

Empathy Is Too Much Work for Many of Us

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Whatever your politics, few would take issue with President [Barack Obama](#)'s eloquent endorsement of empathy. At the 2016 Democratic convention, he [urged Americans](#) "to see ourselves in each other," and then to act accordingly.

So why do we step around the homeless person without giving him a second thought? Or ignore appeals to assist refugees, or victims of natural disasters?

[New research](#) offers a surprising answer: Empathizing with others takes effort, and, generally speaking, we'd rather not expend the energy.

"There is a common assumption that people stifle feelings of empathy because they could be depressing or costly," [said](#) lead author [C. Daryl Cameron](#), a psychologist at Penn State University, in announcing the findings. "But we found that people primarily just don't want to make the mental effort to feel empathy toward others, even when it involves feeling positive emotions."