

Applied Positive Psychology

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Week 8

Lecture 25: Development and Interventions for Prosocial Behavior/Kindness

I welcome you all to module 8 of this course titled "Applied Positive Psychology." So, Module 8 is about kindness and prosocial behavior. This is the third lecture of this module, and overall lecture number 22. Today's lecture is titled "Development and Interventions for Prosocial Behavior or Kindness." So, we will discuss how prosocial behavior develops as the child ages, as well as the intervention aspect for prosocial behavior and kindness.

Now, before we talk about today's lecture, let me give you a brief recap of the last lecture. So, the last lecture was also part of the same module, and in that lecture, we discussed the concept of prosocial behavior and altruistic behavior. How is it defined? What kind of behaviors are included under this? We also discussed why prosocial behavior matters in the context of human life and human society. Why is it so important that we understand prosocial behavior and what its role is or significance in our life. We also discussed the relationship between prosocial behavior and well-being: how prosocial behavior increases well-being and vice versa, in the sense that well-being sometimes also facilitates prosocial behavior. So, we have looked into the empirical evidence as well as theoretical explanations for this.

In today's lecture, the key concept that we will be covering includes developmental changes in prosocial thoughts and actions. Especially as a child, as the age increases, developmental processes, prosocial thoughts, and actions change. We will also look at the role of social learning in prosocial behavior, and at the end, we will discuss some of the strategies and concepts that are relevant in the context of interventions and promoting prosocial behavior and kindness.

Let us start with the concept of developmental changes in prosocial thoughts and actions. As the child progresses in terms of age, their prosocial thoughts and behavior change. So, as children grow, various factors influence their motivation to help others, and several models can explain that. The two prominent models that we will be talking about in today's lecture are Robert Cialdini's socialization model and Daniel Bar-Tal's cognitive learning model. So, this model will try to understand how the development or progress of age and

how these prosocial thoughts and behaviors change within a child. So let's start with the Cialdini Socialization Model. Cialdini proposed some developmental changes based on the observation and experiments of how children's motivation to help others changes. So, according to this model, there are typically three stages of development that can be seen as the child grows.

The first stage is called the pre-socialization stage. So, in this stage, a young child is unaware that society values helping. They may help if asked, but do not associate helping with positive feelings. Typically, the child from birth through the initial 4-5 years, is generally unaware of the social values or social norms regarding helping others and why it is positive or not. But a child can help others if specifically asked for this, and they generally do not associate helping with positive feelings. So, basically, they are not aware of social norms about helping behavior. This is called the pre-socialization stage. The second stage that comes as the child grows is called the awareness stage, which occurs around ages 10 to 12, when children learn that society values helpfulness. This age group may vary from child to child, although some children may become mature earlier than their age.

This is a general age group that is discussed here, somewhere around 10 to 12, or maybe a little earlier. Also, children learn that society values helpfulness and become sensitive to social norms; they help primarily to please adults or comply with norms. So that awareness of social norms and the value of helping behavior generally sinks into their minds in this age group. They learn the values of helpfulness, become sensitive to social norms, and start behaving accordingly. Generally, the focus is that this is something expected, something desirable, and people will reward you for this kind of behavior or they engage in helping behavior in order to comply with these norms and receive rewards.

The third stage is called the internalization stage, occurring around the 15-16 years, or adolescence stage. This help becomes intrinsically rewarding. Slowly, the child internalizes these norms, and they become a part of themselves, i.e. it becomes an intrinsically rewarding experience, and external norms are internalized. Whatever norms are present outside become internal and are internalized by the child.

Helping is motivated by personal satisfaction rather than external approval, so at this stage, if a child reaches the internalization stage, the child will internalize the norms, and then the helping behavior will automatically become intrinsic motivation, where the child will help because it is automatically internalized. This is something that is expected. This is what a human being is supposed to do.

Some of the initial empirical research also supports this model. For example, a study by

Froming, Allen, and Jensen found that younger children in the pre-socialization stage were unaffected by the presence of an evaluative adult, while older children in the typical awareness stage donated more to charity when an adult was present. So, this simply says that in the pre-socialization state, the child is not influenced by the presence of an adult. The presence of an adult did not affect their behavior regarding helping others. On the other hand, the children who are in the awareness stage donated more to charity when an evaluative adult was present. The adult's presence was impacting their behavior. This suggests that younger children lack awareness of social norms, whereas older children are motivated by compliance with these norms. So, a child becomes aware of social norms, which influence their behavior in terms of helping others and kindness; all these behavior changes occur slowly, and then they also internalize those norms, which can influence their behavior.

