



social influence

political psychology

If you want to change the way people think, feel, and behave, you'll increase your chances of success by using these powerful social influence techniques. None are guaranteed to work every time, but they vastly increase the odds of getting what you want – especially when deployed in combination during a single encounter.

automatic reactions

Our brains are designed to exert as little effort as possible when making decisions. Sometimes a single word is enough to ensure another person's unconscious autopilot steers them in your preferred direction.

liking

We all like our friends. We also like people who are physically attractive, who flatter us with sincere compliments, and who display positive, familiar qualities we like about ourselves. And when we like someone, they hold extra influence over our attitudes and behaviors.

reciprocity

Do something kind, helpful, or generous for another person, and they will feel obligated to return the favor – especially when you provide an easy and convenient way for them to do so. But the process works in reverse as well: do something rude, malicious, or harmful to another and you can count on them to respond in kind.

commitment and consistency

Being consistent makes our judgments and decisions easier – and helps us avoid charges of hypocrisy, unfairness, and deception. Once a person commits to an attitude or action, the desire to be consistent frequently trumps other competing influences.

status and authority

Status and authority tend to increase dominance, entitlement, and leadership for those who possess them in abundance. For those who do not, they tend to induce trust, deference, admiration, and submission directed toward those who do.

scarcity

Over millions of years, our brains evolved to equate great rarity with great value. Experts believe this may explain why human beings are so loss averse: we'd rather protect ourselves against losses than take a chance on gains. That's because, psychologically, the mere threat of loss instantly raises the value.

social proof

The fact is that we take most of our cues in life from other people. We all want to fit in by behaving appropriately, and fear the consequences of even mild social ostracism. So much of what we do in our day-to-day lives depends on information we consciously or unconsciously glean from observing and interacting with others. For this reason, social proof may be the most powerful influence of all.

first person politics

1444 rhode island ave nw #704
washington, dc 20005
david@firstpersonpolitics.com
214.497.4398

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