Healthy Ageing: What’s communication got to do with it?

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... Little
Homo sapiens – reasoned behavior
Homer Simpson – automated behavior / habits

Consciousness: reprogramming automated behavior

Communication about behavioral consequences → Consciousness → Subconscious → Behavior

Baumeister & Masicampo (2010)
The promise of Tailored Health Communication

But is Tailored Health Communication the cure?

• Meta-analysis comparing impact
• *Tailored Health Communication - One-size fits all communication*
• on targeted behavior

• Yes, THC fares better

• But

• Effect size is small ($r = .07$)
• Requires extended, individual interviews

Noar, Benac & Harris (2007)
And then I go and spoil it all,
by saying something stupid
like: ‘I love you’
I can see it in your eyes,
that you despise the same old lies
You heard the night before
And though it's just a line to you,
for me it's true
It never seemed so right before
I practice every day
to find some clever lines to say
to make the meaning come through
Advertisers who need to find new ways to tell about their anti-wrinkle cream
Communicating while you’ve got nothing new to tell

Hoeken, Swanepoel, Saal & Jansen (2009); Luinga & Jansen (2011)
Why do people fail to adapt their lifestyle?

• Because they do not know that smoking is dangerous to their health?

• Because they are unable to put their (good) intentions into action?
  - Only 53% of “good intentions” lead to intended behavior
  - Interventions aimed at putting intentions into actions yield large effects on subsequent behavior

• Communication should help people to put their intentions into action by
  - Getting them started
  - Prevent them from getting derailed

• See for review: Maio et al. (2007)
Strategy – Stories instead of Expositions

- A story represents connected events, concerning characters who have goals, actions they take to achieve those goals, and the consequences these actions may have.

- Promising because
  - Facilitate information processing
  - Overcome resistance
  - Provide role models

Stories are often about heroes
But they can be about you and me
Conclusions

• Do not believe people who claim to be able to persuade people to change their lifestyle through communication (alone)

• Beware of communication professionals suffering from the Frank & Nancy Sinatra syndrome

• Focus on providing scenario information that can help people to put good intentions into action

• Thank you!

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References


