Have you ever felt this?

Awe is a complex emotion composed of an appraisal of vastness and a need for accommodation [1]

Abstract

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.

Survey Responses by Factor

Factors of Awe

Unfathomable

Physical

Unfathomable

Physical

 accommodated

Connection

Time

Vastness

Too Big To Grasp

Jaw Dropping

Reframing

Loss of Sense of Time

Part Of Something Greater

Insignificance

One With Universe

Slowness

Factors of Awe

Survey Responses by Factor

In Introductory-Level Astronomy Class?

Chad M. Jocius, William D. Parker
Department of Mathematics and Physics
University of Wisconsin-Parkside

References


Acknowledgments

- The Wisconsin Teaching Fellow & Scholars (WTFS) Program through the University of Wisconsin System Professional & Instructional Development funded this work.