

Eliciting States In People

So I was driving on the freeway the other day and this other car pulls right up next to me. I don't pay much attention to him. The driver proceeds to drive at the same rate I'm going for a couple miles. Now, he's got my attention because he's matching me perfectly.

After a few miles of this, he begins slowly and subtly increasing his car's speed. You know what I do? I begin to unconsciously notice myself driving faster and faster to match him. He continues to accelerate and for some mysterious reason, I do too. Pretty soon, we're flying down the highway going way too fast. Finally, I snap out of my miniature hypnotic trance as I become fully aware of just how fast I was going.

I slow down. What happened here? The guy came along side me at the same rate of speed I was going. He went along with me for a few miles. He then increased his speed and I followed by increasing my speed.

So how the heck does this story relate to eliciting states in people? When you want to create an emotional state in someone else, you have to do what the car driver did with me. First, you have to match the person. Do this by doing what they do.

Then, pace the person just like what the driver did with me. He went at the same rate of speed I was going for a good number of miles. In an interpersonal context, this means to do what the other person is doing to create similarity between you and the other person.

Finally, lead the person into the emotional state you want them to go in. The driver got me to drive faster than I normally would because he increased his driving speed after he paced me for a while. I normally wouldn't have driven that fast. What caused me to drive that fast was the driver leading me into a higher rate of speed.

The driver led me to drive at a higher rate of speed because of human beings innate desire to match up with another person and 'be in harmony' with them. This directly applies to creating emotional states in others.

First, match whatever emotional state the person is in. If an angry customer calls you up to complain about something, the right emotional state is to match them and be a bit 'hot' with them at the bad service or whatever they're complaining about. You don't have to match them perfectly but do it enough to create a sense of rapport. This creates similarity with the person. How many times has a perfectly calm person told an irate person to "calm down" only to have it backfire and the irate person get even angrier? It's because the person is not being matched.

Second, pace the person. This means to do what they do. Say what they say. Match their emotion although you don't have to do it as intensely. This creates similarity and rapport. It's the car driver driving the same speed as me right next to me.

After you have a sense that you have good rapport, begin to change your emotional state from their original emotional state into one that is more resourceful. In the example of the irate customer, it could be that of calm and understanding. The person will follow you. If they don't follow you, go back to pacing them.

There you have it. Match. Pace. Lead. A simple formula for creating emotional states in others. Remember to always go first. For whatever emotional state you want someone else to go into, you have to go there first!

Use this recipe repeatedly because it has an endless number of applications. Enjoy!

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