

# Behavior Change Strategies



Kacey Wetzel,  
Chesapeake Bay Trust



# Awareness & Knowledge

While increasing knowledge or concern about the environment are worthy goals, studies have shown that being knowledgeable and/or concerned about environmental issues **does not** necessarily lead to action.

1Kollmus, A. & Agyeman, J. (2002). Mind the Gap: why do people act environmentally and what are the barriers to pro-environmental behavior? *Environmental Education Research* 8(3), 239-259.

# Social Science Frameworks

- Community Based Social Marketing
- Participatory Approach

# What are behavior change strategies?

- Techniques that provide motivation to act
- Research validated program design elements
- Selected to address specific barriers and benefits

# Develop Strategy

Specific Behavior	Barriers	Benefits
Encourage		
Discourage		

# Building a Behavior Change Program:

- human behavior determined by multiple factors
- Different strategies have varying effects on people
- Individuals may have multiple motivations for doing a behavior (so: know your audience and use multiple strategies)
- A program that reaches an audience from multiple angles will cater to different types of people as well as different motivational factors within each person

# Social Science Strategies

1. Commitments
2. Extrinsic Rewards
3. Feedback
4. Highlighting Health Benefits
5. “How-To” Skills
6. Intrinsic Rewards
7. Positive emotional states
8. Positive Nature Experiences
9. Prompts
10. Social Diffusion
11. Social Norms
12. Story-telling

# What tools to use when?

## Examples:

- Commitments are used in areas where the target audience has good intentions but still aren't doing the behavior.
- Norms are used for those on the fence about a particular behavior.
- Incentives are best used when the target audience is opposed to the behavior.

Barriers	Tools
Lack of Motivation	Commitments, Norms, Incentives
Forget	Prompts
Lack of Social Pressure	Norms
Lack of Knowledge	Communication, Social Diffusion
Inconvenient	Structural Change

# Applied Research

- Survey taken of CBT Outreach Applicants:
- Top 5 Strategies that people want to learn about most:
  1. How to skills (71%)
  2. Prompts (70%)
  3. Feedback (66%)
  4. Social Norms (65%)
  5. Stories (65%)

# Strategy 1: How-to-Skills

- Knowing why you should do a behavior doesn't mean you know how
- Competence and confidence



# Strategy 1: How-to-Skills

## Benefits

- Make doing new and unfamiliar behaviors possible
- May be the key difference between why an individual does or does not perform a behavior

## Challenges

- Know your audience: Is this a barrier? It may not be.
- Skill level (can be a range within your audience)

## Tips

- Provide to those who intend to act, just don't know how
- Show and tell
- Mentoring program design element

# Strategy 2 : Prompts

Simple Requests or reminders

## Benefits

- Easy
- Inexpensive

## Challenges

- Careful design is key
- Prompts as a stand alone do not yield lasting change



# Strategy 2: Prompts - Continued



## Tips:

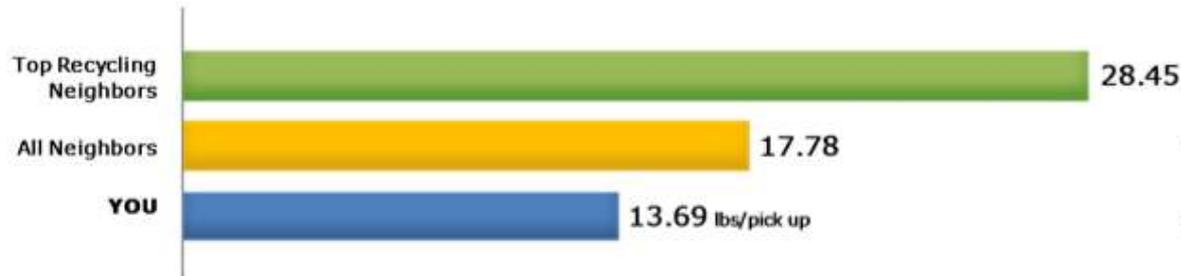
- Be specific
- Place close to behavior
- Give frequently
- Include motives
- Convenient to perform
- Trustworthy source
- Encourage positive behavior

# Strategy 3: Feedback

- Letting people know how they are doing

## Last Month Neighbor Comparison

You recycled **23% LESS** material than your neighbors.



### ■ YOU

Average pounds per household in your neighborhood (see map) about 1,000 households

### ■ All Neighbors

Average pounds per household city-wide (all neighborhoods)

### ■ Top Recycling Neighbors

Neighborhoods with the most pounds per household of recycled material collected

# Strategy 3: Feedback - Continued

## Benefits:

- Can be provided in many different ways
- Tends to work best for those below a set goal

## Challenges:

- Can backfire
- Needed frequently
- Individual feedback is the most effective and the most difficult.

## Tips for Application:

- Give immediately after behavior and personalize
- Frame positively and convert to units that are meaningful

# Strategy 4: Social Norms



*"We're from the Neighborhood Watch committee.  
We've heard you're wearing a fake Rolex."*

4 out of 5  
Everglades students prefer  
not to drink alcohol when  
they hang out with friends.



Know what you stand for.

Survey results - 2268 Everglades High School students, May 20, 2008. ©

# Strategy 4: Norms

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j7OHG7tHrNM>
- Importance of crafting normative messages strategically- Ex. Iron Eyes Cody

# Strategy 4 : Social Norms

## Benefits & Challenges

- The behavior of the majority
- Community integration

## Factors that encourage a “yes” to a social request

- Reciprocation
- Consistency
- Liking
- Authority

# Strategy 5: Story-telling



# Strategy 5 : Storytelling



# Strategy 5: Story-telling

## Benefits

- Experience

## Challenge

- Audience familiarity

## Aspects of interesting stories

- Problem solving
- Characterization
- Concreteness – Specific details not concepts
- Imagery

# University of Michigan Graduate

**Students:** Meghan Kelly, Samuel Little , Kaitlin Phelps,  
and Carrie Roble



# Small Group Activity

- How can you creatively apply the five strategies discussed tonight? How to skills Prompts, Feedback, Social Norms, and Story telling?
- How can you creatively apply some of the other social science strategies listed in the guidance document?

There are no wrong answers! But be prepared to share.