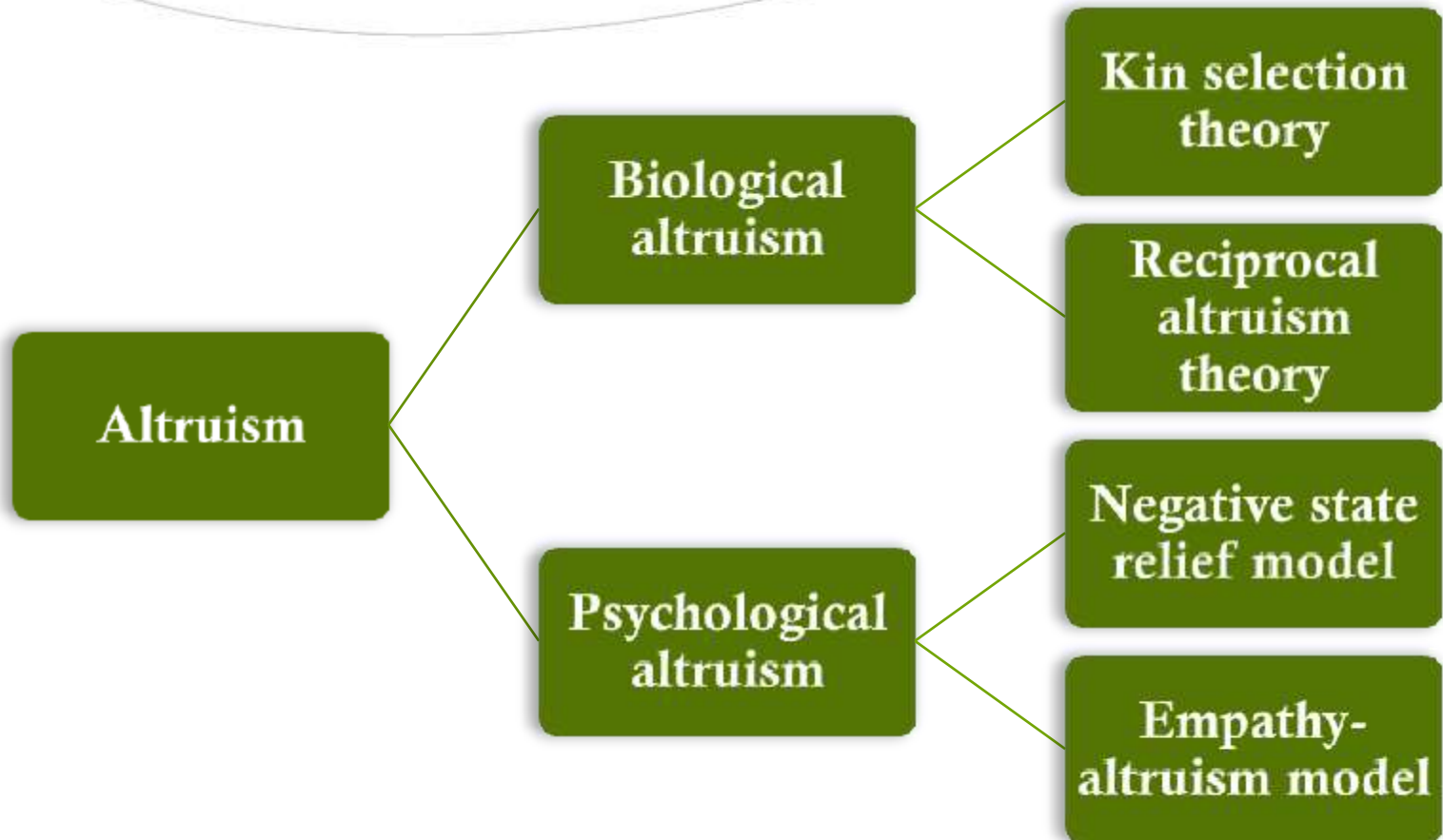
- ◆ Perceiving the need of another person
- ◆ Being motivated by empathy to help the other person
- ◆ Addressing the need by taking action without expecting a reward or recognition in return



Theories of Altruism

- ◆ Psychologists believe there are two types of altruism:
 - ◆ **Biological altruism** (with its roots in evolutionary psychology)
 - ◆ **Psychological altruism** (based more on cognitive psychology)

Theories of Altruism



Biological Altruism

- ◆ Based in Instinct and Genes
- ◆ Evolutionary Psychology is the attempt to explain social behavior in terms of genetic factors that evolved over time, according to the principles of natural selection.
- ◆ Darwin recognized that altruistic behavior posed a problem for his theory: if an organism acts altruistically, it may decrease its own reproductive fitness.



