illnesses and conditions, and how likely they would be to donate money to fight the cause. As shown in Figure 12.1, participants were quite willing to give money to fight afflictions viewed as largely out of one’s personal control (e.g., blindness, heart disease, cancer) but relatively unwilling to donate money to fight afflictions viewed as largely under a person’s control (e.g., obesity, child abuse, drug abuse). These findings establish that attributions of responsibility affect decisions to help (Weiner, 1993).

4. Costs of Not Helping

Finally, we must also consider the costs of not helping. These costs are most obviously related to the victim. If we fail to help, the victim is likely to suffer. But potential helpers also incur costs if they fail to help. For example, we might feel guilty or ashamed of ourselves for falling short of a high moral standard. We might also feel upset and distressed to know that someone else is suffering. In a later section of this chapter, we will see that helping is often undertaken to avoid experiencing negative emotions like these.

B. Evolutionary Models of Helping

So far, we have been discussing factors that influence helping in the immediate situation in which it occurs. Evolutionary models contend that helping behavior has also been shaped by hundreds of thousands of years of human history, and that the costs and benefits are ancient ones rather than modern ones. To understand this argument,