

# Fear has negative impact on mitigation behavior toward climate change

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In a study published in *Climatic Change*, researchers from the Xishuangbanna Tropical Botanical Garden (XTBG) of the Chinese Academy of Sciences tried to explore how emotions of fear or hope

affect curriculum-based climate change education. They designed a curriculum focusing on factual knowledge of climatic change, coupled with a video clip pro for the knowledge lectures intended to instill emotions of fear or hope as manipulated treatments.

In order to explore how emotions affect self-reported mitigation behavior toward [climate change](#), the researchers conducted a two-week CCE program with the support of video clips to induce emotions such as fear and/or hope through the manipulated treatments. They then compared the emotions between the emotion plus lecture group and lecture-only group for adolescents.

The study involved 1,730 students from nine [middle schools](#) in three [coastal cities](#) (Xiamen, Shenzhen, and Ningbo) in China.

The emotion-manipulating experiment showed that [negative emotions](#) may weaken mitigation behavior and knowledge may be the key factor that improves adolescents' pro-environmental behavior. In detail, the lecture-only group presented the most significant mitigation behavioral change among the three treatments. Induced fear in lecture treatment decreased changes in self-reported mitigation behavior, particularly on the change in emission reduction activities among adolescents. Hope plus lecture treatment did not show a significant impact on the mitigation of behavioral change compared to the lecture-only groups.

The study indicates that fear has a negative impact on the mitigation of behavioral changes compared to the lecture-only group. Fear neither increased students' concern about climate change nor improved their involvement in climate change.

"This brings new insight that highlights a more prudential consideration needed for bringing emotion into CCE among adolescents," said Prof. Chen Jin of XTBG.

**More information:** Xueqi Wang et al, Fear emotion reduces reported mitigation behavior in adolescents subject to climate change education, *Climatic Change* (2022). [DOI: 10.1007/s10584-022-03419-7](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-022-03419-7)

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