

Has Humanity Become Numb to Cruelty?

What Does Cruelty Even Mean?

We hear the word “cruelty” often in day-to-day conversation, and while it has a decidedly negative connotation, humans have been desensitized to the word over time. So what does it truly mean to be a cruel human being?

The **Merriam-Webster dictionary** describes the word “**Cruel**” as “*disposed to inflict pain or suffering; devoid of humane feelings.*” And digging deeper, “**Humane**” is described by Merriam-Webster as “*marked by compassion, sympathy, or consideration for humans or animals.*”

Google.com defines **Cruelty** as, “*Callous indifference to or pleasure in causing pain and suffering*” and “*behavior that causes physical or mental harm to another... whether intentionally or not.*”

So, combining these definitions we can **fully define a cruel person** as:

Someone that is capable of, and callously indifferent to, inflicting (and often enjoying inflicting) pain and suffering to harm others physically and mentally while devoid of humane feelings such as compassion, sympathy, and consideration for life.

Thesaurus.com lists **40 synonyms** for the word “**Cruelty.**” Just a few of the synonyms include:

- Barbarism
- Inhumanity
- Malice
- Persecution
- Savagery
- Torture
- Bloodthirstiness
- Depravity
- Callousness
- Wickedness
- Sadism

- Venomous
- Mercilessness

What Makes A Person Cruel?

Healthguidance.org's article "What Makes a Person Mean and Cruel?" lists the following key traits in a human being that is able to display signs of cruelty:

1. Personal Issues:

- a. Low Self Esteem
- b. Anger
- c. Stress

2. Thought Processes (which includes worldview/politics and environmental impacts)

3. Brain Chemistry/Composition

The article closes with this quote: *"In conclusion then there are many reasons why people may act mean or cruel, but the important thing to remember is that in all these cases the people are lashing out because of something wrong with them."*

Psychology.com's article titled, "The True Cause of Cruelty" references Gabriel Marcel's *Spirit of Abstraction* as a driving factor in the ability for a human being to be cruel. The Spirit of Abstraction is *"the practice of conceiving of people as functions rather than as human beings."* Basically, to **dehumanize or devalue life** and reduce it to a function.

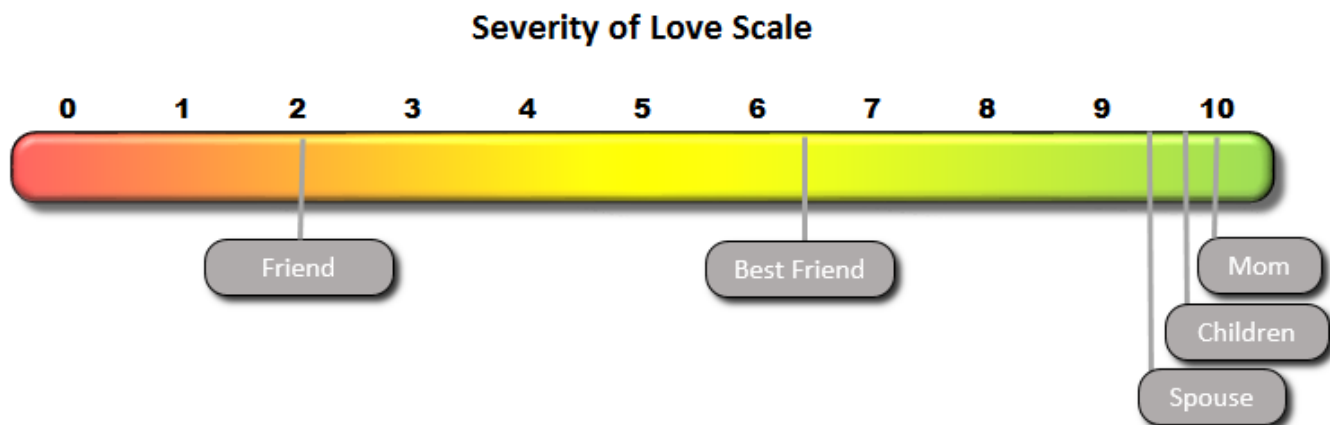
This Spirit of Abstraction is what allowed slave owners to think of slaves as tools instead of people and also what allowed Hitler's Nazi regime to attempt to eradicate the Jews because they were considered less-than-human.

Emotions and the Scale of Severity

Emotions (and therefore actions taken based on emotions) are experienced by humans on a **sliding Scale of Severity**.

