Prosocial Behavior

Prosocial Behavior – acts that help other people.

Research precipitated by Kitty Genovese incident—

Diffusion of responsibility – as the number of potential helpers increases, responsibility for helping is diffused, so likelihood of helping decreases.

Latane and Darley model of prosocial behavior (Decision Tree Model)

Conceptualize a helping response as the culmination of a series of cognitive choices. So, in an emergence a person makes several decisions before help is given.

1. Notice the emergency – Must notice a problem in order to help.
   Example…the man staggering from the side of the road and waving his arms is hard to miss, but a scream in a
crowded snack bar at grand central station could go unnoticed.

2. Interpret an event as an emergency. People that heard Kitty scream could interpret them as something other than a call for help......hammering noises is what one neighbor heard

Two components acting here 1) perception – scream sounds like the crash of a hammer it might be difficult to see it as an emergency 2) motivation—people may want to make a non-emergency interpretation whenever possible so they won’t have to help.

3. Responsibility- Person must decide they should be responsible..... less likely to assume responsibility if an authority figure is close.

4. Decide appropriate form of assistance—do you know how to help?

5. Implement the decision---fear of social blunder
Factors that influence helping

1. Exposure to helpful models—more likely to help when you have seen others helping.....television examples work too....Sesame street viewers rated more helpful.

2. Mood – pos mood – acts that are potentially embarrassing or risky are inhibited by good mood, but, acts associated with rewards are fostered by such emotions.
---neg mood – increased helping when in a negative mood if:
   A. Behavior needed is easy to do
   B. Bad feelings might be alleviated by helping
   C. Negative mood is not too intense

3. Characteristics of the person in need
   A. Attraction to the person increases helping.
   B. Similarity/also likeability
   C. Some people are seen as more deserving of help.
4. Victims Responsibility – help more when victim is not seen as responsible for their situation.
5. Time
6. When previously rewarded for helping