



ESSENTIAL PUBLIC HEALTH

Series Editor: Richard Riegelman

THIRD EDITION

Essentials of
Health Behavior

*Social and Behavioral Theory
in Public Health*

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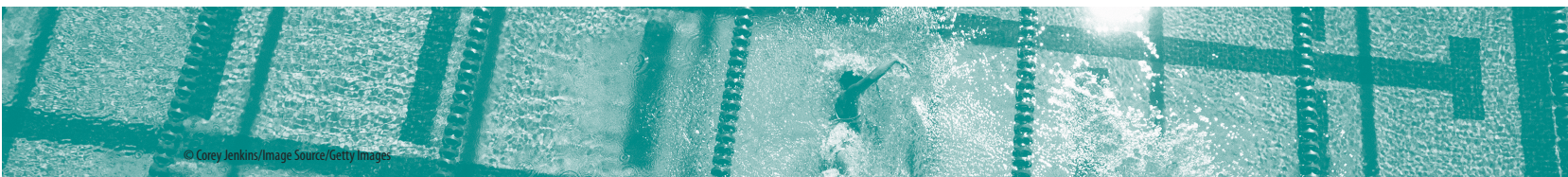
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This book is dedicated to my family for their support and tolerance; to all those at The George Washington University and at Jones & Bartlett Learning who are behind the Essential Public Health series; and, most importantly, to all those already working or planning to work on the front lines to help improve the lives and health of so many people in the United States and around the world. Your work is a testament to humanity at its best.



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Prologue

Essentials of Health Behavior was one of the first books in the *Essential Public Health* series, which now includes over 20 books. It set a standard for the series. Dr. Edberg's writing engages students as he takes them on a journey connecting theory and practice while reassuring them every step of the way. The *Third Edition* continues in this tradition with its emphasis on making theory come to life using stories and scenarios. In addition to updates throughout the text, a new chapter on behavioral epigenetics has been added to the *Third Edition*. Epigenetics is a new area of health behavior that looks at the interaction between social–environmental influences, genetic expression, and their potential impacts on behavior.

Dr. Edberg's writing allows students to understand these complex theories in ways that relate to their lives. From cigarette smoking, to eating habits, to our daily routine, our everyday behaviors affect our health in ways that we often fail to appreciate or even notice. Beyond our individual behaviors, there are larger social and population forces at play in all of our lives, which serve to mold and further reinforce our individual behavior.

Essentials of Health Behavior skillfully combines an emphasis on individual behavior with a clear focus on the social factors that influence the “big picture,” population health perspective. Mark Edberg's approach grounds the practical everyday behaviors within key theories of human behavior drawn from the social sciences. Building on this understanding of health behavior, *Essentials of Health Behavior* examines a range of methods for changing behavior and applies these methods to programs in health promotion and disease prevention.

Dr. Edberg brings to his writing the lessons of extensive teaching experience at both the undergraduate and graduate levels—at The George Washington

University Milken Institute School of Public Health and its Columbian College of Arts and Sciences, he has taught health behavior theory and qualitative research courses, and courses that focus on the impact of culture on health—as well as his training and experience as an anthropologist and social researcher with a public health focus. As an anthropologist, he has a unique understanding of the impact culture and social organization have on individual behavior.

Essentials of Health Behavior can be used in social and behavioral sciences as well as in the public health curriculum looking at the many factors that affect health behavior. Health behavior is a key building block for curriculum in health education. In addition, health professions educators in the clinical disciplines are increasingly coming to appreciate that good outcomes rest on understanding the social and economic factors that affect individual behavior.

As the behavioral and social sciences become more integrated in preparing for the clinical professions, the Third Edition of *Essentials of Health Behavior* provides a structured curriculum designed to fulfill these needs. The recent revision of the Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT) now includes as one of its four sections Psychological, Social, and Biological Foundations of Behavior. *Essentials of Health Behavior* is an excellent text for addressing many of these issues and making health behavior more relevant to premedical students.

Students in a wide range of disciplines will benefit from *Essentials of Health Behavior*. They will take away key concepts that will serve them well for many years to come. They will find themselves engaged in a voyage of discovery and enjoying the journey.

Richard Riegelman, MD, MPH, PhD
Series Editor—Essential Public Health



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Preface

Health promotion, education, and prevention programs ultimately focus on *changing health behavior*. But what do we mean when we say “health behavior?” Is health-related behavior really something different than any other behavior? There is no reason to think it is. To help us understand it, we can draw from the fascinating, multidisciplinary, and ongoing quest to try and understand *human behavior* in general. That, of course, is a big task, and no book can cover that in any adequate way. What we can do is provide an introduction to the kinds of theoretical approaches that are used or could be used in developing and implementing health promotion programs and show how such approaches are applied to real-life settings.

It is my hope that combining these elements together in one book will fill an important gap for undergraduate programs in public health and will provide an important piece of the foundation necessary for understanding the field. It is important that students in public health have a solid grounding in social/behavioral theory, and it is particularly important that they gain a general understanding in this subject area before they proceed to a graduate program or move to direct involvement in prevention and health education programs that apply such theory. Why? Because proper use of theory in public health means, in part, the ability to place particular theoretical approaches in context, to have some sense of their origins, their underlying assumptions, their strengths and weaknesses, and the programs and situations for which they might or might not be most applicable.

More and more, public health interventions *and their evaluations* are guided by theoretical frameworks. Program goals, program components, and the types of data used as evidence of program success are, thus, built on specific theoretical underpinnings. Without at least a general background, application of theory can all too easily become formulaic and inappropriate form without substance. A key aim of this book, in that sense, is to provide the groundwork for understanding, assessing, and effectively applying theory.

