

Why do we risk our lives for others?

Just over two years ago, my home city of Manchester suffered a terrorist attack. Waiting in the arena foyer after an Ariana Grande concert, a young man detonated a bomb strapped to his chest, killing 22 people and injuring several hundred. But in the midst of the senseless savagery of the attack, there were many stories of heroism and selflessness.

An off-duty doctor who was walking away from the venue ran back into the foyer to help the victims. A woman who saw crowds of confused and frightened teenagers guided around 50 of them to the safety of a nearby hotel where she shared her phone number on social media so that parents could come and pick their children up.

Taxi drivers across the city switched off their meters and took concert-goers and other members of the public home. As one paramedic at the scene commented: "There was an unbelievable amount of people doing what they could to help ... I saw people pulling together in a way I have never seen before."

Such acts of **altruism** are almost always a feature of emergency situations. In a London street in 2015, a cyclist was trapped under the wheel of a double-decker bus. A crowd of around 100 people gathered together, and in an amazing act of coordinated altruism, lifted the bus so that the man could be freed.

When we help strangers (or animals), there must always be some level of benefit to ourselves, such as **making us feel good about ourselves, or gaining the respect of others.**

Pure altruism is rooted in **empathy**. Empathy creates a connection that enables us to feel compassion. We can sense the suffering of others and this gives rise to an impulse to alleviate their suffering, which in turn gives rise to altruistic acts. Because we can feel with other people, we are motivated to help them when they are in need.

Heroism (a definition)

- Acting voluntarily for the service of others who are in need, whether it is for an individual, a group, or a community
- Performing actions without any expectation of reward or external gain
- Recognition and acceptance of the potential risk or sacrifice made by taking heroic actions

12 Characteristics of Heroism

- Bravery
- Conviction
- Courage
- Determination
- Helpful
- Honesty
- Inspirational
- Moral integrity
- Protective
- Self-sacrifice
- Selflessness
- Strength