Supplemental Online Materials

I. Demographic Questionnaire

What is your age?

_____

What gender do you most identify with?

- Male
- Female
- Other (specify) _____
- Prefer not to say

How many years of education do you have, excluding kindergarten?

_____

In what language are you most fluent?

Choose one or more ethnicities that you identify as:

- White
- Black of African American
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian or pacific Islander
- Indigenous
- Hispanic/Latino
- Other _____
- Prefer not to say

In what city are you currently located?

_____

Are you currently or have you ever been diagnosed with a mental illness?

- Yes _____
- No
- Prefer not to say

II. Measures and Ratings Excluded from Paper Analyses

Possession of a similar past memory –

Did the [dog] scenario remind you of a past memory of your own?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Perceived Stress Scale – A four item scale quantifying participants' experience of stress over the last month. Participants are asked to respond from 1 (Never) to 5 (Often) to items such as "In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?" (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983)

UCLA Loneliness Scale – A three item scale quantifying how much participants feel lonely. Participants are asked to respond from Hardly ever (1) to Often (3) to items such as "How often do you feel that you lack companionship?" (Hughes et al., 2004)

Self-Concept Clarity Scale – A 12-item scale quantifying the clarity, coherence, and stability of one's self concept. Participants are asked to rate from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree) their agreement with statements such as "My beliefs about myself often conflict with one another" (reverse scored) or "In general, I have a clear sense of who I am and what I am." (Campbell et al., 1996)

III. Simulation Instructions and Examples in both conditions

Simulate the Scenario

In this task, you will be presented with four short scenarios describing an event that someone is experiencing. For each scenario, please imagine the event in as much detail as you can. It is up to you to add in details so that the scenario seems realistic, but you want to imagine things like what is happening, what things look like, what people are thinking and / or feeling, and so on.

After forming this imagined event in mind, describe the event in those details using the text box provided. You will have up to 2 minutes to enter your description. Please do your best to use all of the time provided. If you finish early, please wait. Here is an excerpt from an example scenario and example written description.

Scenario: While riding the train, this person is harassed by other passengers.

Here is an example of a written description: It is dark outside and the train is empty except for that girl being harassed by two older boys. The girl is in her early 20s and she is probably very scared. She is wishing for the train to speed up so it reaches her destination faster. The two boys are close to their 30s and keep saying inappropriate things to the girl. They are getting closer and closer to her….

Simulate a Helping Interaction

In this task, you will be presented with four short scenarios describing an event that someone is experiencing. For each scenario, please imagine a detailed scenario of **helping the person in need within the event** in as much detail as you can. It is up to you to add in details so that the scenario seems realistic, but you want to imagine things like what is happening, what things look like, what people are thinking and / or feeling, and so on. After forming this imagined event in mind, describe the event in those details using the text box provided.

You will have up to 2 minutes to enter your description. Please do your best to use all of the time provided. If you finish early, please wait.

Here is an excerpt from an example scenario and example written description.

Scenario: While riding the train, this person is harassed by other passengers.

Here is an example of a written description: It is dark outside and the train is empty except for a girl being harassed by two older men. I see a girl in her early 20s looking very scared and uncomfortable, as two men in their 30s say inappropriate things to her. I am afraid to help, because I don't want to get hurt, but I can't watch them bother her anymore. I walk over to her and ask her if she is okay and if I can sit with her. She says yes, and we begin to talk about other things. The men lose interest, but I stay with her until she reaches her stop....

IV. Average Levels of Measured Outcome Variables in Each Vignette

	Affective Response		Affect Attribution		Personal Distress		Empathic Concern		Willingness to Help	
Exp 1	*M*	*SE*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
1. Injured on the stairs	5.29	0.09	6.05	0.08	4.60	0.10	4.79	0.09	6.42	0.07
2. Lost dog	5.21	0.10	6.13	0.08	4.67	0.11	4.98	0.08	5.97	0.09
3. Parent is very ill	6.11	0.08	6.52	0.07	5.25	0.10	5.55	0.08	6.22	0.08
4. Allergic reaction	4.94	0.11	6.00	0.08	4.48	0.10	4.38	0.09	6.06	0.09
Exp 2										
1. Injured on the stairs	5.40	0.08	5.98	0.08	4.52	0.10	4.64	0.10	6.26	0.08
2. Lost dog	5.23	0.10	5.89	0.09	4.51	0.11	4.98	0.10	5.92	0.10
3. Parent is very ill	6.08	0.08	6.36	0.08	4.97	0.10	5.44	0.09	6.02	0.09
4. Allergic reaction	5.25	0.09	5.90	0.09	4.62	0.10	4.45	0.10	6.16	0.08
Exp 3										
1. Injured on the stairs	5.56	0.05	6.18	0.04	4.57	0.06	4.81	0.06	6.33	0.04
2. Lost dog	5.51	0.06	6.15	0.04	4.62	0.07	5.12	0.06	6.02	0.06
3. Parent is very ill	6.13	0.05	6.61	0.03	5.06	0.06	5.60	0.05	6.10	0.05
4. Allergic reaction	5.33	0.06	6.04	0.05	4.58	0.06	4.51	0.06	6.07	0.05

