

Introduction to

Health Behavior Theory

FOURTH
EDITION

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40321-3

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Cover Image (Title Page, Part Opener, Chapter Opener):
© Filo/DigitalVision Vectors/Getty Images
Printing and Binding: PA Hutchison Company

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Hayden, Joanna, author.
Title: Introduction to health behavior theory / Joanna Hayden, PhD, CHES,
Professor Emeritus, Department of Public Health William, Paterson
University.
Description: Fourth edition. | Burlington, Massachusetts : Jones &
Bartlett Learning, [2023] | Includes bibliographical references and
index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2021062541 | ISBN 9781284231922 (paperback)
Subjects: LCSH: Health behavior--Textbooks. | BISAC: EDUCATION / Counseling
/ General
Classification: LCC RA776.9 .H39 2023 | DDC 613--dc23/eng/20211228
LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021062541>

6048

Printed in the United States of America
26 25 24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Preface

Theory is the foundation of a profession. It is what professional practice and preparation are built upon. While this does not make the learning of theory any easier, it does make it necessary.

Theory can be difficult for students to grasp. Perhaps because there is no reservoir of knowledge from which to draw from as there is for say math, history, English, or the sciences.

The purpose of this text then, 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 text 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 an expanded section on the factors that influence health behavior. Chapters 2 through 11 cover the more frequently used health behavior theories in public health. Each theory chapter has been revised and expanded, and images have been changed or added where appropriate. Each of these chapters begins with a revised 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 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 not because they are meant to show how theories are used in a variety of settings, by an array of public health professionals working with different populations, addressing an assortment of health issues.

Each chapter with the exception of Chapter 1, ends with a *Theory in Action* section—a full-length, peer-reviewed journal article that provides a complete picture of how the theory was 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. All the articles and class activities in this fourth edition are new.

Also new to this edition are additional examples of “Theory in Action.” These additional open access, annotated articles further illustrate the application of theory. They can be used by students to reinforce the content of the chapter and by faculty as the basis for supplementary assignments or class activities.

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 includes a *Theory Chart* to help answer that question. The chart groups the theories by levels and is a compilation of the tables provided at the beginning of each chapter.

In no way does this book purport to cover all 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 public health

education and promotion. It is my hope that students find this book engaging enough to read it, practical enough to use it, and comprehensive enough to begin filling their theory reservoirs.

Acknowledgments

Just as it takes a village to raise a child, it took the “village” of Jones & Bartlett Learning to bring this fourth edition of *Introduction to Health Behavior Theory* to fruition. Although the words are mine, the “book” is theirs. Thank you to each of the wonderful folks I had the pleasure of working with during the writing of this edition.

To my editorial staff in particular, saying “thank you” just doesn’t convey my appreciation for all you did to help make this edition the best one yet. To my production staff, Pranitha Vaithianathan, Meghan McDonagh, and Faith Brosnan, many thanks for all your help. To Sara Bempkins, my content strategist, thank you so very much for being my right

hand through the whole process, and to Maria Leon Maimone, the rights specialist, for having the patience of a saint! A special thanks to Sophie Teague, my editor, for her confidence in me and commitment to this project.

I am also grateful to the reviewers who took time out of their hectic schedules to provide me with suggestions for this fourth edition. I hope they see how their recommendations were put into action.

Last, but not least, I’d like to thank my husband Roger for his support during the writing of this edition, and to our pooch, Alfie, thank you for making sure I took breaks every few hours to walk outside.



About the Author

Dr. Joanna Hayden began her more than 40-year career in health and education as a critical care nurse. After earning her doctorate in health education from New York University, she transitioned into academia at William Paterson University where she served as chairperson of the department of Public Health for over a decade. Dr. Hayden held leadership

positions in state and national professional organizations, was an inaugural associate editor of the journal *Health Promotion Practice*, and presenter at local, state, and national conferences and workshops. In addition to this text, she is the author of *Introduction to Public Health Program Planning* as well as numerous journal articles and book chapters.

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