

Seven psychological principles that can help foster positive actions in addressing climate change

From Kenny & Harré, 2011¹

1. People are great copiers – identify and promote examples of positive actions, avoid highlighting bad practices. Change will gain momentum as more people take positive actions, these will become more salient and more people will copy these.
2. People need something to work towards, not just something to work against. Visions of a positive future conveyed through stories and films can make the opportunities seem real and feasible.
3. Positive emotions induce creativity and cooperation – focus on opportunity not risk. Embrace creative responses, even if they are not considered ‘optimal’ responses to the situation.
4. People want the chance to contribute to collective social enterprises that are framed as making the world a better place – encourage groups to take pride in their efforts and to foster identities based on ideals such as protecting future generations.
5. People identify very strongly with the place in which they are located. Disparate groups may be able to join forces if their common interest in protecting their catchment/region can be highlighted.
6. Fairness is absolutely essential. Policies will not work if they are perceived to be unfair.
7. Ownership of changes is also critical. The more people that feel they have had genuine input and been heard, the more a change is likely to stick.

¹ Kenny, G and Harré, N (2011). Developing a more action-focused approach to climate change as it may affect sustainable land management in the Bay of Plenty region. Consultant report to Bay of Plenty Regional Council