

DO STUDENTS EXPERIENCE AWE IN INTRODUCTORY-LEVEL ASTRONOMY COURSE ACTIVITIES?

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Have you ever felt the world was so big you just couldn't take it all in at once? Did you change your outlook or behavior after that feeling? If so, you may have experienced the emotion of awe. Scientists have implicated awe as a motivator to persist when studying complex topics, and awe has shown promise in helping students learn science. Before seeing if awe motivates students, we wanted to find out whether students experience awe in course activities during an introductory-level astronomy course. We gave students two surveys developed by psychologists: one to determine prior experiences of awe in nature and the other to determine experiences of awe during class activities. We found, on average, no awe experiences prior to class in nature and slightly elevated reports of awe in course activities, focused on sky observations. This suggests we look further into the effect of awe on student learning.

