

A complex network diagram with numerous nodes and connecting lines, rendered in a light blue/white color against a dark purple background. The nodes vary in size and are interconnected by thin lines, creating a dense web of connections.

# HEALTH BEHAVIOR

THEORY, RESEARCH, AND PRACTICE

FIFTH **5** EDITION

KAREN GLANZ · BARBARA K. RIMER  
K. VISWANATH

EDITORS

WILEY

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# **HEALTH BEHAVIOR**

## **THEORY, RESEARCH, AND PRACTICE**

**Fifth Edition**

**Karen Glanz  
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***In memory of my father, Michael Glanz, who lived so well and so long, and whose unconditional love and support helped me to succeed in work and in life.***

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***In memory of Irving Rimer, my father, who did so much to reduce smoking rates in the U.S. He inspired me and others through his love, courage, conscience, and creativity. And with thanks to my husband, Bernard Glassman, whose support enables me to accomplish more than I could achieve alone.***

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***To my parents and their parents who modeled a life of honesty, industry, and kindness to their children and grandchildren.***

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## Foreword

Health is inseparable from behavior. According to one CDC study, individuals who engaged in one or more of three healthy behaviors—not smoking, eating a healthy diet, and getting adequate physical activity—substantially reduced their risk of death within the next six years. The greatest benefit was seen among those who engaged in all three healthy behaviors. But if the benefits of a healthy lifestyle are so clear, why aren't these behaviors more common, and why are they so difficult to change.

This fifth edition of *Health Behavior: Theory, Research, and Practice* provides a compelling and practical response to these difficult questions. This volume is compelling because it provides vivid illustrations of the multiple determinants and complex mechanisms underlying health behavior. It is practical in that it provides a feasible roadmap for conceptualizing, measuring, and changing health behaviors within everyday contexts.

The challenges faced by any individual or organization that seeks to influence health behaviors are many. Where should we focus? What strategies should we use? What outcomes should we measure? Whether we are working in a local or national context, the temptation often is to rely on intuition or the least controversial strategy. But as this book demonstrates, such an approach is not only inappropriate but inexcusable. Given the scarcity of resources to support health behavior programs and the scale of the problems to be addressed, it is essential that we rely on sound research evidence and a rigorous and explicit conceptualization of both the target behaviors and the strategies required to modify them. A complete understanding of behavior is not a prerequisite to action, but action uninformed by the best



available theory and evidence concerning the determinants of that behavior is foolish.

The unique role that this and previous editions of this classic text are playing in the evolution of health behavior theory, research, and application cannot be underestimated. For many years, an unfortunate schism between research and practice existed, and to some extent, it still exists. Much of the literature in the field has been either too esoteric and theoretical or too limited in its rigor and generalizability. Current and future leaders in the field need to learn how best to balance the conceptual with the practical. This book is designed precisely to fill that gap. The chapters throughout this book recognize and appreciate this fundamental challenge but then go on to demonstrate the practical utility of theory in a variety of public health contexts. The solutions are imperfect and evolving, but as in all fields of science, progress has been facilitated through the development of new methods, the testing and refinement of theories, and the diversification of our workforce. The growth of transdisciplinary team science has continued to challenge traditional ways of thinking within the research community while the substantive engagement of community stakeholders has informed the application of theories to implementation strategies.

Within the context of other books in the field, this one does not focus on one problem domain, nor does it focus on one theoretical approach. The goal instead is to provide students and practitioners with a diverse set of theories and applications in order to illustrate how to rigorously conceptualize problems and how best to address them in ways that test these conceptualizations. Rather than advocating one “best theory,” this book illustrates the reciprocal nature of understanding and action, encouraging the reader to consider the context of the problem, the

relevant levels of analysis, and the importance of measuring key constructs. Generalizable knowledge depends on the careful assessment of mechanisms underlying behavior change, and the work described here indicates that there is an ongoing need for basic behavioral science. That work is described elsewhere, as is purely applied work that focuses entirely on a particular health behavior or problem context. The achievement of this book is that it provides the reader with foundational knowledge concerning the theory-intervention interface in a manner that is relevant to both researchers and practitioners.

As in previous editions, the editors have enlisted an impressive group of experienced scholars who have conducted some of the best theoretically based intervention research. The scope of the volume has expanded, in terms of both the theories covered and the increased emphasis on disparities and theory utilization. Given rapid changes in information technology and the information environment, the current edition also reflects changes in how health communication strategies are conceptualized. As new sources of *big data*, such as social media, become available to health behavior scientists, the tension between atheoretical exploratory analysis methods and more focused, theoretically driven research is likely to grow. Although exploratory analytic methods will continue to uncover unanticipated relationships and generate hypotheses, the work described in this book demonstrates the unique value of theory in establishing priorities for measurement and targeted intervention.

