

# Behaviour Change Tools



Have you ever wondered why people behave the way they do?

Behavioural psychology helps us to understand the reasons behind people's actions, and provides us with tips and tools that can help to alter behaviour...

## 1. Prompts

These are reminders to carry out behaviours that we know we should be doing. We all know we should recycle, but being prompted or reminded helps to make it happen. This is successful at encouraging simple, specific behaviours and is best used with other tools.

## 2. Norm appeals

The people we're surrounded by inform our behaviour... whether we realise it or not! This tool involves creating a 'social norm' for a particular behaviour by incorporating it into messages and making it mainstream, or by leaders demonstrating and talking about the behaviour. This may include messages such as "help us keep our school tidy" or "be a part of the change".

→ Reich & Robertson (1979) conducted a study on litter at a public swimming pool. When people bought a snack at the public pool they were handed one of two flyers; a general "don't litter" flyer or one that suggests everyone else is clean with the message "help keep our pool clean". The norm appeal had a greater effect with only 30% of the "help keep our pool clean" flyers left lying around as opposed to 50% of the "don't litter" flyers.

A study by Reich & Robertson (1979) compared the response to norm appeals.

## 3. Commitment

Commitments such as pledges and goals is an effective tool for long-term behaviour change. There is potential to change behaviours and attitudes which has positive flow on affects to others in the community by people demonstrating change. Written, public and specific goals have the best effect as opposed to spoken, private and general commitments.

→ The 1-2-3 Campaign Against Global Warming campaign encouraged households in Portland, Oregon to pledge to any or all of the following actions; reduce heaters by 1°; reduce driving speed by 2 units; and swap three regular lightbulbs for more energy efficient fluorescents. A follow up showed that 98% of households fulfilled at least one of the pledges, and over 50% fulfilled all.

## 4. Feedback

Feedback involves reporting progress back to people, which helps them to see the change they're making and inspires them to continue. For instance, you may be able to find out the recycling rates of your school before you introduce a recycling scheme, and then share how this changes over time. It could even be a message as simple as "Thanks for taking part! Keep it up!". Ongoing feedback promotes behaviour change, and works well with commitment for best results. Frequent feedback is best!

## 5. Incentives

Incentives such as prizes or certificates motivate people to participate in an activity or event that they may not have otherwise completed. These are good for encouraging one-off behaviours, but don't support long-term behaviour change.

### TIPS

- Remain positive in your messages
- Create an opportunity for people to demonstrate change (The 'Inspire' stage of your campaign is a good opportunity for this)
- Set a good example!
- Keep it simple and accessible for a wide range of people
- Emphasise personal relevance... talk about the human aspects of environmental issues such as the air we breathe and the water we drink.
- Use visual reminders such as photos and videos to overcome perceptual barriers
- Provide the how-to knowledge such as what to put in a recycling bin



Bartram, A 2009, *Discussion Paper: Behaviour change intervention tools*, Government of South Australia, Adelaide, Australia.

Manning, C 2009, *The Psychology of Sustainable Behaviour: Tips for empowering people to take environmentally positive action*, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Saint Paul, America.

Also read on "Fogg Behaviour Model" and "Theory of Planned Behaviour"