Cialdini and Kenrick further tested the model using the negative state relief theory that we discussed in the last lecture, which was also proposed by Cialdini, and they found that 6 to 8-year-olds in a sad mood donated fewer coupons than those in a neutral mood, as they did not associate helping with mood improvement. Six to eight-year-olds are generally in the pre-socialization stage, and it was found that in that age group, as the negative state relief model suggests, we are more likely to help in many situations when our mood is bad. In a sense, this negative mood sometimes propels us to help others in order to remove or reduce it, because helping others can sometimes improve our mood. This may not happen every time, but many times, a negative mood can motivate people in terms of helping behavior.

In that context, they found six to eight-year-old children, typically in the pre-socialization state, that the sad mood did not actually promote helping behavior as they did not associate helping with mood improvement. Those concepts and norms were not in their minds. However, when in the age group of 10 to 12-year-olds, whether they had a positive mood or negative mood in both conditions, their helping nature or helping behavior was almost equal. So, they indicate they had some idea that the mood was influencing them. Fifteen to eighteen-year-olds in a sad mood donated significantly more coupons as they had internalized the idea that helping would relieve or reduce negative feelings. In 15 to 18-year-olds, the internalization stage took place. So, this is some of the experimental evidence that supports some of the basic ideas of this model. This is how a child moves through the different stages of helping behavior.

Cialdini and Kenrick also emphasize that these changes result from learning and socialization. These changes that happen are not biological processes. The children learn this from society. This is more of a result of the socialization process rather than biological maturation. When we talk about a lot of these developmental models, we typically talk about biological changes that happen and, accordingly, some cognitive changes that occurs.

But when you talk about helping behavior models, these changes typically happen or take place because of the learning, and the socialization process. This generally does not have much to do with the biological maturation that happens in the body. Obviously, the biological changes happen. Accordingly, some changes happen in the thought processes as well, but typically helping behavior and other aspects of social behavior are more influenced by learning and the socialization processes. The progression through the stages varies based on cultural and individual experiences. A lot of these cultural influences can also affect whether somebody helps or not. Socialization experiences play a more important role.

The next model that also talks about some of the developmental changes that can be noticed is called the Bar-Tal's cognitive learning model. Now, some of the ideas are similar to Cialdini's model, but this model also adds a few more things. So, Daniel Bar-Tal, an Israeli psychologist, proposed a developmental model of helping based on observations of children in Israel. In one study, children aged 4 and a half to 9 and a half years were observed in a game where there were situations where one could help others.

Now, researchers measure how children responded to progressively more explicit requests to share i.e., one child owns a candy and then whether that child shares this candy with others. So, they are observing and trying to understand whether they are sharing nature or whether they are sharing whatever candy the child owns with the others or not. So, researchers measured how children respond progressively to more explicit requests about how children in different age groups change their behavior when different requests are made. So that was the idea. So, in one condition, no instructions were given to the children, and they just observed whether they shared or not. Then a story about sharing was narrated by the researcher regarding the goodness of sharing and then they observed whether, after listening to the story, their behavior changes or not. Then, in another condition, a suggestion about earning a role in a school play if they share (some kind of reward was given), stating that if they share, some kind of role in a school play (a reward) will be given. Finally, a direct request with the tangible reward was given to the child, directly asking, "See if you share this, reward will be given," and they try to observe under all these conditions how children in different age groups behave. The results show that older children required less external inducement to share, with thirty-eight percent of the oldest children sharing after hearing a story, compared to only seven percent of the youngest.

What they observe is a general trend that children who are a little older in the age group, they needed less external prodding or inducement to help other children, but the youngest children in the lower age group needed more specific external inducement for sharing. So, for example, they found that 38 percent of the oldest children shared when they heard a story about sharing and its benefits, whereas only seven percent of the youngest children actually shared. They could observe some developmental changes where external rewards

could play a role. Based on some of these observations and with other experiments, the Bartels model, which is very similar to what Cialdini proposed, suggests that children's motivation to help evolves with age with a certain pattern. They found that young children, typically around 5 to 6 years old, are motivated by tangible rewards or punishments. In this age group, children generally tend to help others only when they can find a very tangible reward in a situation; then, and only then, do they help or share things. Middle childhood, which spans from 6 to 12 years, is driven by the desire for social approval and praise. The reward is more subtle; children are more influenced by social approval and whether someone praises them rather than by tangible rewards or material gifts.