Perhaps no other policy context in recent years has generated as much discussion and debate as health insurance and health care reform. Much of the debate surrounding how best to improve the quality and efficiency of health care focuses on strategies for changing the behavior of patients, providers, administrators, and health

care systems. It is worth noting that many of the discussions suffer from a lack of appreciation for many of the key themes and challenges addressed in this book. What are the theories of change underlying the predictions and interventions offered by proponents and critics of reform? Are assumptions clearly and explicitly stated so that they can be tested against the data? If so, to what degree does the evidence support predictions derived from the theory? Do theories adequately address behavior change at multiple levels of the organization? How do changes in the context of patient care influence behaviors at the individual patient and provider level? In order to test theories of health reform, we need valid measures of theoretical constructs such as coordinated care, patient-centered care, and the value of care. Do these measures exist, and if so, are they being used appropriately?

The example of health care reform illustrates how vital the knowledge and skills afforded by this volume are in a complex and contentious policy environment. Our progress against obesity, tobacco use, diabetes, asthma, alcohol abuse, and many other health problems will depend on our ability to thoughtfully utilize and evaluate theories of health behavior in order to maximize the impact of health behavior interventions. Policies can serve as constraints or facilitators at any level and we urgently need more evidence concerning the impact of policies on individual behaviors. We also need more theory-based policy, tested in many cases through natural experiments such as state-to-state variation. By reviewing the research evidence and theories described here, the reader will be in a much stronger position to contribute thoughtfully and substantially to some of the most important health policy debates facing nations around the world. Just as global health has served as a catalyst for the growth of implementation science, debates concerning the most

effective strategies for preventing disease will only strengthen the demand for individuals who are knowledgeable about health behavior theory, research, and practice. This book provides a timely and essential foundation for students, researchers, or practitioners who want to make meaningful and long-lasting contributions to the health and vitality of their fellow citizens.

Robert T. Croyle  
Bethesda, Maryland  
December 2015

## Preface

Programs to influence health behavior, including health promotion and education programs and interventions, are more likely to benefit participants and communities when guided by a theory or theories of health behavior. Theories of health behavior can help program planners to consider in a systematic way the sources of influence on particular health behaviors, and to identify the targets for behavior change and methods for accomplishing these changes. Theories also can inform the evaluation of change efforts by helping planners, evaluators, and others to specify the outcomes to be measured, as well as the timing and methods of study to be used. Although the evidence is not unequivocal, when they are developed and implemented thoughtfully and systematically, theory-driven health promotion and education efforts stand in contrast to programs based primarily on precedent, tradition, intuition, or general principles.

Theory-driven health behavior change interventions and programs require an understanding of the components of health behavior theories, as well as the operational or practical forms of the theories. The first edition of *Health Behavior and Health Education: Theory, Research, and Practice*, published in 1990, was the first text to provide an in-depth analysis of a variety of theories of health behavior relevant to health education in a single volume. It brought together dominant health behavior theories, research based on those theories, and examples of health education practice derived from theory that had been tested through evaluation and research. The second (1996), third (2002), and fourth (2008) editions of *Health Behavior and Health Education* updated and improved upon the earlier volumes.

People around the world are using this book. It has been translated into multiple languages, including, most recently, Japanese, Korean, and Chinese editions.

It has been over six years since the release of the fourth edition of this book. We are confident that the fifth edition of *Health Behavior: Theory, Research, and Practice* improves upon the preceding edition, as each earlier edition has done. We have shortened the title to reflect the broad influence of health behavior theory and research, which is not limited to health education and health promotion. The main purpose of the book is the same: to advance the science of understanding health behavior and the practice of health behavior change through the informed application of theories of health behavior. Likewise, this book serves as the definitive text for students, practitioners, and scientists in these areas and in education in three ways: by analyzing the key components of theories of health behavior, describing current applications of these theories in selected public health and health promotion programs and interventions, and identifying important future directions for research and practice in health behavior change.

The fifth edition responds to new developments in health behavior theories and the application of theories in new settings, to new populations, and in new ways. We have moved the chapter on ecological models to the first section of the book to set the stage for the subsequent chapters grouped into individual-, interpersonal-, and community-level theories and models. The previous edition's chapter on social networks and social support is now two separate chapters, reflecting the increasing activity and maturation of theory-driven research on social networks. We have added a chapter on behavioral economics and its application to understanding and improving health behavior. Three chapters in the fourth edition do not