

Appeal to Desperation

Description: Arguing that your conclusion, solution, or proposition is right based on the fact that something must be done, and your solution is "something."

Logical Form:

Something must be done.

X is something.

Therefore, X must be done.

Example #1:

These are desperate times, and desperate times call for desperate measures. Therefore, I propose we exterminate all baby seals. It is obvious that something must be done, and this is something.

Explanation: No reason is given for why we should exterminate all baby seals. Perhaps the reason is that they all have a virus that will spread to the human race and kill us all, perhaps exterminating all baby seals will leave more fish for humans, or perhaps exterminating all baby seals will be a way to put an end to the clubbing of baby seals—but without these or any other reasons given, we have nothing to go on except the desperation that something must be done.

Example #2:

Chairman: We are out of money come Monday. Any suggestions?

Felix: I suggest we take what money we do have, and go to Disney World.

Chairman: Any other suggestions?

(silence)

Chairman: Since there are no other suggestions, Disney World it is.

Explanation: Desperate times don't necessarily call for any measure over no measure. Many times, no action is better than a bad action. Blowing what money is left on over-priced soft drinks and what appears to be rotisserie ostrich legs, may not be a wise choice -- especially when investors are involved.

Exception: At times, especially in situations where time is limited, taking some action will be better than taking no action, and in the absence of better reasoning, the best available reason might have to do. However, a reason, no matter how poor, should still be given -- not simply a conclusion.

Tip: Do your best to avoid situations of desperation where emotion very often takes the lead over reason. Although not all desperate situations can be avoided, many can, by proper planning and foresight.

References:

This a logical fallacy frequently used on the Internet. No academic sources could be found.