In that spirit, *Essentials of Health Behavior* is designed to:

1. Introduce students to the relationship between behavior and a selection of major health issues.
2. Provide an introductory background to the kinds of social and behavioral theories that guide our understanding of health-related behavior and that form the background for health promotion and prevention efforts.
3. Explore some of the ways in which these theories and approaches are used in applied health promotion efforts.

In the first section, we will introduce the relationship of behavior to health, review a sample of current and ongoing health problems (domestic and international), and, in a broad sense, discuss the relationship of *behavior* to those health problems. In the second section, we will provide a context from which to understand theory, and survey theoretical perspectives from psychology, social psychology, sociology, anthropology, ecology and other disciplines that offer explanations of human behavior, keeping in mind that health behavior is one domain of human behavior in general—thus linking the field of health promotion and prevention to the broader context of social/behavioral theory. The second section then goes on to outline and explain the range of social and behavioral theories used in health promotion across social–ecological levels, from individual-level theories all the way out to theories that address socio-economic, cultural and political context, as well as a brief, new introduction to the emerging field of behavioral epigenetics. The third section will introduce students to theory-based program planning and application, providing real-world examples across a range of settings—including community, school, and workplace programs, global health, mass media/communications, and programs targeting special populations. This section will also show how theory links program design, implementation, and evaluation. In the fourth section, current issues in the applied field of health behavior/health promotion will be

reviewed, and we will present some of the occupational and career possibilities for which material in the book is relevant.

► **New to the Second Edition**

In the *Second Edition*, data and other information were updated throughout, with additional applied examples of theoretical applications. A new chapter on multilevel theory was added because of the growing recognition that complex community contexts require interventions that address multiple levels.

► **New to the Third Edition**

For the *Third Edition*, data and other information have again been updated throughout, with additional applied examples of theoretical applications. Information about several new or additional theories has been added to chapters on individual theory and multilevel theory. Significantly, a new chapter on behavioral epigenetics has been added to the *Third Edition*. This is a brand-new area of theory that seeks to examine the interaction between social–environmental influences and genetic expression, and the potential impacts on behavior.

Acknowledgments

One can never attempt to do a book alone, and with that in mind, I am deeply grateful to a number of individuals who provided invaluable support and assistance in preparing this book:

- Richard Riegelman, MD, MPH, PhD, for his leadership in compiling the series and for shepherding everyone through the process.
- For the *Third Edition*, Tigest Mekonnen, MPH candidate, and Ichhya Pant, MPH/DrPH candidate, for able assistance in updating the data and intervention examples throughout. I also want to acknowledge students in the doctoral social/behavioral theory seminar in the Department of Prevention and Community Health, who, as always, are working with recent theory and application, and raising questions that push me to seek additional answers.
- For the *Second Edition*, Natalie Terens, MPH, for thorough and timely help in preparing the manuscript.
- From the *First Edition* and carried into this revised edition, input and expert critique from Kristen Corey, PhD (Chapter 2); Deborah Galvin, PhD, and Julia Lear, PhD (Chapter 10); Lorien Abrams, PhD (Chapter 11); and Laurie Krieger, PhD (Chapter 12).
- The Department of Prevention and Community Health, Milken Institute School of Public Health at The George Washington University, for overall support and expertise.

And, of course, thanks to my wife Haykham and children Eleazar and Jordana for their tolerance and support across all three editions.



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About the Author

Mark Edberg, PhD, MA, is Associate Professor in the Department of Prevention and Community Health at The George Washington University Milken Institute School of Public Health, with secondary appointments in the Department of Anthropology and Elliott School of International Affairs. Dr. Edberg is an applied and academic anthropologist with more than 25 years of experience in social research, interventions, evaluation, strategic planning for agencies, and communication, primarily in public health, in both domestic and global contexts. Key areas of focus have been high-risk and marginalized populations, social determinants of health, health disparities, minority health, at-risk youth, prevention of youth violence, prevention of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections, substance abuse, general issues of poverty and health, and theory development. He currently directs a health disparities research center (Avance Center for the Advancement of Immigrant/Refugee Health) that has been funded by the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities as well as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and he has directed other research and interventions funded by CDC, National Institute on Drug Abuse, U.S. Office of Minority Health, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, the Administration on Children, Youth, and Families, and other U.S. Department of Health and

Human Services agencies. Globally, he has worked with the Gates Foundation in Ethiopia, with UN International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) in the Latin America–Caribbean regional office and in Belize, and, as Director of the Center for Social Well-Being and Development, he has worked on projects for UNICEF in Belize, South Africa, Indonesia, Ghana, and Jamaica. Previously, he has provided consulting and support for the Organization of American States, U.S. Agency for International Development, Urban Institute, and local governments. Dr. Edberg teaches graduate courses in social/behavioral theory, qualitative research methods, and culture and health, as well as courses in the Anthropology Department. He has published numerous journal articles, and his recent books include an edited volume (and chapter) on youth violence and economic factors; a book on culture, health, and diversity; this textbook on social and behavioral theory in public health; an accompanying reader; and a book documenting his U.S.–Mexico border research on narcocorridos and the narco-trafficker persona (and implications for popular understanding of risks for violence, HIV/AIDS, and other issues). He is also a recipient of the Praxis Award for excellence in applied anthropology, a Salzburg Global Seminar Fellowship, a Fulbright Senior Specialist award, and is a Fellow of the Society for Applied Anthropology.