The middle childhood group helping nature was more influential when social approval, praise, and other things were present in the situation. The period of adolescence, from ages 12 to 20, helps individuals become more altruistic, motivated by moral convictions, self-satisfaction, and raised self-esteem. Now, this is very similar to the internalization stage as discussed by Cialdini in the earlier model. This helping becomes more altruistic i.e. it may become very automatic, even if the reward is absent and may be motivated by more moral conviction, self-satisfaction, or internal psychological concepts that may determine internal motivation, which may be more influenced and more influential in the case of adolescence.

So this is one aspect they noticed in the model and in the experiments. They made this model of developmental stages more specific based on some of these observations in terms of phases. The phase one of this model talks about the stage of concrete compliance. In this stage or in this phase individuals help because they have been ordered to do so. The very concrete ordering or something has to be specifically stated; only then will helping be shown by children in this group; with the explicit threat of punishment, or if there is a very threatening situation where, if they do not help, there will be punishment,.

An example of when a child is asked to carry a spoon because the mother explicitly said, "If you carry this spoon, I will give you a candy." This is a typical case of the compliance concrete stage. In very early childhood, a lot of children are in this phase.

The second phase is called compliance. In this stage, individuals help if an authority requests them to do so. Here again, they only engage in helping behavior when some authority figure, like parents or others, requests them to do so. Even now, in this case, there may not be a need for a concrete reward; the threat of actual punishment is no longer needed. An example of this motivation occurs when a child helps to clean the table because the mother told him to do so.

So here, if you see the compliance, at the concrete stage, the mother said, "I will give you a candy," so that concrete reward was necessary. In this case, such concrete rewards or

punishments may not be necessary; the child will just comply with the order, or if an authority figure just makes a request, the child will follow that. So that's called compliance stage. The third phase is called internal initiative and concrete reward. What happens here is that individuals help because they expect a tangible reward. For example, a child may help by giving his toy to another child, expecting or receiving an ice cream in return. So now, mostly in the return an expectation comes to the mind of the child. So, they can initiate the helping behavior internally, but then with an expectation of a reward in that situation comes up. Now, here specific request and order may not be necessary.

The child may automatically help another child internally, but with the expectation of a reward. In the other cases, a specific order was made. In this case, that may not be necessary. But the expectation of some reward has to be there in the mind, so individuals help here because they expect some tangible reward.

The fourth phase is called the normative behavior phase. What happens here? Individual help is important because they know the norms about helping and are concerned about social approval. It is similar to awareness stage like in Cialdini's model. So, here the child internalizes the social norms. So, individuals help because they understand the social norms of helping. They are concerned about social approval because they know that if they help, there can be social approval, and if they don't help, there may be some social rejection. That is what normative behavior is; the child behaves according to the norms of society, the family, and so on. For example, a child who helps his friend with homework, when the teacher sees him doing so, is an example of this motivation. Thus, the child will help another child. Let's say, in doing homework, especially when the teacher is present, it's just to get approval from the teacher, because the child understands that's the norm or that's what the teacher expects. So, that's called normative behavior.

The phase 5 is called the generalized reciprocity. Individuals help because they believe that the recipient would and should reciprocate. This individual who helps with the described motivation can feel sympathetic distress for others in need and internalizes the rules of society, which prescribe helping behavior. In the earlier reciprocal stage, there was a clear expectation that if I gave a toy, I was expecting ice cream or something in return. Now in this phase, it is a little more mature that some general reciprocity principles will be there to help the child with the belief that the other should also reciprocate maybe now or later. There may be some feelings of sympathetic distress in this stage, and some internalization of the social norms might have taken place.

The sixth phase is called altruistic behavior. As we have already discussed, when we use the term altruistic, we are referring to when somebody helps without any expectation in return. So that's typically called altruistic behavior.

