

# Questions to answer for Effective Collective Action\*

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**Who is the target audience for the collective action?** Audiences of collective actors include:

- self (inspired, empowered, expressing values)
- supporters of the cause (building momentum, solidarity)
- opponents of the cause (detering, converting, confronting)
- bystanders with no allegiance (raising awareness, converting, mobilising)
- third parties (with their own agenda – e.g., media, policy-makers – building coalitions, lobbying)

**What is the timeframe for the collective action?** Immediate, short-term, medium-term, longer-term

## If your focus is on mobilising:

A first step is **Awareness Raising**: Motivating attention and educating for understanding of an issue.

Keywords for scholars: raising awareness, agenda setting, agenda seeding	Psychological factors: threat, reward, novelty, scandal, questions, relevance	What works: Experts, advocacy, education campaigns, lobbying, celebrities, stunts.
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Closely related, **Building Sympathy**: Helping people move from awareness to sympathy for a campaign or cause. People who are aware but not sympathetic usually feel like the issue isn't relevant to them/their group.

Keywords for scholars: persuasion, social influence, political influence, public opinion	Psychological factors: ingroup sources, likeable, expert, moral, similar, admired. Appeals to values. Single worthy, needy victims.	What works: Education / Persuasion campaigns, lobbying, advocacy. Building a "chain of trust" and recruiting champions. Reaching out to media and journalists.
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Important for actual change is generating **Intentions to act**: People who are sympathetic but don't intend to take action usually don't see it as their responsibility, don't see people like them as acting, and feel they lack control.

Keywords for scholars: SIMCA (social identity model of collective action); 3N (Needs, Narratives, Networks); TPB/TRA/RAA (Theory of Planned Behaviour/Reasoned Action Approach)	Psychological factors: social identities, group norms, efficacy, anger/injustice, moral convictions, perceived control, subjective norms (of family and friends), attitudes (cost/benefit calculations)	What works: Leadership, advocacy, education / persuasion campaigns, lobbying. Building a "chain of trust" and recruiting champions. Normative interventions. Incentives. Capacity- building.
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Eliciting actual **Actions** from people who plan to act: People who don't act on their intentions may not perceive easy opportunities, or supportive norms, or they may have other priorities.

Keywords for scholars: implementation intentions; stages of change model; nudges; norms	Psychological factors: social support, role models, relevance, resources, responsibility, prioritisation.	What works: Sharing testimonies. Networking/recruiting/asking. Formulating SMART goals; assisting with action and coping planning. Consciousness- raising. Communicating theories of change. Normative interventions. Same as above but with a focus on communicating norms and eliciting norm signals (other people want this) and efficacy/control (you can do this / if we do this good things will happen). Incentives. Capacity- building.
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## An active movement must 'Persist to Power' and create change. This involves:

**Sustaining groups / commitment over time:** People who don't persist may have unrealistic expectations for short-term change, experience stress and hardship with a lack of interpersonal friendships and support, or feel like they aren't valued and welcome. Other demands on their time also may intrude.

Keywords for scholars: burnout; factionalism; schism; polarisation; disidentification	Psychological factors: social identities, group norms, relationships, failure, conflict	What works: Cultivating belonging; a culture of inclusive warmth; role clarity; skill-building and recognition; celebrating small wins; social events.
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**Joining and building Coalitions:** This includes broadening the movement so new groups of people become supporters, but also inviting and motivating third parties with other agendas to support your cause or some of it.

Keywords for scholars: coalitions; networks; political opportunity structure; framing; swing voters; Overton window	Psychological factors: social identities, group norms, power, alliances and opposition, personal friendships and enmities, disidentification, conversion	What works: Networking, relationship-building. Opportunities for intergroup contact and affirming shared and cross-cutting identities. Symbolic gestures. Horse-trading. Making new frames through respectful and deep listening.
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**Avoiding Counter-mobilisation:** Oppositional frames and stigmatising messages may provoke a backlash. Threats to other groups and their interests also causes people to push back. People may feel disrespected or overlooked.

Keywords for scholars: counter- mobilisation; radicalisation; DIME (Disidentification, Innovation, Moralisation, Energisation); 3N model (Networks, Narratives, Needs); polarisation; repression	Psychological factors: threat, reactance, innovation, differentiation. Socialisation, norm contestation.	What works: Focusing on change at the centre. Retaining and recruiting moderate pragmatists. Recruiting and dividing elites. Growing networks outside the conflict context (e.g., internationally, or via shared identities). Symbolic gestures.
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**Discuss, Map, Act, Evaluate, Repeat!** – Movement actors may not know their own goals, audiences, and time frames, or may have diverse goals, audiences, and time frames in mind.

People also change and grow.

Opportunities and threats arise and may be recognised and engaged.

### References:

Gulliver, R., Wibisono, S., Fielding, K., & Louis, W. R. (2021). *The Psychology of Effective Activism*. Cambridge University Press, Elements in Applied Social Psychology series. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108975476> . (\*<-- This resource draws on this monograph)

Louis, W. R., Thomas, E. F., McGarty, C., Lizzio-Wilson, M., Amiot, C., & Moghaddam, F. M. (2020). The volatility of collective action: Theoretical analysis and empirical data. *Political Psychology*, 41(S1), 35-74.

Video summaries of chapters from the Routledge Handbook of Environmental Movements

"Policy and Legislative Outcomes of Environmental Movements," by Erik W. Johnson and Jon Agnone (Chapter 30) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GI2BhacaM-M> - analyses the connection between environmental movements and governments' responses, examining the theories and data regarding outcomes.

Joanna K. Huxster, the author of Chapter 31, "The Influence of Environmental Movements on Public Opinion and Attitudes" - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6iDFX5mH-sU> (Part 1) and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eCW3nR1w7WQ> (Part 2) – analyses when and how social movements create public opinion change