# I'm fine—the heck with you

Don't feel bad for today's college students; they certainly don't feel for you. A new University of Michigan study has found that empathy among today's college students is about 40 percent lower than it was among their counterparts three decades ago. Researchers looked at standard personality test results for some 14,000 students going back 30 years. They found that, compared with students of the late 1970s, today's young people are far less likely to agree with statements like, "I try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective." Researchers theorize that the rise of social media is one contributing factor, since it leads to having large groups of disposable "friends" with whom one has superficial relationships. "The ease of having friends online might make people more likely to just tune out when they don't feel like responding to other people's problems," study co-author Edward O'Brien tells *USA Today*. Other possible factors: violent video games and reality TV shows that emphasize ruthless competition, and the hypercompetitive atmosphere now found in some high schools and colleges.