In this stage, individuals help because they want to benefit others. Helping increases their self-esteem and satisfaction in life. In this stage, one is not expecting anything in return from the external world. But helping happens because of some internal satisfaction or internalization of all the norms, as it is good to help and so on.

So although an individual does not expect anything in return, self-satisfaction, or raised self-esteem may be experienced. That is one aspect, as many people help because they feel satisfied with it or they feel an increase in self-esteem because they believe they have done something good, which in turn helps in improving moods and emotions. So these are the specific stages that are discussed in this model. These are the two models that are very similar in terms of how developmentally a child changes regarding helping behavior. Only the names of the stages and specific details are a little different.

Now, let us look into the concept of social learning in prosocial behaviors. Now, as we have already said, prosocial behavior or helping behavior is, by large, mostly learned behavior. A child learns from society, from looking at other people, and so on. This is typically a matter of socialization and the learning process. That is why many people may not enter into a lot of these advanced stages that we discussed if they do not learn it. A lot of these internalization cases where no altruistic behavior may occur, a child may never enter into those stages if they do not learn it.

So, that is why social learning plays a very important role in the case of prosocial behavior. Three important concepts that are related to social learning can further explain how social learning plays a role in terms of prosocial behavior. One is through direct reinforcement, the second is observing models, and the third is verbal instruction. These are the three important components of social learning that can explain helping behavior in much more detail.

The first is called direct reinforcement; here, reinforcement is typically used in the sense of reward or anything that increases the probability of a behavior. So, children learn to help through rewards and punishments. Many times, in society, helping behaviors are typically rewarded. The child learns that this is something good, and people expect that when there are such behaviors, they are rewarded with praise or some tangible reward and hence it is to be repeated again and again.

This is how a child learns, for example, rewarding children with praise or small tokens for helping increases their future helpfulness. Typically, a lot of studies indicate that rewards can increase the future probability of a behavior; however, material rewards like toys can undermine intrinsic motivation, reducing spontaneous helping. However, giving a very specific material reward can reduce intrinsic motivation. Then the child will become dependent on receiving only concrete rewards. Only then will the child help others.

Dependence on very concrete external rewards may sometimes reduce intrinsic or internal motivation to help. Not all kinds of rewards may be good in that sense. Social rewards like praise are more effective and long-lasting, than tangible rewards; this is what research shows: rewards can facilitate the process of prosocial behavior.

We learn by looking at other people's models—in a sense, whoever the model is: parents, adults, authority figures, and so on. A lot of things we learn by observing other people. Similarly, we also learn helping or prosocial behavior, by observing other people. So, children learn by observing helpful or altruistic models, such as parents or media figures.

Nowadays, children are also hugely influenced by social media, television, and so on. All these things also influence children, not just the actual social situations. So parents who model prosocial behavior and foster secure attachment raise children who are more empathetic and helpful. If a parent shows helping behavior and empathetic behavior, the child will also follow that. They also see, observe, and learn. So, typically, actions speak louder than words; initially, the child learns by looking at actions—what kind of actions people are doing, not just what they say. And later, over time, both behavior and verbal messages of the model also influence what the model says, which also becomes important later on. So prosocial television programs can also increase children's helpfulness. Television programs reflect real-life social situations.

So whatever behavior they see around them, they internalize it. This is how they learn things, including prosocial behaviors. Verbal instruction can also be helpful in terms of prosocial behavior, which is a part of social learning. Direct instructions and moral exhortations like preaching can effectively teach children to help with the general message that the value of helping is more impactful than specific instruction. Verbal instruction can also be helpful in this context. Specifically, the research also shows internal attributions whenever this verbal instruction is accompanied by internal attributions. For example, when you say to a child that you are a helpful person rather than saying that you help because I told you to do so. This is an external thing because you are helping only because somebody told you to do so. This may not work, but on the other hand, when you say to somebody, "You are a helpful person," that means it is an internal thing.

This is who you are as a person. So, it becomes much more effective than external praise. So, internal attributions are much more helpful. When children attribute their helpful actions to internal causes, such as "I help because I am a helpful person," they are more likely to help in the future because they will make it a part of their identity and that is much more impactful in that regard. For example, some research by Grusek and Radler found that telling 8-year-olds you are a helpful person increases their subsequent prosocial behavior, but the same statement had little effect on 5-year-olds. This suggests that younger

children may not yet fully understand or internalize concepts. So when two young children are involved, they may not understand when you say you are a helpful person or any external things; certain age-related maturities are also required. So, an eight-year-old could understand this difference. This is how the social learning process or different processes involved in social learning can influence helpful or prosocial behavior.

