



# Foundational Theories of Health Communication/Promotion

Presented by:

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## Learning Objectives

**After this tutorial you will be able to...**

1. Understand the role of theory
2. Describe key theories of behavior change in public health
3. Understand the role of persuasive health communication

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## There is nothing so practical as a good theory

- Professor Kurt Lewin,  
father of social psychology
- Compatibility: theory & practice
- What is theory?
  - Relies on assumptions
- Health behavior & health promotion theories
- Conceptual or theoretical frameworks



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## Theoretical constructs

- **Concepts** - Building blocks (primary elements) of a theory
- **Constructs** - Concepts developed/adopted for particular theory. Key concepts are constructs
- **Variables** - Operational forms of constructs
- **Theory** - Presents a systematic way of understanding events or situations
- **Models** - May draw on numerous theories

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## A solid grounding: Applicable theory, audiences, addressing behaviors

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- **Persuasion Theory** – used most often to predict persuasion, guide behavior change communication
- **Interventions** – grounded in applicable change theories and audiences
- **Behaviors** – addressed systematically according to targeting **segmentation** & **tailoring** principles

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## A solid grounding: Levels of influence

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- **Levels of influence**
  - Individual
  - Interpersonal
  - Community

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## Health Belief Model (Individual level)

- **Focus:** Individuals' perceptions of threat posed by health problem, benefits of avoiding the threat & factors influencing decision to act
- **Key Concepts:**
  - Perceived susceptibility, severity, benefits, barriers
  - Cues to action
  - Self-efficacy

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## Transtheoretical Model (Individual level)

- **Focus:** Individuals' motivation & readiness to change a problem behavior
- **Key Concepts (stages):**
  1. Precontemplation
  2. Contemplation
  3. Decision/Preparation
  4. Action
  5. Maintenance

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## Precaution Adoption Process Model (Individual level)

- **Focus:** Individuals' journey from lack of awareness to action & maintenance
- **Key concepts (Stages):**
  1. Unaware of issue
  2. Unengaged by issue
  3. Deciding about acting
  4. Deciding not to act
  5. Deciding to act
  6. Acting
  7. Maintenance

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## Theory of Planned Behavior (Individual level)

- **Focus:** Individuals' attitudes toward a behavior, perceptions of norms, and beliefs about the ease or difficulty of changing
- **Key concepts:**
  - Behavioral intention
  - Attitude
  - Subjective norm
  - Perceived behavioral control

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## Social Cognitive Theory (Interpersonal level)

- **Focus:** Personal factors, environmental factors & human behavior exert influence on each other
- **Key Concepts:**
  - Reciprocal determinism
  - Behavioral capability
  - Expectations and expectancies
  - Self-efficacy
  - Observational learning
  - Reinforcement

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## Diffusion of Innovations (Community level)

- **Focus:** How new ideas, products, & practices spread within a society or from one society to another
- **Key Concepts:**
  - Relative advantage
  - Compatibility
  - Complexity
  - Trialability
  - Observability

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## Summary

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- Importance of behavior change theory
  - Concepts
  - Constructs
  - Variables
  - Theory

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