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When do emotions influence pro-environmental behaviour? A model of affect generalization

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Evidence for the causal effects of emotions on pro-environmental behaviour is mixed. Experimentally manipulated emotions can increase pro-environmental behavioural intentions, but these effects are small, depend on individual differences, and diminish with time. The model of affect generalisation may explain this. According to this model, repeated experiences of episodic affect (emotions) can develop into chronic affect (affective attitudes), and this constitutes the process of affect generalisation. Behavioural intentions are more likely to be influenced by these stable affective attitudes (e.g. fear of climate change; anger at inadequate action on climate change) than by brief emotional episodes (e.g. fear or anger elicited by a video clip about global warming). Thus, emotional stimuli may be particularly effective in influencing behavioural intentions when they do not only evoke a short emotional episode, but also change general affective attitudes. Consistently taking into account the difference between emotional episodes and affective attitudes and further investigating the process of affect generalisation may improve interventions for more sustainable behaviour.

Are you currently an Early Career Researcher?

No

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