Now let us look at some specific strategies that we can inculcate within ourselves or in terms of teaching children, in promoting pro-social behavior and kindness. What kind of strategies and interventions can we implement? Some of the strategies will come from things that we have already discussed, as these all originate from the theories and experiments that were conducted. We very briefly talk about some of the factors that can promote prosocial behavior. These are reinforcement and reward, modeling and observational learning, teaching empathy and perspective-taking, induction and reason-based discipline, encouraging cooperative activities, creating a prosocial environment, attributional strategies, and community and cultural involvement.

Let's look very briefly at each of them and how they can promote prosocial behavior. The first ones are reinforcement and reward. We have already touched upon that in social learning. When we reward prosocial behavior, it increases their likelihood.

So, anything that is rewarded generally their future probability increases. Any behavior that is rewarded increases the probability of the same behavior in the future. So, similarly, this is true for prosocial behavior. Social rewards such as praise are more effective, as we have already said, than material rewards because if you give very specific material rewards, then the child will become dependent on those rewards. They will only help when they receive such rewards.

So, that becomes very problematic, and intrinsic motivation decreases. So, praising a child for sharing toys with a peer reinforces the behavior and encourages future sharing. While tangible rewards can be initially important for a smaller age group to encourage prosocial behavior, they may undermine intrinsic motivation. As we said, when it is overused, children may come to expect rewards and stop helping when rewards are not present. So, for example, a child who receives a toy for helping may only help when a reward is offered, not out of genuine concern for others.

So, their behavior becomes contingent on the reward, not on the actual interest or motivation. So, this is an important factor. Second is about modeling and observational learning, which we have discussed already. When we look at other people helping and it is rewarded, the child also learns this is something expected and is something good and desirable. They also repeat that behavior.

So children learn prosocial behavior by observing others, particularly parents, teachers, and peers. Consistent modeling of helpful actions is crucial. So, when they look at it consistently, people are rewarded for helping, they internalize that this is something good. Inconsistent things may not impact. So, for example, if they see their parents are doing volunteering and charity work, a child will also likely internalize that.

The prosocial television programs and stories can also serve as effective models. Research shows that children exposed to prosocial media content exhibit increased cooperation and generosity. So watching a TV show where, for example, a character helps others can inspire children to act similarly. Children are nowadays more influenced by the media than by the real world. So whatever they are observing in the media, especially if that is rewarded, they will internalize those things and learn from there as well. Now teaching empathy and perspective-taking to children can also improve their empathy and make them more sensitive to the needs of other people, as well as promote helping behavior.

Teaching children to recognize and understand others' emotions fosters prosocial behavior; activities like role-playing or discussing others' feelings can enhance this empathy. If children are engaged in such activities, they are taught how others feel about different situations and emotions. Role-playing exercises in schools and other activities help children understand how someone else is feeling when they play the role of that person; all these things can enhance empathy and prosocial behavior. For example, asking a child, "How would you feel if someone took your toy?" helps them to understand the impact of their actions. The child will at least reflect on what kind of feeling he or she is more likely to experience in such a situation and understand how other children are feeling from whom was the toy taken. So, this kind of exercise through instructions and role-playing can enhance perspective-taking and empathy and is more likely to increase prosocial behavior. Now, perspective-taking exercises encouraging children to see situations from another's perspective which can promote altruistic behavior. For example, a teacher might ask students to imagine how a new classmate feels and brainstorm ways to make them feel welcome. So these kinds of perspective-taking exercises, how others will feel in a particular situation and how to help people in different emotional situations, can enhance a child's empathy, which ultimately promotes prosocial behavior.

Now, induction and reason-based discipline are two important factors that can promote prosocial behavior. What that means is when we talk about inductive discipline, we are talking about an approach that involves explaining the consequences of actions and encouraging empathy. So you are not just directly punishing and abusing a child; rather, you are trying to explain the consequences of an action. What will happen if they engage in this kind of action? It is more effective than punitive methods, where you just punish a

child or withdraw love from that child, which may not work in the long term. For example, instead of punishing a child for not sharing, a parent might say, "How do you think your friend felt when you didn't share?" Sharing makes others happy.

