

Open Your Class with This Tomorrow
Against Empathy: The Case Against Rational Compassion

Morality and Empathy

Paul Bloom argues that morality and empathy are not necessarily linked, although they are often presented and consistently linked with one another. Bloom provides examples in his book *Against Empathy* of individuals acting morally but without empathy. For example, if you are walking along a trail and see a child drowning in a pond, you will likely try to save the child, but you do not feel what the child feels, your empathy does not cause your action. Bloom argues that empathy may create a negative outcome in which people think they are doing something good for a person, but the action more likely provides an adverse outcome for a larger group. This activity intends to combine these thoughts with the ideas morality as proposed by Lawrence Kohlberg.

Directions: Read the scenarios below, first determine which stage and level of Kohlberg's theory of moral development the individual is acting and then determine if their empathy caused the action and if the impact was positive, negative or neutral.

Situation	Kohlberg Level and Stage of Morality with explanation	First, determine if there is empathy. Second, does this decision have the optimal outcome? Explain.
<p>Sheri Summers has a rare and fatal disease and is waiting on a list for treatment to save her life. She is 8-years old, has an older brother and a pet hamster. Sheri loves Disney films and wears her hair in ringlet pigtails. She is trying to smile through her illness but is on a long list of patients who are also waiting for the treatment, she may not survive the wait. You have the opportunity and decide to move her up the waiting list because you feel that her life is more important than those ahead of her on the list.</p>		
<p>You have set aside 50 dollars monthly for charity. You are debating between providing mosquito netting to a town in rural South America in which every 2 dollars will provide netting to save people from the spread of malaria or donating to the GoFundMe page of your neighbor suffering from a neuromuscular disorder. Your neighbor needs a wheelchair to leave the house. You decide to give to the GoFundMe page so others in the neighborhood will see your donation on the webpage and think you are a good person.</p>		

<p>You give your church a predetermined donation each month because they recommend an amount based on your salary. The money goes to the maintenance of the church facilities and grounds. One month, you must decide if you should instead use that money to save five puppies at a shelter that will otherwise be euthanized. You decide to give the money to the church as usual because these are the guidelines in terms of donations they have set for you.</p>		
<p>A local school has just been hit by a tornado (everyone is safe), and on the same day, 400 people are killed in a Tsunami in Thailand. You only have enough money to help with one of the causes and decide to donate to the local school because you are afraid that if you do not, your taxes will increase for the cost to rebuild the school.</p>		