

INTRODUCTION TO

HEALTH BEHAVIOR THEORY

THIRD
EDITION

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Preface

Theory is the foundation for professional practice and an essential component of professional preparation at any level. However, this does not make the teaching and learning of theory any easier; it just makes it necessary. Theory is often the most difficult for undergraduate students to comprehend. It is difficult because they do not have a reservoir of knowledge from which to draw as they do for, say, math, history, English, or the sciences. This text is written for them.

The purpose of this text is to provide an easy to understand, interesting, and engaging introduction to a topic that is usually perceived as challenging, dry, and boring. The language used and the depth and breadth of the information presented are intentional. It is not meant to be a comprehensive tome on theory, but rather an *introduction* to theory. It is meant to be the headwaters of that reservoir of knowledge.

While written with the undergraduate in mind, this book would also be of value to graduate students or practicing professionals whose own “reservoir” of theory knowledge and understanding could use a refill. It would be an excellent text to use along with others in preparing for certification examinations in which health behavior is included.

The text begins with an explanation of what theory is, how theories are developed, and factors that influence health behavior. Chapters 2–11 cover the more frequently used health behavior theories. New to this edition, each theory chapter begins with a table containing the theory essence sentence (a statement that reflects the essence of the theory in one sentence), its constructs, and brief definitions. This is followed by a more in-depth discussion of the theory concept and constructs using multiple examples from the literature to demonstrate how the theory is used in practice. While some examples are related to college students, many are purposely not, for a few reasons. This book is intended for students in professional preparation programs, so the examples demonstrate how theories are used in a variety of settings, with different populations, addressing an assortment of health issues. Second, because the examples were taken from the literature, students have an extensive reference list at the end of each chapter that contains numerous citations of research studies and programs in which the theory was used.

Each theory chapter ends with a *Theory in Action* section—a full-length, peer-reviewed journal article that provides students a complete picture of the theory used in a practice setting to guide research, develop an intervention, or conduct an evaluation. The *Theory in Action* articles address a variety of health issues in different populations. The articles are also the basis for a class activity included in each chapter. All of the articles in this third edition are new.

Also new to this edition is Chapter 7 on Protection Motivation Theory. This was added in direct response to reviewers’ suggestions for additional theories and in particular those deriving from health communication.

The final chapter in the book, Chapter 12, “Choosing a Theory,” answers the often-asked question, “How do I know which theory to use?” This chapter provides a framework to help answer that question, a *Theory Chart*. The chart groups the theories by levels and is a compilation of the *Theory Essence Sentence* tables provided at the beginning of each chapter. New to this edition is a table with the construct domains for each theory and suggested techniques for addressing them.

The PowerPoint slide presentations have been revised for this edition to the extent possible in keeping with the publisher’s guidelines, as have the examination questions. A new instructor’s support is an annotated bibliography with active links to additional journal articles of the theory in practice.

In no way does this book purport to cover all of the theories that could be used to explain health behavior, nor does it claim to provide an in-depth, exhaustive discourse of the theories it does contain. It does, however, provide an introduction to the more commonly used theories in health education and health promotion. It is my hope that students will find this book interesting and engaging enough to read it, and that it will entice them to read further, more deeply filling their theory reservoirs.



Acknowledgments

This book certainly would not have been written if it were not for my former students who struggled to understand theory. They were the reason I stopped trying to find the right book for them and decided to write it myself.

I must give a big “thank you” to my editorial and production staff at Jones & Bartlett Learning for all of their help with this third edition—Lindsey Sousa, Merideth Tumas, Danielle Bessette, Carter McAlister, and of course my editor, Michael Brown, whose confidence in me allowed this edition to come to fruition. A big thank you also goes to the many reviewers who provided me with wonderful suggestions that guided the writing of this third edition. I hope they see how their recommendations were put into action.

Finally, I’d like to thank my husband Roger for making sure I had a never-ending supply of hot tea during the writing of this edition and our puppy Alfie, for making sure I got away from the computer every few hours for a walk!

