

Effects of a mood and an unrecognized hint on insight problem solving

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Abstract: This study investigated the interaction effect between a mood and an implicit hint on insight problem solving. A total of 60 undergraduate students participated in a 3 (mood: happy, sad, neutral) \times 2 (subliminal priming: hint, no-hint) factorial between-participants experiment. In the happy and sad conditions, they described a life event that had made them feel happy or sad. In the neutral condition, they drew a map of their campus. Next, participants engaged in an insight problem solving task for 10 minutes. Two minutes after starting the task, they watched “an irrelevant movie” for one minute. In the hint condition, the movie included a hint image (exposed 33 ms \times 60 times). The hint raised the solution rate only in the happy condition. This result suggests that a positive mood facilitate the acceptance of information available in the environment. People also seem to unconsciously assimilate the information into their thinking.