

SHAPING HEALTHY BEHAVIOURS – THE SCIENCE OF HEALTH PROMOTION ACTIVITIES

In today's society, we benefit from access to a wealth of research about how different choices and behaviour can affect short and long term health. Reputable information is freely available for a range of health concerns along with corresponding advice about how best to attempt prevention or minimisation of adverse impacts to our health. However, promoting healthy behaviour is more than just providing access to facts and information. Many things influence our behaviour decisions, particularly when it comes to health.

Motivation to participate in “healthy behaviours” is influenced by both internal and external factors. A popular model used by researchers to capture these influences is the “Health Belief Model” (HBM; Rosenstock, 1966; Rosenstock, Strecher & Becker, 1988) This model lists three areas which impact on our decisions around health issues. An outline of the different areas, their implications for health education generally, and examples of how these may apply to hearing health are shown in the table below.

The Hear4Tomorrow programme has been structured with these HBM elements in mind. The programme aims to go past information provision about the mechanics of noise and hearing, to a more cohesive examination of hearing as a health issue. The modules have been designed to assist students to appreciate the value of good hearing health, understand those activities which may threaten hearing, and develop a solid understanding of how to identify and minimise noise risks to which they are exposed. Ultimately, the programme aims to increase students' awareness of hearing health issues, their engagement and motivation to protect their hearing, thereby increasing the likelihood of self guided action.

References

Rosenstock, I., M., 1966. Why people use health services, *Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly* 44 (3), 94–127

Rosenstock, I., M., Strecher, V., J., & Becker, M., H., 1988. Social learning theory and the Health Belief Model, *Health Education Quarterly*, 15(2), 175-183

HBM Area	General Definition	Implications for Health Education	E.g. Hearing Health Education
<i>Perceived Severity & Perceived Susceptibility</i>	<p>These relate to our beliefs about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent or impact of a health condition on the individual's life • The likelihood that the individual could develop the health condition 	<p>Motivation towards health behaviours can be improved through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising awareness of the actual consequences of risky behaviours and the condition • Providing information about populations at risk, and their risk levels • Exploring how personal factors or behaviour may influence risk for the individual 	<p>Children will be more motivated to look after their hearing health if they understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The importance of hearing, and the difficulties faced when hearing is damaged • It is possible for noise to damage hearing • Activities which they participate in may be noisy enough to damage their hearing
<i>Perceived Benefits and Barriers</i>	<p>Benefits and Barrier perceptions work as a type of “cost-benefit” analysis, where the individual weighs up beliefs about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expectations that the advised behaviour will be effective in reducing risk or minimising harm. • The perceived physical, psychological or financial costs of undertaking the advised behaviour 	<p>Healthy behaviours will be viewed more favourably if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advised action is clearly defined and explained • The expected outcomes of the behaviour are explained • Potential barriers are identified and minimised through education and assistance 	<p>Children will more likely be engaged in healthy hearing behaviours if they know</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When noise exposure can be damaging • How personal noise exposure can be reduced to safer levels without adversely impacting comfort or enjoyment of related activities
<i>Cues to Action</i>	<p>Certain activities or environmental cues can work to increase motivation and activate readiness to undertake healthy behaviour</p>	<p>Participation in healthy behaviour can be improved by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructing individuals “how-to” undertake appropriate action • Raising awareness about the health issue, and providing reminders 	<p>Children will be cued to action by teaching that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides information about how to take steps to protect their hearing in different environments • Hearing is something that should be considered as part of a healthy lifestyle
<i>Self Efficacy</i>	<p>This relates to the individual's belief that they are capable and confident in taking the appropriate action</p>	<p>Participation can be improved with interactive training, guidance and positive reinforcement</p>	<p>Children's self efficacy about hearing health can be improved by giving them opportunities to plan ways to reduce noise exposure in their day-to-day lives</p>