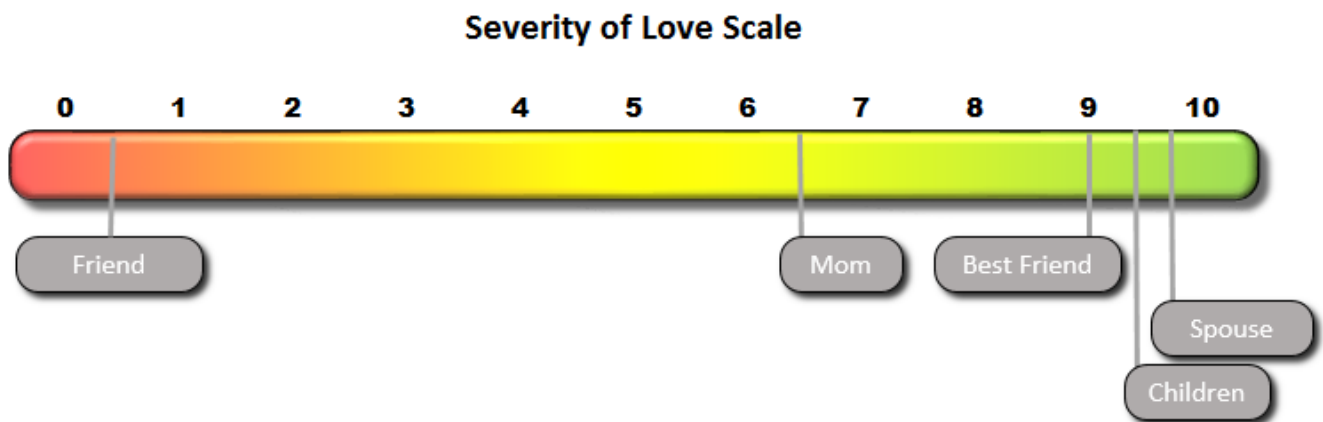
Consider the emotion love. **Love** is considered a *strong* emotion, but humans experience different severities of love.

For instance, a woman may love her best friend. She may feel an even deeper sense of love for her husband. And maybe she experiences an even deeper sense of love for her child or mother. So, she's experiencing the emotion of love for all of those people, but at different levels of severity. Her "Severity of Love" scale might look something like this:



She loves all of these people, but she loves them in different degrees of severity.

Additionally, not all people experience love with the same severity. A man had a poor relationship with his mother growing up but he has developed a deep family-like bond with his best friend. His severity of love scale might look like this:



As we can see, both the man and the woman love the same people in this example. However, they feel different *severities of love* depending on their life experiences.

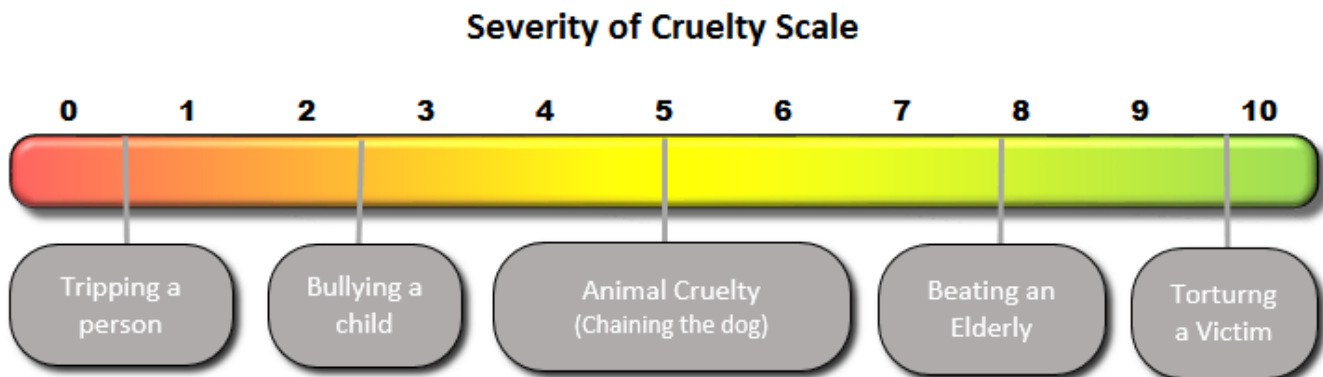
Despite **this severity, the emotion experienced for each person is love.**

While **Cruelty** is not an emotion (but instead an action *driven by* emotions), we can **graph cruelty on a similar scale of severity**. And like the previous example of love, the **level of severity can be subjective**.