V. Zero-order correlations between measured variables

SOM Table 1. Zero-Order Correlations of Measured Variables

Experiment 1

	Affective Response	Affective Attribution	Personal Distress	Empathic Concern	Willingness to Help	Psychological Closeness	Immersion
Affective Attribution	.551**						
Personal Distress	.512**	.172**					
Empathic Concern	.460**	.153**	.657**				
Willingness to Help	.414**	.224**	.342**	.330**			
Psychological Closeness	.391**	.101**	.423**	.451**	.397**		
Immersion	.456**	.169**	.526**	.500**	.368**	.562**	
Familiarity	.143**	-0.017	.172**	.208**	.238**	.458**	.470**

Experiment 2

Affective Attribution	.586**						
Personal Distress	.514**	.335**					
Empathic Concern	.486**	.362**	.551**				
Willingness to Help	.498**	.370**	.395**	.388**			
Psychological Closeness	.412**	.179**	.378**	.440**	.384**		
Immersion	.462**	.353**	.390**	.407**	.448**	.529**	
Familiarity	.222**	.096**	.165**	.264**	.245**	.505**	.450**
Experiment 3							
Affective Attribution	.604**						
Personal Distress	.570**	.361**					
Empathic Concern	.552**	.383**	.559**				
Willingness to Help	.519**	.415**	.407**	.438**			
Psychological Closeness	.400**	.239**	.381**	.443**	.380**		
Immersion	.432**	.302**	.406**	.458**	.428**	.545**	
Familiarity	.190**	.078**	.146**	.244**	.237**	.468**	.524**

VI. Empathic Concern and Personal Distress Analyses Without Controlling

The MLMs in each Experiment which predict empathic concern or personal distress, without the "alternative" empathic response entered as a control, are summarized in SOM Table X. A few differences emerged without the control strategy; first, in Experiment 1, we see that simulating the scenario significantly predicts both personal distress *and empathic concern,* as compared to a control condition. This is very nearly replicated in Experiment 3, in which the simulate scenario condition shows marginally higher empathic concern when compared to the control condition. Second, in Experiment 2, the higher reported empathic concern in the simulate helping condition, as compared to the simulate the scenario condition, becomes only marginally significant when the model does not control for personal distress. However, it is likely these changes are picking up on shared variance between empathic concern and personal distress, and not each specific response, and so we interpret them with caution.

SOM Table 2. MLMs predicting Empathic Concern and Personal Distress without controlling for alternative empathic response, across Experiments

A. Experiment 1

Personal Distress	Est	95% CI	t	p
Simulate Scenario (ref. Control)	0.777	0.461–1.092	t(212)=4.810	<0.001
Gender	0.164	-0.152–0.480	t(212)=1.013	0.312
Age	0.025	-0.008–0.057	t(212)=1.451	0.148
Empathic Concern	Est	95% CI		p
Simulate Scenario (ref. Control)	0.357	0.081–0.633	t(212)=2.529	0.012
Gender	0.185	-0.091–0.462	t(212)=1.310	0.192

Age	0.025	-0.003–0.054	t(212)=1.746	0.082
B. Experiment 2				
Personal Distress	Est	95% CI		p
Simulate Scenario (ref. Control)	-0.067	-0.393–0.260	t(197)=-0.398	0.691
Gender	-0.026	-0.356–0.304	t(197)=-0.154	0.878
Age	-0.005	-0.039–0.029	t(197)=-0.280	0.78
Empathic Concern	Est	95% CI		p
Simulate Scenario (ref. Control)	0.315	-0.003–0.632	t(197)=1.937	0.054
Gender	0.116	-0.205–0.436	t(197)=0.704	0.482
Age	0.065	0.032–0.098	t(197)=3.826	<0.001
C. Experiment 3				
Personal Distress	Est	95% CI		p
Simulate Scenario (ref. Control)	0.520	0.273–0.767	t(567)=4.114	<0.001
Simulate Helping (ref. Control)	0.515	0.262–0.768	t(566)=3.977	<0.001
Simulate Helping (ref. Scenario)	-0.173	-0.384–0.038	t(562)=-1.607	0.109
Gender	0.003	-0.204–0.210	t(566)=0.030	0.976
Age	-0.021	-0.042–0.000	t(570)=-1.933	0.054
Empathic Concern	Est	95% CI		p
Simulate Scenario (ref. Control)	0.021	-0.014–0.435	t(565)=1.834	0.067
Simulate Helping (ref. Control)	0.525	0.295–0.754	t(565)=4.466	<0.001
Simulate Helping (ref. Scenario)	0.314	0.076–0.552	t(565)=2.583	0.010
Gender	0.205	0.017–0.393	t(565)=2.136	0.033
Age	0.024	0.005–0.043	t(565)=2.446	0.015