CONNECTING AUTONOMY, COMPETENCE, AND RELATEDNESS FOR SUSTAINED HEALTH BEHAVIOR CHANGE: FINDINGS FROM COMMUNITY, ACADEMIC, AND FAITH INITIATIVES

Judy B. Springer, PhD, Susie D. Lamborn, PhD, Diane M. Pollard, PhD, Emie J. Zubereuther, BS, Jeffrey A. Mozanski, PhD, Melissa A. DeNomie, MS, Willie J. Davis

National Wellness Conference, 2012

1Milwaukee Area Technical College, 2University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, 3University of Wisconsin—Parkside, 4Medical College of Wisconsin, 5Marquette University

Which of the following is not a basic psychological need as described in self-determination theory?

A: relatedness
B: autonomy
C: wealth
D: competence

Based on 2008 data what percentage of American adults spend none of their free time being physically active?

A: 25%
B: 35%
C: 45%
D: 55%
Since the 1950's, sedentary jobs have increased by ______ in the United States.

Objectives

- Explain the connections among basic psychological need satisfactions and sustained healthy lifestyle practices
- Describe self-regulation styles for internalization of behaviors and their application in real world settings
- Identify strategies for basic psychological need satisfaction promotion to specific aspects of professional practice

Introduction

- Inactivity in our society (youth and adults)
- Understanding physical activity adherence / health behavior is complex
- Barriers and supports for health behavior change
- Formation of an identity as an active, fit member of society

Self-determination theory

- A theory of human motivation and personality
- According to Deci & Ryan\(^1\), the fulfillment of three main intrinsic needs motivate the self to initiate behavior and specify a source of nourishment that are essential for psychological health and well-being of the individual.


SDT -- Autonomy

- The desire to self-organize experience and behavior and to have activity be in agreement with one’s integrated sense of self.\(^1\)
- Enhanced by
  - Choices and options
  - Detailed description of benefits
  - Activity that is relevant to the needs of the individuals.\(^2\)


SDT -- Competence

- The tendency to have an effect on the environment as well as to attain valued outcomes within it.\(^1\)
- Enhanced by
  - Novices see individuals similar to self master tasks
  - Design well-structured programs
  - Set appropriate goals, and
  - Provide positive feedback.\(^2\)

**Relatedness**

- The desire to feel connected to significant others—to love and care, and to be loved and cared for
- Enhanced by
  - Provide participants with positive feedback
  - Promote conversations and small group activities when possible
- Provide a secure relational base

---

**Self-determination theory**

- Internalization –
  - Active, natural process
  - Transformation of socially sanctioned mores or requests into personally endorsed values and self-regulation
- Self-regulatory styles and internalization of behaviors
  - Used in smoking cessation, education, and understanding physical activity

---

---

---

---
External motivation styles include all but which of the following?

- A: External regulation
- B: Introjected regulation
- C: Identified regulation
- D: Intrinsic regulation

Self-determination theory in action

- Community health/fitness facility in a mid-western city
- Academic wellness center at a mid-western university
- Faith community in medically underserved area of a mid-western city

Community health/fitness facility

- Participants: Adult members (n=12) who had engaged in regular physical activity for at least three years
- Demographics: age range 29 to 73 years, male=7, female=5
- Study Protocol: grounded theory
  - 2 interviews (75-90 min in length) with grand tour question format
  - Personal Reflective Journal

Springer JB, Lamborn SA, Pollard DM. Maintaining physical activity over time: the importance of basic psychological need satisfaction for developing the physically active self. American Journal of Health Promotion (in press)
Academic wellness center

- Participants: Upper level Fitness Management majors (n=22) who worked with university faculty / staff to develop and implement individually-tailored fitness programs
- Demographics:
- Study Protocol:
  - Convenience sample of university faculty / staff
  - Trainers administered screenings and fitness tests, created individualized programs, trained participants and conducted post-tests
  - Interviews with participants post-program

Faith community

- Participants: Adult health advocates (n=7, male=2, female=5) and youth (n=24, male=14, female=12)
- Study Protocol
  - Health Advocates received training on promoting youth health
  - Youth
    - Physical Activity
    - 10-week physical activity and nutrition program, and
  - Health Career Awareness
    - MATC service-learning students and church health professionals spoke on being in the health care field

Other similar studies

- Weight-training center
- Group fitness program
- Workplace fitness program
- Qualitative studies – long-term and short-term
- Faith Community Studies –
  - Good venue for promoting healthy lifestyle practices
  - Strong pastoral support valuable

References:
Other settings

- Are there other settings or circumstances where the principles of the self-determination theory would have relevance?

Voice of the participants

Youth and Health Advocates
- Physical Activity
- Health Career Awareness

Adult Health / Fitness Members
- Value of physical activity
- Developing an identity as an active, fit member of society

Faculty / Staff
- Physical activity is desired but "never took the time"
- Win / win for developing long-term fitness

Psychological need satisfaction in action

Relatedness
- Health Advocates: games for team building
- Adults (fitness center): giving and receiving of support

Competence
- Youth: self-assessment of fitness
- Faculty/Staff: aiding students in the learning process

Autonomy
- Youth: determine your own destiny
- Health Advocates: building a foundation for aiding youth
- Adults (fitness center): value of fitness status
Connections in basic psychological needs

- How do the basic psychological needs interact, intersect, or balance? \(^1,2\)
- Silly Sylables \(^3\)

---

A Fit, Active Member of Society

- Personal fit of an active lifestyle
- Identity as an active person
- Attachment to physical activity as life enhancing
Worksheet

Please place the following quotes with their appropriate basic psychological need or regulation [use number]

1. When I first moved to town I worked with a woman who said, "Why don't you come to yoga classes with me?" We just kind of hit it off.
   - Relatedness

2. The time just goes by so fast. It's my time completely.
   - Personal Fit of Active Lifestyle

3. In my mind I have the devil on one side telling me to turn the car around & the angel telling me to go workout.
   - Challenge & Competition

4. My family history scares me to death. Physical activity is something I can do to combat my genetics.
   - Autonomy

5. In my day I like to think at 9 am I should be there [facility] to be physically active.
   - Relatedness

6. Before my coronary event I think I was probably tuned out to exercise. Looks too tiring.
   - Competence

7. Coming in the summer to workout was a bit more difficult. I enjoyed the facility's incentive program.
   - Autonomy

8. Learning the new movement and doing it myself, try to concentrate on it which can make a difference.
   - Competence

9. I exercise because I've always been a 'wanna-be' athlete. As a farm kid I loved sports but didn't get to play. Now I'm in better shape than most of my HS buddies.
   - Autonomy

Feedback and time for sharing

- Small groups/partners report main points
Reinforce Main Concepts and Wrap Up

- Sustained health behavior change is complex
- Develop identity as an active, fit member of society, a well-established, essential element of self
- Psychological need satisfaction aids in the initial attempts with activity then promotes long-term adherence
- Applicable across venues with continued research providing clarity

With sustained practice the principles of self-determination theory will aid my practice for promoting long-term health behavior change.

Thank you!