Yorkshire and Humber Summary of Behaviour Change Techniques

Abraham C, Michie S: **A taxonomy of behavior change techniques used in interventions**. *Health Psychology* 2008, **27**(3):379-387.

- The need for a common vocabulary to represent the content components of behaviour change interventions was identified
- Abraham and Michie (2008) developed and extended existing lists of content components into a set of distinct theory-linked definitions of BCTs, twenty-six BCTs were defined
- They tested whether these definitions could be used to reliably identify techniques included in interventions on the basis of intervention descriptions
- The development of this reliable taxonomy of BCTs allows researchers to identify the BCTs that contribute to effectiveness across interventions

BCT 1. Provide general information on behaviour-health link

Information about the relationship between the behaviour and health – including susceptibility or factual risk and/or mortality information OR. health education material relevant to the behaviour.

BCT 2. Provide information on consequences

Involves providing information focusing on what will happen if the person performs the behaviour including the benefits and costs of action or inaction.

BCT 3. Provide information about others' approval

Involves information about what other people think about the reader's or target person's behaviour. It clarifies whether others will like, approve or disapprove of what the person is doing or will do.

BCT 4. Prompt intention formation

Involves encouraging the person to set a general goal or make a behavioural resolution e.g., "I will take more exercise next week" would count as a prompt to intention formation. This is directed towards encouraging people to decide to change.

BCT 5. Prompt barrier Identification

Think about potential barriers and plan ways of overcoming them. Barriers may include competing goals in specified situations. This may be described as "problem solving" and if it is problem solving in relation performance of the behaviour i.e., then it is an instance of this technique.

BCT 6. Provide general encouragement

Involves praising or rewarding the person for effort or performance without making this contingent on specific behavioural performance; or "motivating" the person in an unspecified manner. This will include attempts to enhance self-efficacy through argument or persuasion (e.g., telling someone the will be able to perform a behaviour).

BCT 7. Set graded tasks

Set the person easy-to-perform tasks, making them increasingly difficult until target behaviour is performed.

BCT 8. Provide instruction

Involves telling the person how to perform a behaviour or preparatory behaviours. For example, providing individual face to face instructions, offering an instructional group class or providing "tips" on how to take action in text form.

BCT 9. Model/ Demonstrate the behaviour

Involves showing the person how to correctly perform a behaviour e.g., face-to-face as in a group class or using video.

BCT 10. Prompt specific goal setting

Involves detailed planning of what the person will do including, at least, a very specific definition of the behaviour e.g., frequency (such as how many times a day/week), intensity (e.g., sped) or duration (e.g., for how long for). In addition, at least one of the following contexts i.e., where, when, how or with whom must be specified. This could include identification of sub-goals or preparatory behaviours and/or specific contexts in which the behaviour will be performed.

BCT 11. Prompt review of behavioural goals

Involves reconsideration of previously set goals/ intentions. In most cases this will follow previous goal setting and an attempt to act on those goals.

BCT 12. Prompt self-monitoring of behaviour

The person is asked to keep a record of specified behaviour/s. This could e.g., take the form of a diary or completing a questionnaire about their behaviour.

BCT 13. Provide feedback on performance

This involves either receiving data about recorded behaviour or commenting on how well or badly a person has performed an action, or a discrepancy in relation to the performance of others.

BCT 14. Provide contingent rewards

This can include praise and encouragement as well as material rewards but the reward/ incentive must be explicitly linked to the achievement of specified goals i.e. the person receives the reward if they perform the specified behaviour (or preparatory behaviour) but not if they do not perform the behaviour.

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BCT 15. Teach to use prompts/ cues

Teach the person to identify environmental prompts which can be used to remind them to perform the behaviour. This could include times of day, particular contexts or elements of contexts which prompt them to perform the target behaviour.

BCT 16. Agree behavioural contract

Must involve agreement (e.g., signing) of an explicitly specifying behaviour so that there is a written record of the person's resolution witnessed by another.

BCT 17. Prompt practice

Prompt the person to rehearse and repeat the behaviour or preparatory behaviours numerous times. Note this will also include parts of the behaviour e.g., refusal skills in relation to quitting smoking. This could be described as "building habits or routines" but is still practice so long as the person is prompted to try the behaviour (or parts of it) during the intervention.

BCT 18. Use of follow up prompts

Involves sending letters, making telephone calls, visits or follow up meetings after the major part to the behaviour change intervention has been completed. If spaced contacts is an intrinsic part of the behaviour change intervention these in themselves do not count as follow up.

BCT 19. Provide opportunities for social comparison

This will most commonly be seen in the case of group practice (e.g., group classes) but could also be employed using detailed case studies in text or video or by pairing people as supports. It provides a setting in which processes such as social comparison could occur.

BCT 20. Plan social support/ social change

Involves prompting the person to think about how others' could change their behaviour to offer him/her help and/or (instrumental) social support. This will also include provision of such support during the interventions e.g., setting up a "buddy" system or other forms of support.

BCT 21. Prompt identification as role model/ position advocate

Involves focusing on how the person may be an example to others and affect their behaviour e.g., being a good example to children. Also includes providing opportunities for participants to persuade others of the importance of adopting/ changing the behaviour. For example, giving a talk or writing a persuasive leaflet.

BCT 22. Prompt Self talk

Encourage the person to use talk to themselves (aloud or silently) before and during planned behaviours to encourage and support action.

BCT 23. Relapse prevention

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Following an initial change help the person identify situations that increase the likelihood of returning to a risk behaviour or failing to perform a new health behaviour – and help them plan how to avoid or manage the situation so that new behavioural routines are maintained.

BCT 24. Stress management

This may involve a variety of specific techniques (e.g., progressive relaxation) which do not target the behaviour directly but seek to reduce anxiety and stress to facilitate the performance of the behaviour.

BCT 25. Motivational interviewing

This is a specific set of techniques involving prompting the person to provide self-motivating statements and evaluations of own behaviour to minimise resistance to change (includes motivational counselling).

BCT 26. Time management

This includes any technique designed to help a person make time for the behaviour (e.g., how to fit it into a daily or weekly schedule). These techniques are not directed towards performance of target behaviour but rather seek to facilitate it by freeing up times when it could be performed. This technique may or may not be mentioned by name.

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