
MODULE 59

Prosocial Relations

Module Preview

Geographical proximity, physical attractiveness, and similarity of attitudes and interests influence our liking for one another. Passionate love is an aroused state we cognitively label as love. Companionate love often emerges as a relationship matures and is enhanced by equity and self-disclosure.

Altruism is the unselfish regard for the welfare of others. The presence of others at an emergency can inhibit helping. The bystander effect is most apparent in situations where the presence of others inhibits one's noticing an event, interpreting it as an emergency, or assuming responsibility for offering help. Many factors influence our willingness to help someone in distress, including cost-benefit analysis and social norms or expectations.

Conflicts are fueled by social traps and by enemies forming mirror-image perceptions of one another. Enemies become friends when they work toward superordinate goals, communicate clearly, and reciprocate conciliatory gestures.

Module Guide

Attraction

- ▶ Lectures: Speed Dating; What Is Beautiful Is Good; Physical Appearance and Election Success
- ▶ Exercises: Using Personal Ads to Learn About Interpersonal Attraction; Assessing Friendship; The Pairing Game; Matching, the Contrast Effect, and Relationship Satisfaction
- ▶ Exercise/Project: The Mere Exposure Effect
- ▶ Feature Films: *Beauty and the Beast* and Physical Attractiveness
- ▶ Instructor Video Tool Kit: *Interpersonal Attraction: Clothes Make the Man*

59-1. *Describe the influence of proximity, physical attractiveness, and similarity on interpersonal attraction.*

Three factors are known to influence our liking for one another. Geographical proximity is conducive to attraction, partly because of the **mere exposure effect**: Repeated exposure to novel stimuli enhances liking of them. Physical attractiveness influences social opportunities and the way one is perceived. We view attractive people as healthier, happier, more sensitive, and more successful. As acquaintanceship moves toward friendship, similarity of attitudes and interests greatly increases liking. The factors that foster attraction are explained by a **reward theory of attraction**: We like those whose behavior is rewarding to us, and we will continue relationships that offer more rewards than costs.

- ▶ Exercises: The Passionate Love Scale; Love Styles; The Trust Scale; The Minding Scale; Solitude: Bane or Blessing?
- ▶ Feature Films: *Speed* and the Two-Factor Theory of Passionate Love
- ▶ Instructor Video Tool Kit: *Love: The Mind-Body Connection*

- 59-2. Describe the effect of physical arousal on passionate love, and identify two predictors of enduring companionate love.

We can view *passionate love* as an aroused state that we cognitively label as love. The strong affection of *companionate love*, which often emerges as a relationship matures, is enhanced by *equity*, a condition in which both parties receive in proportion to what they give. Another vital ingredient of loving relationships is mutual *self-disclosure*, in which partners reveal to each other intimate details about themselves.

Altruism

- ▶ Lectures: Case Studies in Helping; The Bystander Effect and Legislating Helping; Europeans Who Helped Jews Escape
- ▶ Exercise: Why Do People Volunteer?
- ▶ Project: A Random Act of Kindness
- ▶ Videos: Video Clip 40 of *Digital Media Archive: Psychology*, 1st ed.: *Takooshian's Psychology of Bystanders*
- ▶ Instructor Video Tool Kit: *Bystander Apathy: Failing to Help Others in Distress; Whom Do We Help?*

- 59-3. Define altruism, and describe the steps in the decision-making process involved in bystander intervention.

Altruism is unselfish regard for the welfare of others. Risking one's life to save victims of genocide with no expectation of personal reward is an example of altruism.

The **bystander effect** is the tendency for any given bystander to an emergency to be less likely to give aid if other bystanders are present. Research on the bystander effects indicates that to decide to help, one must (1) notice the event, (2) interpret it as an emergency, or (3) assume responsibility for helping.

- ▶ Lectures: Five Dangerous Ideas; The Dual Concern Model of Social Conflict; The Jigsaw Technique
- ▶ PsychSim 5: Social Decision Making

- 59-4. Explain altruism from the perspective of social exchange theory and social norms.

Social exchange theory proposes that underlying all behavior, including helping, is the desire to maximize our benefits (which may include our own good feelings) and minimize our costs. For example, we will donate blood if we anticipate that the rewards (e.g., social approval, good feelings) for doing so exceed the costs (e.g., time, discomfort). Social norms may also prescribe altruistic behavior. The **reciprocity norm** is the expectation that people will help, not hurt, those who have helped them. The **social-responsibility norm** is the expectation that people will help those who are dependent on them.

Peacemaking

- ▶ Exercise: The Missiles Game

- 59-5. Explain how social traps and mirror-image perceptions fuel social conflict, and discuss effective ways of encouraging peaceful cooperation and reducing social conflict.

A **conflict** is a perceived incompatibility of actions, goals, or ideas. **Social traps** are situations in which conflicting parties may become caught in mutually destructive behavior as they pursue their own ends, thus creating an outcome that no one wants. Helping people to agree on regulations, to communicate better, and to be more aware of responsibilities toward others fosters cooperation. The spiral of conflict also feeds and is fed by distorted **mirror-image perceptions**, in which each party views itself as moral and the other as unworthy and evil-intentioned.

Research suggests that noncompetitive contact between parties of equal status may help reduce conflict. More important, the discovery of **superordinate**, or shared, **goals** that require cooperation can turn enemies into friends. Communication, sometimes through a third-party mediator, also promotes mutual understanding. Finally, the **GRIT** (*Graduated and Reciprocated Initiatives in Tension-Reduction*) strategy suggests that reciprocated conciliatory gestures bring peace.