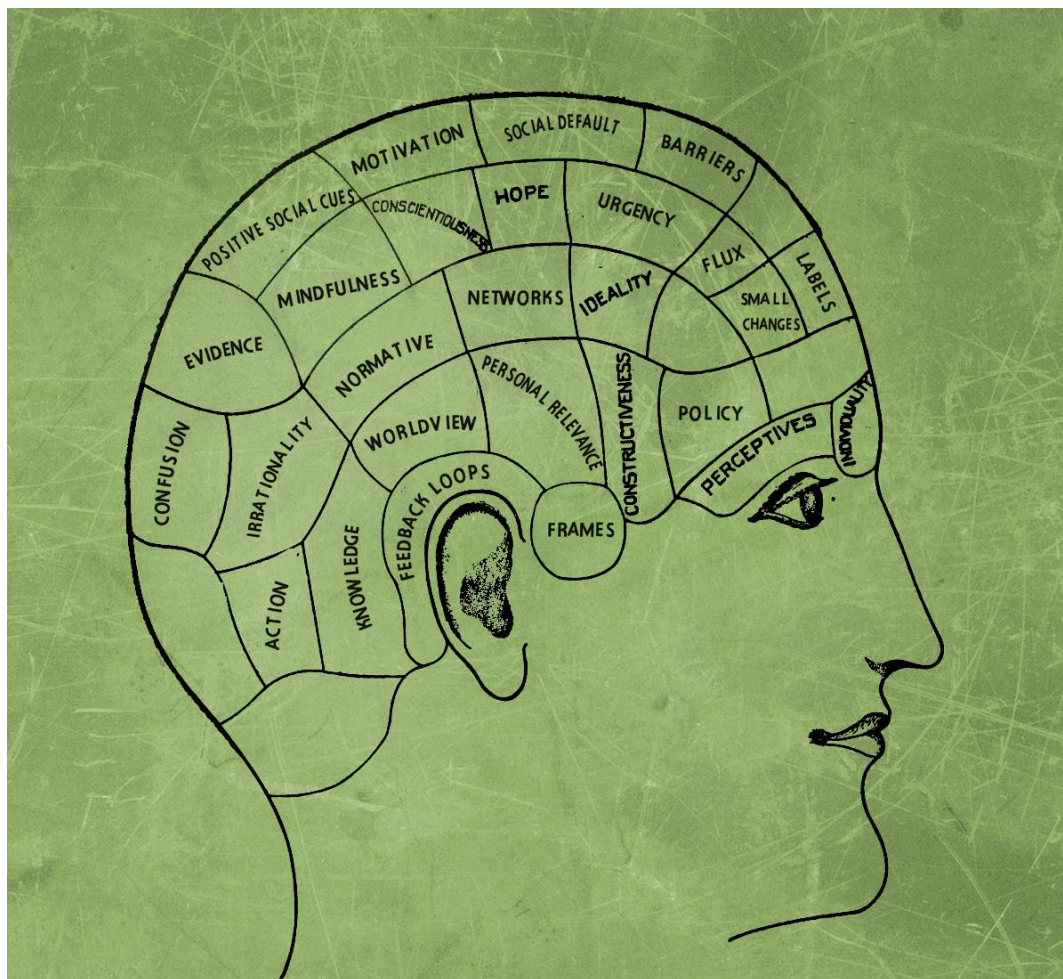


BEHAVIOUR CHANGE INTERVENTION TOOLS

Sustainable Behaviour

“Human behaviour underlies almost all environmental problems, such as air and water pollution, climate change, deforestation and loss of biodiversity. Most people want to live in a way that treats the ecosystems we depend on with care and respect, and people express increasing worry about the state of our natural environment. Yet we all find ourselves engaging in unsustainable daily behaviours that have negative environmental impact. We are intelligent, thinking creatures. Why is it so difficult for us to change our behaviour and act upon our environmental concerns?” (Manning, 2009, p.3)



In-order for the **Whole-School Earth Action Plan** to foster long term sustainable behaviours, it was important for us to gain some insight into the psychology of behaviour. The goal of any school sustainability action plan should be for sustainable behaviours to become the new ‘social norm.’ We like to call this new behaviour the “*social default.*”