So basically, you ask the child to reflect on the consequences of their actions. We can also teach children to be more reflective about the things they are doing. Moral reasoning also sometimes helps where we discuss the moral principles behind prosocial behavior, which helps children internalize these values. For example, explaining why helping a classmate with homework is the right thing to do can help them understand the moral reasons behind it; they are more likely to be kind and helpful to others. If they don't understand, and you just punish them, they may not grasp why you are punishing them or what the necessity of it is. Doing something where they understand the reason, automatically they will do it more,

The next is encouraging cooperative activities; that is where a child learns others' perspectives, learns to help others, shares with others, and collectively does something. That is where school can play a very important role because that is where children do a lot of cooperative activities. Collaborative task group activities that require cooperation, such as team projects and games, promote prosocial behavior by emphasizing shared goals and mutual support. When children understand that they cannot succeed in situations where collective efforts are needed, they learn to understand each other and try to see from others' perspectives, and this is how they learn to help and share with others. For example, a classroom activity where students work together to build a model encourages teamwork, collaboration, and so on.

The more they work in such situations, the more likely they are to develop this mindset of helping. Sometimes peer tutoring, where older students help younger ones with academics, fosters empathy. So if you tutor the younger children or those in your age group, , such activities also promote empathy, a sense of responsibility, and pro-social behavior. Now, creating a prosocial environment is ultimately important because the child learns from the environment. So, if we are able to create a collective environment in society or our home, where a child learns, that environment will automatically help them learn things.

So, creating a prosocial environment is very important. That is where school and family environment can play a very important role. School and classroom culture are very important. School can promote pro-social behavior by creating a culture of kindness and inclusion. This includes setting clear expectations for respectful behavior and recognizing acts of kindness. The school generally tries to do that, and a lot of activities can enhance the whole environment of kind behavior. A kindness board where, for example, students can post notes about helping acts they have witnessed in the school would be beneficial.

That can also promote helpful behavior in the school. The family environment is obviously very important; parents who model prosocial behavior and create a supportive, nurturing home environment raise children who are more likely to be helpful in nature. The next one is about the attributional strategy that I think we touched upon a little bit earlier as well. It basically talks about how internal attribution plays a very important role in encouraging children to see themselves as inherently helpful in the context of long-term pro-social behavior. It is better to help a child realize that they are inherently helpful by nature; they are not helping for some external reason, but rather because they are naturally helpful.

Helpfulness comes from within, not because of external reasons, which is also referred to as internal attribution. For example, we already talked about telling a child, "You are a kind person." Because you have shared something, you say you are a kind person, which reinforces your self-concept as a helper, creating an identity of a helpful person. For example, a teacher might say, "You are the kind of person who always helps others," to encourage continued pro-social behavior.

By this statement, the teacher is making an internal attribution to the child, which will motivate them to do that again. So in that context, the natural conclusion we can draw from here is that avoiding external attribution and overemphasizing external rewards can reduce intrinsic motivation. Therefore, this internal attribution is very important. The last one is community and cultural involvement, which is part of the broader socio-cultural context, such as involving children in community service projects like cleaning a park or visiting nursing homes teaches the value of helping others or helping in society.

For example, a school-organized food drive encourages students to contribute to their community. All these activities can help them understand the value of this. Cultural practices that emphasize cooperation and shared responsibilities tend to raise more prosocial children. So overall, the culture of the society is also very important. A child slowly internalizes that culture.

So if, in a society, the overall culture is to be more helpful, then the child is most likely to pick up that message. These are some things that we can keep in mind in terms of training children or even for ourselves; all these intervention aspects can be very helpful in promoting prosocial behavior. So, in conclusion, promoting prosocial behaviors is a multifaceted approach that may combine reinforcement, modeling, empathy training, inductive discipline, and environmental support. All these factors can collectively enhance performance. So, this strategy not only benefits individuals but also contributes to a more compassionate and cooperative society because individuals only collectively make up society. If individuals are compassionate, kind, and prosocial in nature; society will automatically become that. This is all about some of the interventional aspects of prosocial behavior, so with this, I stop here. Thank you.