Social Cognitive Theory and improving children’s nutrition

Findings from a New Zealand social marketing programme

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Health Sponsorship Council, New Zealand
Background

• 29% of NZ children overweight or obese
• Feeding our Futures part of NZ Government’s strategic response to this problem
  – National social marketing programme
Feeding our Futures

- Focus is on improving child nutrition
- Priority audience groups
  - Maori (NZ’s indigenous people)
  - Pacific peoples
  - Low socioeconomic status groups
Social Ecological Framework

- Child
- Family
- Peers
- School
- Community
- Society
Social Ecological Framework

Child
Family
Peers
School
Community
Society
Approach

• Motivate and support parents and caregivers to adopt practices that support healthy eating
  – eg. family meal times, involving children in food preparation, eating more fruit and vegetables, drinking water and milk, healthy snacking

• Theory of change informed by Social Cognitive Theory
Social Cognitive Theory

• Personal constructs:
  – Outcome expectancies [motivation]
  – Knowledge
  – Skills
  – Self-efficacy [confidence]

• Environmental constructs:
  – Modelling
  – Reinforcements
Child nutrition

Parent/caregiver individual factors
- Motivation
- Knowledge
- Skills
- Confidence
- Role-modelling

Practices
- Healthy snacking
- Fruit & vegetables
- Meal-times
- Involving children

Family food environment

Feeding our Futures
Survey data

• Children’s Food and Drinks Survey ‘07
  – Nationwide, in-home survey
  – 1,133 parents and caregivers of 5 to 16-year-olds

• Health and Lifestyles Survey ‘08
  – Nationwide, in-home survey
  – 719 parents and caregivers of 5 to 16-year-olds

• Descriptive ‘analysis’ only

Preliminary data only
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Outcome expectancies [motivation]

• Limited awareness of risks and benefits of children eating healthily
• Low concern about children’s weight and diet
  – Concern higher in Pacific households and households in high deprivation areas

2007 survey results
Knowledge

• High awareness of importance of fruit and vegetable consumption
  – Higher awareness in Pacific households and households in high deprivation areas

• Some awareness of importance of drinking water
  – Higher awareness in Maori and Pacific households and households in high deprivation areas

2007 survey results
Self-efficacy [confidence]

- 60% parent/caregivers found it ‘easy’ to get child to eat/drink healthily
  - Lower for Pacific parent/caregivers (54%)

2007 survey results
Role-modelling

- 90% parent/caregivers tried to set a good example by what they eat and drink
  - Lower for Maori (83%) and Pacific (80%) parent/caregivers
- 92% parent/caregivers talked to their children about healthy and unhealthy foods
  - Lower for Maori parent/caregivers (84%)

2007 survey results
In 2007 …

**Overall -**
- ✓ Use of healthy eating practices, incl. role-modelling
- ✓ Confidence in ability to ensure healthy eating
- ? Motivation to change - limited
- ? Knowledge and skills - information limited

**For priority audience groups -**
- ↓ Use of healthy eating practices, incl. role-modelling
- ↓ Confidence in ability to ensure healthy eating
- ✓ Motivation to change
- ? Knowledge and skills - information limited
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Outcome expectancies [motivation]

- High % of parent/caregivers not already using healthy eating practices, intend to ‘try’
- BUT – high overall usage of healthy eating practices => ‘motivation’ less relevant?

2008 survey results
Knowledge

• ~ 1 in 2 parent/caregivers report:
  – increased awareness of ‘things I can do to improve my children’s diets’ cf 12 months ago
  – increased understanding of ‘things I can do to improve my children’s diets’ cf 12 months ago

• Maori, Pacific, and low-income parent/caregivers more likely to agree

2008 survey results
Skills

• ~1 in 2 parent/caregivers report having ‘more skills to help their children eat and drink in healthy ways’ cf 12 months ago

• Pacific parent/caregivers (78%) and those in high deprivation areas (65%) more likely to agree

2008 survey results
Confidence

• 1 in 2 parent/caregivers find it ‘easy’ to get their child to eat/drink healthily
  – Decreased since 2007 (60%)
• 1 in 3 parent/caregivers find it ‘hard’
  – Increased since 2007 (13%)

2008 survey results
From 2007 to 2008 …

• Overall -
  ✓ Use of healthy eating practices increased
  ↓ Confidence in ability to ensure healthy eating
  ✉ Motivation to change
  ✓ Knowledge and skills (perceived to have) increased

• Priority audience groups
  – more likely to agree their knowledge and skills have increased
  – confidence levels unchanged
Community Organisation Approaches

Communication theories

Child

Family

Peers

School

Community

Society

Society
Acknowledgements: NRB NZ

Further information:
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