

How Moods Can Affect Persuasion

Moods affect our thinking, our judgment, and our willingness to say yes. When the person you are trying to persuade is in a good mood, they are more likely to accept your offer. The opposite is also true. If they're not in a good mood, chances are much higher they won't bite. This is a huge advantage to you when it comes to persuasion. Great persuaders create the right mood. Great persuaders actually put people in a happy state. When we are feeling happy, we tend to think happy thoughts and to retrieve happy ideas and experiences from memory. Conversely, when we are in a negative mood, we tend to think unhappy thoughts and to retrieve negative information from memory.

If you can influence the mood, you minimize the likelihood of objections and resistance. How do you influence mood? The most important thing is to make sure you are in a good mood yourself. Even if your audience is in a good mood initially, a bad mood on your part will quickly dampen their spirits (even if you are trying to hide it). Then, your chances at successful persuasion decrease significantly.

One particular study demonstrated just how much the moods and attitudes of those around us influence our responses. Three individuals sat down to a meal together—two who were in on the study, and one who was unknowingly being evaluated on whether or not his companions altered his opinion of the food. The two conducted themselves in a very disagreeable manner and were unpleasant and contentious. On another occasion, this same individual was brought back to the same place and offered the same food. The only difference was he was given different table companions. This time around, the company was fun, interesting, and enjoyable. How do you think his evaluations of the food differed? You guessed it—the first evaluation was negative, while the second was positive, even though the food itself was identical from the one situation to the next.

There is evidence across the board that mood is a major factor in persuasion. Even simple mood-boosting methods like eating a good snack or listening to pleasant music have been shown to make people easier to persuade. An interviewer who is in a good mood tends to assign higher ratings to job applicants. Happy moods also increase creativity, which is critical for great persuaders. Consumers who are in a good mood will be more aware of positive qualities in products or experiences they encounter. And as any kid has already figured out, parents who are in good moods tend to be more lenient.

Just to reinforce the point, I will highlight one other study. The study was conducted in a hotel room that did not have a window or any other means by which the occupant could know what the weather was like. When the guest ordered room service, the server would describe the weather as cold and rainy, cold and sunny, warm and rainy, or warm and sunny. How do you think these pleasant or not-so-pleasant reports affected the amount of the server's tip? Interestingly, it did not seem to make much difference whether it was warm or cold, but when the weather was reported to be sunny, tips increased by 26.65 percent!