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Goodness of ideas is judged based on affective valence: A study using the remote associates task

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Abstract

This study investigated the possibility that judgment about the goodness of ideas in insight problem solving is influenced by the solvers affect. In each trial of the remote associates tasks, participants were asked to judge whether or not the target word was the solution. Immediately before the presentation of the target word, a positively or negatively valenced picture was presented for a short period of time. Results showed that the presentation of positive pictures facilitated the correct response towards a solution word and interrupted the correct rejection of a non-solution one. The presentation of negative pictures had the opposite effect. Notably, participants did not notice the influence of the valenced pictures. These results indicate that implicit affective feelings can play a crucial role in the search for a solution and may sometimes lead solvers to the false acceptance of non-solution.