Altruism: Kindness begets kindness

Description

One of the ideas that has always fascinated me is altruism within random groups. The idea that if you do a good deed and others see it, they will also be more likely to do a good deed.

I have been testing this idea on my drive into work for a few months now. In a totally non scientific way, I have been alternately allowing people to cross past me at a junction and not letting them. When I let them cross, I keep an eye on the car behind me to see if they then let the next person through.

I would estimate that about 7 times out of 10, the person behind will let the next car through. When I don't do it, then the car behind almost always follows suit and won't let the someone past.

I got me to thinking if there is a psychological study on this out there and low and behold discovered something called the "Multiplier Effect". An article at Psychology Today talks about research that suggests generosity is contagious.

> The researchers actually set up a game where selfishness made more sense than cooperation, and in spite of this, acts of giving "tripled over the course of the experiment by other subjects who are directly or indirectly influenced to contribute more," wrote political scientist James Fowler of the University of California, San Diego, and medical sociologist Nicholas Christakis of Harvard University.
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> *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* March 8 2010

So, if you want to get people to act in an altruistic or philanthropic way, you can help the process by demonstrating acts of altruism and generosity that they can see – it may just lead to more! Hell, why not just try being nicer in general – we could do with more that in our world right now – help make the world a better place.

Category

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Tags

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