BEHAVIOUR CHANGE INTERVENTION TOOLS

Make Sustainability the Social Default

This term “social default” was coined by Christie Manning, Ph.D. in her document, “The Psychology of Sustainable Behavior.” For more insight into the Psychology of Sustainable Behavior, we recommend you read this handbook which provides research-based tips from psychology to help people in their efforts to empower sustainability in their personal life, community, and workplace. (2009)

<https://www.pca.state.mn.us/sites/default/files/p-ee1-01.pdf>

Psychological research has shown that, *“awareness of an issue is not sufficient to motivate people to act”* (Gardner, 2001; Howard, 2000; Schultz, in press> referenced in P. Schick & P.W.Schultz).

This would indicate that a sustainability program implemented within a school which relied heavily on methods of awareness through flyers, newsletters etc. would not prove successful on its own. This is not saying that “awareness” does not play a role in sustainability campaigns, as it is very important. However, awareness must be partnered with other methods for sustainability action.

Research indicates that the use of behaviour change intervention tools are more likely to influence long term sustainable behaviour change (Community Education & Programs Discussion Paper, Behaviour Change Intervention Tools, Ashlea Bartram, 2009)

Behaviour Change Intervention Tools

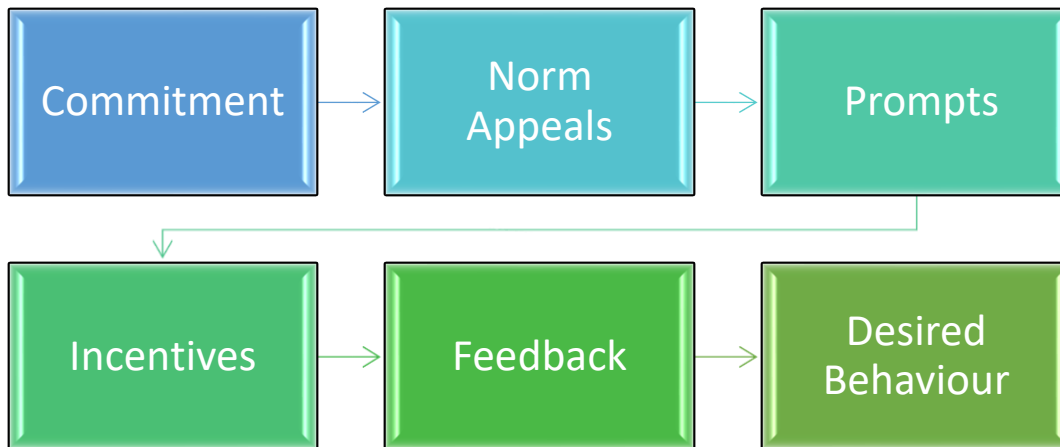
In most instances, the behaviour change intervention tools utilised in the **Whole-School Earth Action Plan** are:

- Commitments
- Norm Appeals
- Prompts
- Incentives/Rewards
- Feedback.

When these tools were used together, they became very effective for fostering sustainable behaviours.

“Effective tools are primarily considered to be those that lead to a measurable change in a target behaviour, particularly in the longer term.” (Bartram, 2009, p. 5)

BEHAVIOUR CHANGE INTERVENTION TOOLS



Definitions are provided below of the behaviour change intervention tools along with a few examples of how these tools were implemented.

Contained within the Earth Action manuals (found @ www.earthactionplan.com) are full details of how the behaviour change tools were used. The manuals also provide the cost associated for each tool that was implemented.

In most instances, the optimal outcome will occur when more than one tool is embedded within the sustainability activity/initiative.

1. **COMMITMENTS** are considered to be extremely beneficial by Psychologists, especially if the commitment is written or verbal and presented to the 'public.' It's noted that when we do something which is inconsistent with our prior actions or beliefs, we experience what Leon Festinger (1957) terms 'cognitive dissonance', a state of discomfort, and we will take steps to reduce this either by changing our behaviour or our attitudes.

