

Editorial note on color psychology

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EDITORIAL NOTE

Colours, like features, follow the changes of the emotions," the artist Pablo Picasso once remarked. Colour is a powerful communication tool that can be used to signal action, influence mood, and even influence physiological reactions. Certain colours have been associated with increased blood pressure, increased metabolism, and eyestrain. **Colour psychology** is the study of hues as a determinant of human **behaviour**. Colour influences **perceptions** that are not obvious, such as the taste of food. Colours have qualities that can cause certain emotions in people.

How people are affected by different colour stimuli varies from person to person. While perceptions of colour are somewhat subjective, there are some colour effects that have universal meaning. Colours in the red area of the colour spectrum are known as warm colours and include red, orange, and yellow. These warm colours evoke emotions ranging from feelings of warmth and comfort to feelings of anger and hostility.

Colours on the blue side of the spectrum are known as cool colours and include blue, purple, and green. These colours are often described as calm, but can also call to mind feelings of sadness or indifference.

Several ancient cultures, including the Egyptians and Chinese, practiced chromotherapy, or the use of colours to heal. Chromotherapy is sometimes referred to as light therapy or colorology. Colorology is still used today as a holistic or alternative treatment. In this treatment:

Red is used to stimulate the body and mind and to increase circulation. **Yellow** is thought to stimulate the nerves and purify the body. **Orange** is used to heal the lungs and to increase energy levels. **Blue** is believed to soothe illnesses and treat pain. **Indigo** shades are thought to alleviate skin problems.

Studies have also shown that certain colors can have an impact on performance. No one likes to see a graded test covered in red ink, but one study found that seeing the color red before taking an exam actually hurt test performance. While the color red is often described as threatening, arousing or exciting, many previous studies on the impact of the color red have been largely inconclusive. The study found, however, that exposing students to the color red prior to an exam has been shown to have a negative impact on test performance.

In the first of the six experiments described in the study, 71 U.S. colleges students were presented with a participant number coloured either red, green or black prior to taking a five-minute test. The results revealed that students who were presented with the red number before taking the test scored more than 20% lower than those presented with the green and black numbers.

Experts have found that while color can have an influence on how we feel and act, these effects are subject to personal, cultural, and situational factors. More scientific research is needed to gain a better understanding of color psychology.

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