The Struggle to Survive and its Effect on Moral Code

When people are faced with difficult circumstances, they are often forced to make decisions they wouldn’t normally make. During these times, if the situation calls for it, people sometimes begin to question sticking by the ethics they’ve followed for their whole lives. Many people wonder how troubling an event has to be for them to come to the point of actually breaking their moral code. When it comes to a situation as serious as struggling to survive, a person’s moral code would definitely be affected, sometimes even **nullified** entirely.

Humans are animals of routine and security, so it is natural to be changed by fear and uncertainty. In most cases, people aren’t usually used to having to struggle to survive. It is natural for there to be some sort of **attrition** to how strictly people follow their moral code when they are faced with desperate situations. When people don’t know what the future holds, they are likely to act out of fear. In an article called “The Moral Ambiguity of Looting,” the author writes, “…groups of shantytown women entered stores en masse, loaded baskets, and left without paying…” (McNeil) In normal situations, most people wouldn’t be as willing to just barge into stores and steal food. For many people, this fear of the unknown is enough to cause them to lose all their moral beliefs and do what they feel they may need to in order to survive.

When people are forced to grow up too fast, they will often tend to do things others might not consider morally right in order to survive. In an article called “Children of the Mountains Struggle to Survive,” the author talks about an eleven year old girl and how she has to take care of her mother who is a drug addict. The girl states, “‘She’s almost 50, and if I don’t get her out of this town soon, then she’ll probably die any day.” Because the girl has basically been a mother to her own mother, she hasn’t had anyone to teach her acceptable morals. In the movie Swing Kids, children in the town are essentially forced to join the Nazi army where they learn things such as physically beating people with ideas different than those of the Germans. If those children had not been forced to join the army and grow up quickly, they probably would have been able to hold onto their moral beliefs. In the book, Lord of the Flies,many of the older children have had to fill the role of adults on the island. Even though they are only around twelve years old, they realize in the beginning that they could be stuck for a while; a boy named Ralph says, “‘...this isn’t an island we might be rescued straight away’” (Golding 23) Back home, the boys had **copious** amounts of rules they had to follow; on the island now, though, they have no parents around them to make sure they stick to their best behavior, so most of them eventually forget about what they’ve always believed in. The children in all three examples have been forced to grow up to survive far too quickly, and because of this, their morals have been completely twisted.

Along with people being changed by the unknown, humans’ natural survival instinct kicks in when they are faced with desperate times. People will do anything to survive, even if it includes breaking their moral code. Others argue that even in a tough time, one still has his or her conscience. This is true to some extent; however, since the beginning of time, the strongest instinct in humans has been to survive, and in nearly every situation, one will do whatever it takes to survive. Often times, we live in a sort of dog-eat-dog world, where people have a ‘kill or be killed’ mentality. In the article called “New Wave of ‘Lost Boys’ Flee Sudan’s Lingering War,” Sudan is at war with a group of rebels, and both sides are having absolutely no mercy towards to people of the opposing side. Each group realizes that if it gives up, the other group will be able to invade and conquer completely. The author states, “…tens of thousands of Nuban soldiers, equipped with artillery, rockets, and tanks, are refusing to disarm until the government falls in Khartoum, Sudan’s capital…” (Gettleman) This is a prime example of how people will throw out their morals to survive and be on top.

The struggle to survive has an effect on one’s moral code because humans are naturally changed by fear of the unknown; human instinct along with having to grow up too quickly also have an effect on a person’s moral code during a crisis situation. Though many people may not realize it, humans do not stick to their beliefs as much as they think they do when it comes down to surviving or not.