

Open Mind ~ Open Seas

Let's Take Environmental Action - With the Help of Psychology

Exercise: My Environmental Psychology Canvas

The goal of this exercise is to brainstorm and develop an individual or collective environmental action in/for the ocean environment.

While planning environmental actions, intuition and knowledge often become blurred. A process with small steps makes it easy to implement the gained knowledge. The “Environmental Psychology Canvas” from the “Handbook for Encouraging Sustainable Actions” by Wandelwerk E.V. offers a question catalogue and a simplified template for environmental action. The canvas is no action guide but an environmental psychology reflection tool for possible influences on behaviour. As a creative brainstorming tool, it can be used alone or in a group.

If you want to work with the canvas in the classroom, you might take the following steps:

1. In the first step, you can phrase a goal and specify a behaviour and measures that the action should be all about. You can find a question catalogue in the guide that will help you with it. You might answer the entire question catalogue or choose a number of questions that you find suitable.
2. In the next step, you fill the canvas with all your ideas that come to mind when thinking about the status quo or a potential change. Let your creativity run free!
3. In the last step, you can summarise all results. For instance, you can do this by marking main ideas in colour, prioritising ideas with sticky points, drawing connecting lines, or much more.

Here you see an example of specifying behaviour and action:

(see the document “My Environmental Psychology Canvas” for the blank canvas and more information)

Example of specifying behavior and action

My goal: *Reduce paper usage* ☀️
.....
.....

My behavior of choice: *Stickers against free ads*
..... *and newspaper*
..... *⇒ attach, single-time, individual*
.....

My measure: *Throw sticker + message*
..... *in mailboxes*
.....

My target group: *My neighborhood, a rather heterogeneous*
..... *group, ... maybe let them participate*
..... *in the action beforehand?*
.....

My context of action: ✿ *My neighbors will find a sticker with*
..... *a friendly message in their mailboxes, it is*
..... *very simple and easy to use.*
.....

Illustration 8. Example of specifying behavior and action.

This is an example of the filled in canvas:

(see the document “My Environmental Psychology Canvas” for the blank canvas and explanations concerning each field. If you want to learn more about the canvas, we recommend reading the “Handbook for Encouraging Sustainable Actions” by Wandelwerk e.V)

The environmental psychology canvas












<p>Social norms</p>  <p><i>UGHT-norms: are mentioned on a message that comes along with the sticker</i></p> <p><i>IS-norms: are very high in the chosen districts because many neighbors already have anti-ads stickers on their mailboxes</i></p> <p><i>Conclusion: the more neighbors attach a new sticker, the stronger the IS-norms become :-)</i></p> <p><i>Social models? There are none.</i></p>	<p>Personal ecological norm</p>  <div> <div data-bbox="472 556 695 888"> <p>Problem-awareness</p>  <p><i>... is probably high, because consequences of high paper consumption are typically known in Germany.</i></p> <p><i>Topic can be touched in the message</i></p> <p><i>It needs an appealing layout in order to raise attention!</i></p>  </div> <div data-bbox="695 556 950 888"> <p>Perceived responsibility</p>  <p><i># Unknown</i></p> </div> <div data-bbox="950 556 1174 888"> <p>Self-efficacy</p>  <p><i>Unknown</i></p> <p><i>We'll raise it!</i></p> <p><i>In the message we will demonstrate how much can be saved per household on the average.</i></p> <p><i>Further ideas? No competences are necessary :-)</i></p> </div> </div>	<p>(Behavioral) costs and benefits</p>  <p><i>Pro: they don't have to dispose of huge amounts of paper waste, maybe they feel molested by advertisements.</i></p> <p><i>Con: They don't receive any free ads or newspapers anymore, can't look for sales, maybe have less to read, hear less about local events.</i></p> <p><i>By throwing in stickers in the mailboxes, they don't have to buy one or go to the local district center, therefore our behavior is much more comfortable and behavioral costs are minimized.</i></p>
<p>Habits</p>  <p><i>Behavior is intentional and not automatic.</i></p> <p><i>Target group members should change their habit.</i></p>	<p>Weighing process and intention</p>  <p><i>Most probably, the weighing process is really quick (the moment when they find a sticker in their mailbox), maybe they have to talk about it to a family member or flat mate before attaching it. Some neighbors probably have an intention to</i></p> <p><i>attach an anti-ads sticker, however, didn't do it so far because of convenience.</i></p> <p><i>⇒ we could create a list of pros and cons and attach it to the message</i></p> <hr/> <p>Pro-environmental behavior and its consequences</p>  <p><i>If we highlight environmental protection in the message, it could lead to a spillover effect and maybe my target group will slowly behave more sustainable in the same domain!</i></p>	<p>Emotions</p>  <p><i>Probably, the behavior is not connected to many emotions. Eventually, people feel relieved of the huge amounts of paper that typically annoy them.</i></p> <p><i>Anger over paper waste might encourage them to attach an anti-ads sticker.</i></p>

Illustration 10. Example of the environmental psychology canvas.