

Summary of Situational Factors and Psychological Processes that Determine Whether a Person will be helped. (Dovidio)

Copyright © 2006 The Social Psychology of Prosocial Behavior by Dovidio, Piliavin, Schroeder, Penner.
Reproduced by permission of Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, a division of Taylor & Francis Group.

Decision Steps	Possible Influences	Impact
Notice the Event	Clarity and vividness Stimulus Overload	Clearer and more vivid events are more likely to be noticed. Excess environmental stimulation reduces the likelihood that the event will be noticed.
Interpret the event as requiring help	Perceptual cues Informational social influence Relationship to the person in need High costs for helping	Events that involve more cues of another person's need are more likely to be interpreted as situations requiring help. Particularly in perceptually unclear (ambiguous) situations, the behavior of others will define whether help is required. People are more likely to recognize the need of others with whom they are closer. People may resolve the high cost for helping-high cost for no help dilemma by reinterpreting the situation as one not requiring assistance.
Assume Personal Responsibility	Immediate and general norms Presence of Others Focusing Responsibility Relationship to the person in need. High costs for helping.	Norms affect whether people will feel that they should help. The opportunity to come to believe that other people can help allows a person to diffuse responsibility. People are more likely to take action when they are in positions of explicit responsibility. People are more likely to accept responsibility for helping others with whom they are closer. People may resolve the high cost for helping – high cost for no help dilemma by diffusing responsibility for helping.
Choose a Way to Help	Knowledge and training	People who are more knowledgeable about the situation can better evaluate alternative courses of action.
Implement the Help	Training and Experience	Bystanders who are well trained are more likely to help safely and effectively.