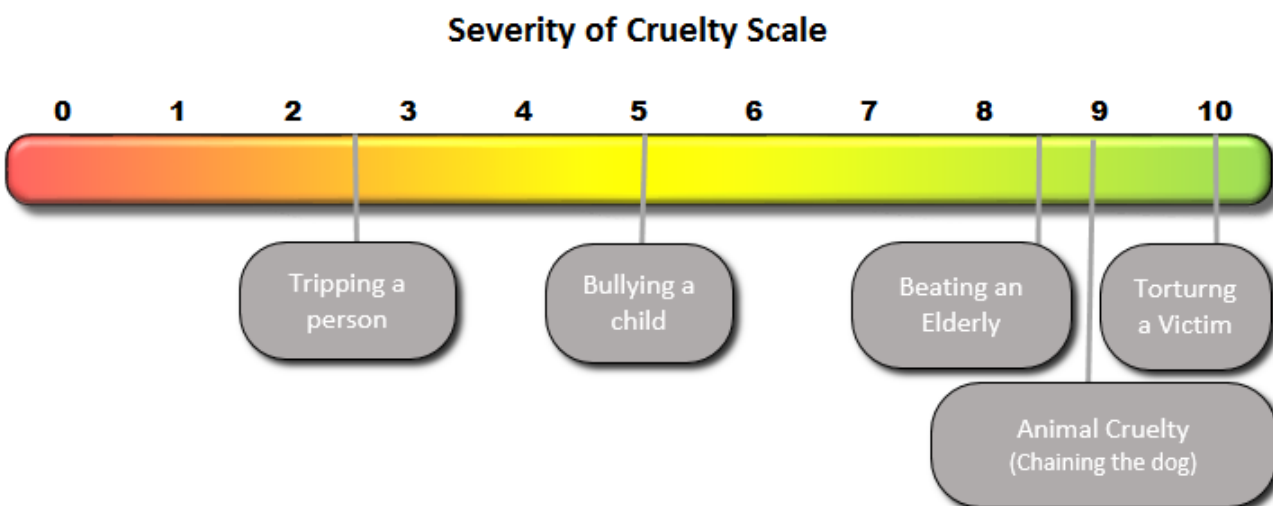
For example, consider a cruel person committing the following acts of cruelty:

- Bullying a child based on the child's physical characteristics
- Severely beating an elderly woman
- Torturing a victim
- Condemning a dog to live on a chain with little love, shelter, and other basic needs
- Tripping an unsuspecting person and mocking them when they fall

A possible Scale of Severity for how this cruel person's actions are perceived could be:



As with the example of love, this too could be subjective. For instance, an advocate for animal rights may view this person's acts with this severity scale:



As previously stated, the scales are subjective based on a variety of impacts (to include world view, religion, personal experiences, upbringing, etc.).

That said, no matter where the item falls on the scale and no matter the corresponding level of severity, all of these items are considered cruel.

Cruelty towards Animals versus ANIMALcruelty versus AnimalBLAHBLAHBLAH – The Crisis in Society Today

Cruelty towards animals (as shown in the Severity of Cruelty examples) is a type of cruelty that different people perceive in different levels of severity.

No matter how severe you may perceive it, cruelty towards animals **IS** unquestionably cruel.

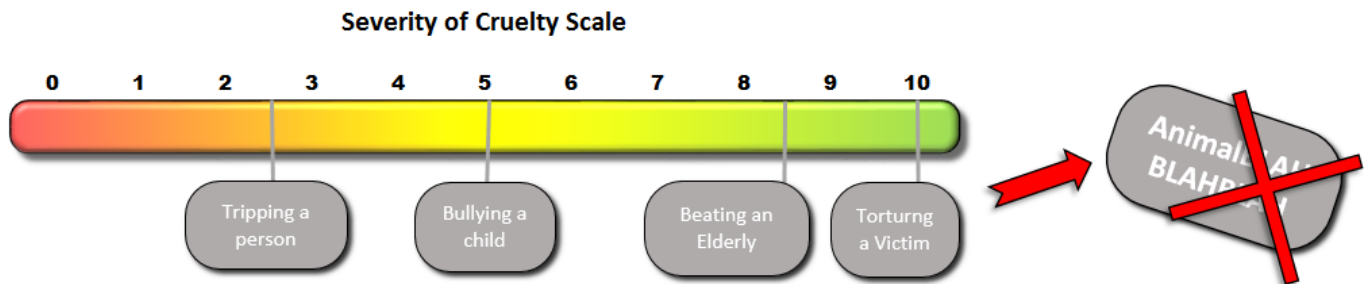
Unfortunately, in today's society this form of cruelty has become extremely desensitized in people that move "animal cruelty" down the severity scale to a lower weighting.