Kin Selection Theory

- ◆ Kin selection theory predicts that the extent of altruism depends on genetic relatedness.
- ◆ By helping relatives to reproduce (even at the cost to your own reproductive success) then your shared genes can spread. Assisting a close relative thereby increases one's 'Inclusive Fitness'.
- ◆ Using mathematical modelling, Hamilton showed that an altruistic gene can spread through the population if it causes an individual to help a relative, whenever the cost to the individual is offset by the reproductive benefit gained by the receiver.

$$\text{'Hamilton's Rule'} = r B > c$$

where r = coefficient of relatedness, B = benefit to the recipient, c = cost to the giver.

Kin Selection Theory

- ◆ In a house fire, who would you save first, your brother/sister or your neighbor?



Kin Selection in Humans

- ◆ Food sharing is more common amongst close relatives.
- ◆ Political alliances between kin are more stable than those formed between distantly related, or unrelated individuals and involve less preconditions.
- ◆ The passing on of wealth to lineal descendants (excluding spouses) is far more common than giving to less closely related or unrelated individuals.
- ◆ Close relatives are preferentially sought out in times of need and such help is less likely to be reciprocal.
- ◆ Relatives typically receive more expensive presents.



Reciprocal Altruism Theory

Norm of Reciprocity

The expectation that helping others will increase the likelihood that they will help us in the future.

- One reason we help people is that we assume it will make them more likely to help us in the future.
- This is so strong it may have become genetically based.



Reciprocal Altruism Theory

- ◆ Proposed by [Trivers \(1971\)](#).
- ◆ Natural Selection may create psychological mechanisms designed to deliver benefits even to non-relatives, provided that such actions lead to reciprocal beneficial actions in the future.
- ◆ This is not necessarily limited to the same species e.g. cleaner fish.
- ◆ If the benefit received is larger than the cost incurred, then individuals who engage in such behaviour will out-reproduce those who do not.
- ◆ E.g, in vampire bats, an individual will share food with a conspecific (whether related or not) if the other has shared food with that individual in the past

Conditions Under Which Reciprocation Flourishes

- ◆ Individuals must associate for long-enough periods of time to develop reciprocal interactions.
- ◆ The likelihood of one individual performing some social exchange with another should be predicted on the basis of their past associations.
- ◆ The roles of giver and receiver should reverse at least once.
- ◆ The short-term benefits to the recipient are greater than the costs to the donor.
- ◆ Givers should be able to recognise and expel cheaters from the system.

Reciprocal Altruism: Prisoner's Dilemma

- ◆ Criminals A and B commit a crime together
- ◆ They are caught by the police and are interviewed separately
- ◆ They both know that without the testimony of the other, there is not enough evidence to imprison them for more than a year.
- ◆ However, they also know that if they collaborate with the police and blame the other one, the other would go to prison for 20 years, but they would go free.



Reciprocal Altruism: Prisoner's Dilemma

		Prisoner B's Strategies	
		Do Not Confess	Confess
Prisoner A's Strategies	Do Not Confess	1 Year / 1 Year	Parole / Life
	Confess	Life / Parole	20 Years / 20 Years



Psychological Altruism

- ◆ Where biological explanations of altruism can be seen in many animals, psychological explanations of altruism are witnessed only in higher-level mammals.
- ◆ While biological explanations of altruism occur almost automatically, psychological explanations of altruism arise as a result of cognition. That is, this type of altruism relies on the 'helper' understanding the situation. This kind of altruism is not innate.



Negative-state relief model

- ◆ When encountering a homeless person asking for money, we can either:
 - ◆ Give them some money or
 - ◆ Walk away



Negative-state relief model

- ◆ Schaller and Cialdini (1988) proposed the **negative-state relief model**.
- ◆ Pro-social behavior results from egoism rather than altruism.
- ◆ We help others in order to relieve the stress we feel when encountering a bad situation.
- ◆ This model also explains why people walk away. Walking away also alleviates distress.



