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Social Psychology  
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## The Day of Compassion

Devoting an entire day to compassion was a fantastic, positive experience. It's staggering to think about how much good we all did considering the thousands and thousands of students in our Social Psychology class.

Compassion to me is devoting my positive energy to benefit others, not just myself. I took the challenge of a *day* of compassion quite literally. To raise money for the Salvation Army, I challenged myself to complete 1,000 sponsored push-ups over the 24-hour period.

The Salvation Army is an international charitable organization known mainly for its work with homeless people. In addition to this, they also help with aged care, support victims of domestic violence, help people overcome addiction, provide emergency services, and offer support for low income families.

I chose the Salvation Army because I can see a lot of the fantastic work that it does locally. It's always on the streets helping people in need, and I trust it to use donations mindfully and responsibly. Our course did a great job of pointing out that there are people who need help; contrary to what people might think based on the fundamental attribution error, many people become poor or get addicted to drugs due to extremely tough situations rather than dispositional factors (Lecture 2.2).

My target was to raise \$1,000 AUD for the Salvos by being aggregately sponsored \$1.00 per push-up. I asked my clients, friends, and family to help out. This effort was also going to be a physical challenge for me because I had never completed more than 30 push-ups in a set before. Additionally, as a Fitness Coach, I thought it would be a great way to set a positive example for my clients in both a physical and philanthropic sense (drawing from research on modeling, source credibility, liking, and normative influence).

### **The Response Others Had**

To write that I was overwhelmed by the support I received is an understatement. First, one of my clients, Grant, said he'd do push-ups, too, and he asked his clients to donate. Second, my girlfriend and colleague Kasey got in on the action when one of her coaching clients offered to donate if *she* did push-ups.

When asking people to sponsor me, I explained that others were sponsoring me between 2 to 5c per push-up (emphasizing a descriptive norm, in keeping with Reading 2.3 and Guest Lecture 2.7). I also used the "even-a-penny-will-help" technique by adding that even a contribution of 1c per push-up would really be a help to someone in need (Lecture 2.8).

I was incredibly surprised to find that nearly everyone I asked sponsored me. I received multiple donations of 10c, two of my extremely kind clients sponsored me 40c, and one client sponsored me at 50c per push-up!

### **How the Day Went**

Having so much money on the line for such a great cause motivated me to compete all 1,000 push-ups. The plan was to do 100 sets of 10. I got up before 4:00 am to get a head start before work and had 150 done before I started work at 6:00 am. During the day, my clients got involved as I continued, and I had 560 done before lunch. I had a nap during my usual break, and when it came time to get back to work, I'd done 800. Grant, Kasey, and I ended up finishing around the same time, 8:00 pm, with fairly sore muscles.

Together, we ended up raising \$6,500!

### **Analysis of the Experience**

Getting back to the topic of compassion, I thought that the best feeling would come from raising so much money for the Salvation Army, but I was wrong. Organizing the program and physically meeting the challenge was completely overshadowed by the feeling that I'd inspired so much generosity in others. I'm delighted that my sponsors followed the social responsibility norm, helping those who need it regardless of any future exchanges (Reading 5.1). I am very grateful to those who contributed, and I'd love to do something like this on a regular basis.

I met with a Salvation Army representative this week, and she was extremely appreciative. In fact, the Salvos want to put a photo of me on their Facebook page to recognize my contribution and encourage others to do something similar (the Salvation Army's effort to match positive *injunctive norms* with *descriptive norms*, as described in Reading 2.3).

Looking back, I cherished my Day of Compassion. In addition to the obvious benefits of helping the needy, I loved seeing the goodwill that was generated among those involved; everyone who was a part of the effort really enjoyed the day. It was great to bring some positivity into our gym as well.

From my experience with Professor Plous' Social Psychology class, I believe that if we were to educate people about the fundamental attribution error and show them that poverty and addiction aren't simply a function of laziness and other character flaws, society as a whole would benefit immensely.

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Related links:

- [Salvation Army International](#)
- [Facebook Page of Salvation Army Australia](#)
- [Secrets from the Science of Persuasion](#)

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**The Salvation Army Australia** Hi Jeananne, Cheryl and Ashlee. Try <http://eftposgiveback.com.au>. Thanks for letting us know! – ED

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**The Salvation Army Australia**  
September 12

Meet Cambo. He's a personal trainer from Melbourne whose heart's as big as his arms. Cambo wanted to do something to help people who were doing it tough, so he thought up a creative way to help. He set himself a challenge of completing 1,000 push-ups in a day, and invited others to sponsor him. 1,000 push-ups later and a massive \$6,500 was raised for The Salvation Army! Thanks Cambo! And thanks to all your wonderful clients and friends for their generous donations – big thumbs up!

Have a great weekend everyone!

**The Salvation Army Australia**  
September 8

The Salvation Army's new world leader, General André Cox, has recently joined Facebook and Twitter! Like him on Facebook at <http://on.fb.me/15cmPUV> and follow him on Twitter at <http://bit.ly/183qrUN>.

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