In fact, when an individual that is **not passionate** about cruelty towards animals (or when they have priorities that rank higher in their own minds than cruelty towards animals) hears an animal rights advocate speaking about animal cruelty, **sometimes** (due to being extremely desensitized to the concept) they are hearing the advocate say "**ANIMALcruelty**" as one word with the focus on the word "animal." And, since the subject of animals ranks lower on their mental priority list, the **word cruelty gets lumped in** and it **becomes one word for them** and they do not relate this concept with the word "cruelty" at all.

The situation **worsens** the as this person continues to hear more and more about (what they perceive as) "ANIMALcruelty." They start to **tune out the words** of the animal advocate. Instead of hearing a very real and horrific example of the cruel and inhumane treatment of an animal, the person starts to just hear "AnimalBLAHBLAHBLAHBLAH."

The situation becomes dire when government officials, to include animal control officers, start to hear "AnimalBLAHBLAHBLAHBLAH" when cruelty is occurring. This **desensitization** of the word **allows** government officials, animal control officers, and society in general to **turn a blind eye** towards **blatant and evil cruelty** occurring in their communities each and every day. Additionally, it allows them to put a **lower priority on enforcing the very laws and ordinances** that **outlaw and forbid these atrocities to occur**.

As this concept further solidifies, the severity scale of our example group of “AnimalBLAHBLAHBLAH” no longer even categorizes the cruel and inhumane treatment of animals as a form of cruelty. In fact, **their Severity Scale of Cruelty has subconsciously shifted to removing animal cruelty completely:**



This trend needs to be reversed in order for government officials, animal control officers, law enforcement, and society as a whole to increase their own priority level and views of cruelty towards animals.

To do so, the concepts outlined in this document need to be driven home so that *this* group can truly understand that cruelty (not AnimalBLAHBLAHBLAH) is occurring and **cruelty of all kinds is wrong.**

A person that is capable of being cruel to an animal is a person that is *scientifically* categorized as a **cruel person** committing a cruel act.

As we know, Animal Cruelty almost always leads to other forms of cruelty and human violence. Therefore, when law enforcement offers are called to animal cruelty cases, they should view these cases not as AnimalBLAHBLAHBLAH but as physiologically deficient human behaviors that will downward spiral if not handled immediately.

A Google search for “*animal cruelty and human violence*” turns up **2.14 million articles**. A few of those articles include:

- The Huffington Post wrote an article detailing the connection (**and natural progression**) **between Animal Cruelty and Human Violence** (https://www.huffingtonpost.com/cathy-kangas/animal-cruelty-and-human-b_2507551.html).
- The **National District Attorneys Association** has put out an **84-page .pdf** outlining the link between **Animal Cruelty and Human Violence**: <http://www.ndaa.org/pdf/The%20Link%20Monograph-2014.pdf>

In summary:

1. **Cruelty** is defined as someone that is capable of, and callously indifferent to, **inflicting** (and often enjoying inflicting) **pain and suffering to harm others** physically and mentally **while devoid of humane feelings** such as compassion, sympathy, and consideration for life.
2. **Healthguidance.org** has listed cruelty as a mental deficiency and, after defining attributes of a cruel person, summarizes with:
*“In conclusion then there are many reasons why people may act mean or cruel, but the important thing to remember is that in all these cases the people are lashing out because of **something wrong with them.**”*
3. **Psychology.com**’s article, “**The True Cause of Cruelty**” explains the **Spirit of Abstraction** as a driving factor in the ability for a human being to be cruel, defining this as “*the practice of conceiving of people as functions rather than as human beings.*” Or **dehumanizing or devaluing life** and reducing it to a function.
4. People experience/observe **cruelty** on a sliding **Scale of Severity**. And, despite varying perceptions of the severity of types of cruelty, **cruelty is cruelty**.
5. Cruelty toward animals = Cruelty.
 - a. Cruelty towards animals ≠ ANIMALcruelty
 - b. Cruelty towards animals ≠ AnimalBLAHBLAHBLAH
6. **Animal Cruelty** leads to and **escalates to further cruelty, human violence, and depravity**.
7. Government officials, animal control, law enforcement, etc. **MUST** understand these concepts in order to feel motivation to take action and enforce laws preventing the cruel and inhumane treatment of animals, which in turn keeps our society safer and happier as a whole.