Commitment example:

- On Earth Day, students complete hand-written pledges and publicly display them at the school for other students to read.
- On the back of an entry form for a competition (to win a Nude Food Lunch box), students write their pledge on how they could reduce lunch box packaging. The winning entry is read out loud during parade.

BEHAVIOUR CHANGE INTERVENTION TOOLS

2. **NORM APPEALS** are based on the Social Learning Theory which “states that social behaviour (any type of behaviour that we display socially) is learned primarily by observing and imitating the actions of others” (Bandura, 1977). Norm appeals can also be presented as a Prompt (see Prompt definition below)

Norm Appeal examples:

- School stakeholders model the desired behaviour. This means School staff learn how to recycle correctly, turn off the lights when leaving the room, etc.
- Key Community members and experts are invited to the school to reinforce positive sustainable behaviours; ie wildlife workshop, local councilor acknowledges the students sustainability achievements, etc.

Norm Appeal Prompt example:

- “Recycle, everybody is doing it” The word “everybody” is the key word in this norm appeal message (prompt) to take action (recycle).

Use Norm Appeal Prompts at Parades, within the classroom, in the staffrooms, in School News Letters, message boards, etc.

3. **PROMPTS** are put in place, at the place where the action needs to occur, to remind students and other school stakeholders to do something. “Prompts attempt to overcome the barrier of habit or forgetfulness or just not understanding the course of action to take” (Bartram, 2009, p. 6). The best prompts, might also include a norm appeal (see example above).

Prompt examples:

- POSTERS/SIGNS> Nude Food Day, Do the right thing, Put it in the right bin, Messaging to reduce food waste, Turn off the lights when leaving the room, etc.
- STICKERS> Bin labels make a great prompt to help students and staff to sort waste correctly. Some bin labels, however, do not provide enough information to help students (and staff) to sort waste effectively. Put photos of common lunch time waste all over the waste bins.
- SOCIAL MEDIA> Regular Facebook posts keep families informed and up to date with current events to attend. Although social media is not in the immediate area of where an action needs to occur, it does offer an opportunity to provide a constant reminder.
- VERBAL PROMPTS> Sometimes a simple friendly, “Great job with your nude food lunch,” while the student is eating their lunch, is enough for the action to be repeated. Student sustainability team members and staff can easily provide verbal prompts.

BEHAVIOUR CHANGE INTERVENTION TOOLS

4. **INCENTIVES/REWARDS** work quite well at motivating the students to undertake an activity they would not have otherwise done. The incentives/rewards are used to encourage the students to undertake particular activities more frequently (such as sorting their waste).

Incentive/Rewards examples: Ice cream voucher for completing sustainable actions, end of year trophy award for the top 'Earth-Kid.'

5. **FEEDBACK** about performance/results can be comprehensive data presented back to school stakeholders or it can be as simple as a comment.

Feedback example: "Congratulations, you are on track"

Data might include waste and energy audits. Quantitative data can be provided at parades, within social media posts, school newsletters etc.

"Changing individual behaviour is central to achieving a sustainable future. Accordingly, psychology is of considerable relevance to the delivery of effective environmental programs. Desirable goals, such as lowering greenhouse gas emissions, reducing waste, and increasing energy and water efficiency can be met only if high levels of public participation are achieved."
(McKenzie-Mohr, 2000, p. 544)

Barriers and Benefits

Before any behaviour change intervention tool can be implemented, it is important to understand the barriers to desirable sustainability behaviours at your School. Within an educational institution, these barriers are most likely to be the following:

- The School's physical properties do not allow for sustainable behaviours to occur (ie. No recycle or organic bins available for the students to use)
- Lack of funding to initiate a sustainability action plan
- Lack of support from various school stakeholders

Alternatively look for the Benefits that promote sustainable behaviours to occur.

The **Whole-School Earth Action Plan** has been developed to identify some of the barriers that a Primary School is likely to encounter. Additionally, solutions are provided for these barriers, however, **'one size does not fit all.'**

We understand that schools will have different barriers and benefits and it's likely your school may have different approaches to overcoming these barriers.

Please keep in mind that this document is not a definitive guide on how to "get rid of the old habit and replace it with a new habit." (Wu 2014).