Empathy-altruism model

- ◆ Batson disagrees with the notion that we only help to relieve negative feelings.
- ◆ Batson et al (1981) suggests that people experience two kinds of emotion when they see suffering.



Empathy-altruism model



Personal
distress (e.g.
anxiety,
fear)

Empathic
concern (e.g.
sympathy,
compassion,
tenderness)

Empathy-altruism model

- ◆ According to Batson, if you feel empathy towards a person, you will help, regardless of what you may gain from it.
- ◆ Relieving suffering becomes the most important thing.
- ◆ If a person feels no empathy, then they would consider the costs and benefits before making the decision to help

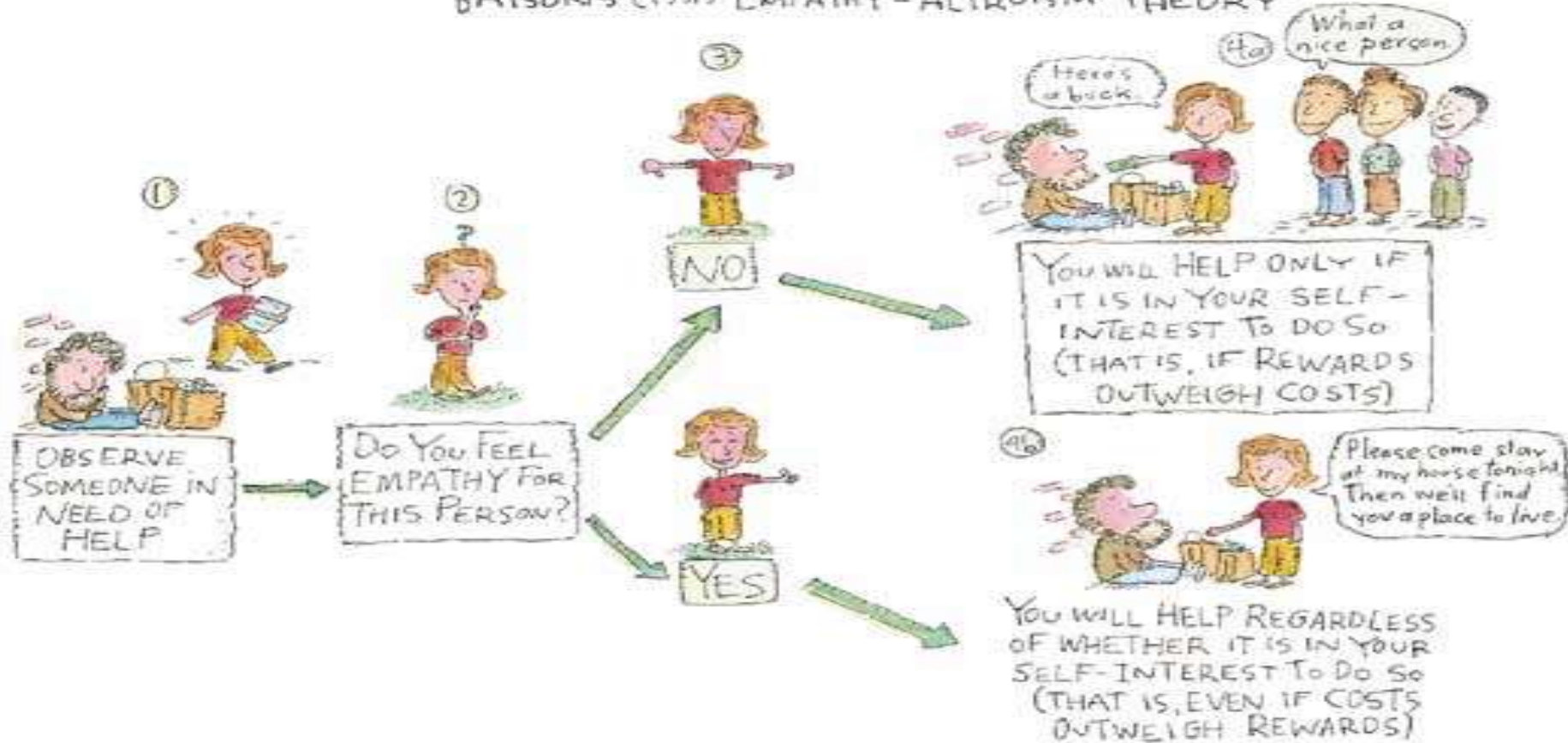
Empathy-altruism model

- ◆ The empathy-altruism hypothesis has been tested empirically many times, in order to distinguish it from egoist hypotheses (e.g. Schaller and Cialdini's 'negative-state relief' model).
- ◆ It is, however, very difficult to determine from observed behavior, whether someone is acting out of empathy or to relieve distress.



Empathy-altruism model

BATSON'S (1991) EMPATHY-ALTRUISM THEORY



Process of Helping

Has something happened?



Is it an emergency?



Is this something for which I should take personal responsibility?



What form of assistance should I give?



I'll help.

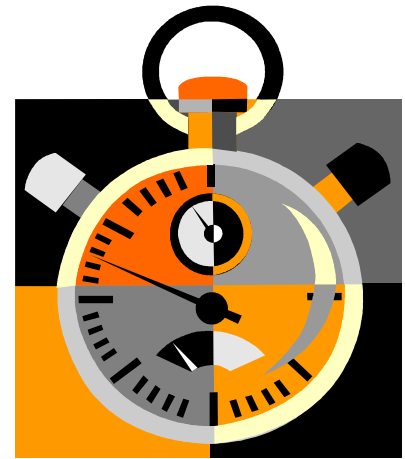
Factors that Influence Helping

- ◆ Number of bystanders
 - ◆ How does a large crowd influence noticing an emergency, interpreting something as an emergency, and assuming responsibility?
 - ◆ Leads to the bystander effect.
- ◆ Factors exist that reduce bystander effect.
 - ◆ Clear emergencies vs. ambiguous.
 - ◆ Cohesive groups vs. strangers.



Additional Factors

- ◆ Presence of Prosocial models.
 - ◆ Salvation Army contributions increase if person has just seen someone else give.
- ◆ Time pressure
 - ◆ You are less likely to receive aid from someone in a hurry
 - ◆ They are less likely to notice an emergency and less likely to interpret a situation correctly.



Emotions

- ◆ Guilt
 - ◆ Increases helping behavior.
 - ◆ In one study, those who had not lied volunteered to help an experimenter for an average of 2 minutes, those who had lied helped for approximately 63 minutes!
 - ◆ More likely to help if our guilt is public knowledge.



Emotions

◆ Negative mood

- ◆ For adults, not children, a bad mood increases the likelihood of helping behavior.
- ◆ It appears that adults have learned that helping is a self-gratifying behavior.
- ◆ Exceptions to this tendency include feelings of anger and grief.

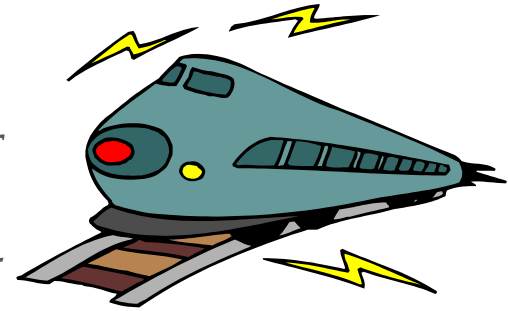
◆ Positive mood

- ◆ Happy people are helpful people.
- ◆ Parking ticket study: fear turning to relief increases helping behavior significantly.



Personality Traits

- ◆ No one trait predicts altruism
- ◆ However,
 - ◆ There are individual differences in helpfulness over time.
 - ◆ Network of traits (emotionality, empathy, self-efficacy) are linked to helping.
 - ◆ High self-monitors help if they believe it will be socially rewarded (interaction of personality and situation).
 - ◆ Men more likely to help in dangerous situations; women in safer situations.



How do we teach altruism?

- ◆ Teach moral inclusion
 - ◆ If we are more likely to help those who are like us, expand that group.
- ◆ Model altruism
 - ◆ Even television can be helpful here!
- ◆ Attributing behavior to altruistic motives
 - ◆ Avoid over justification effect. That is, don't coerce people into altruism, don't reward them too much, etc.





Thank You