

Change Behavior

Following Jeni Cross's talk, I had a revelation about how much we rely on "common sense" when it comes to behavior change—and how wrong that is. We assume that if individuals know better, they will behave better, but that isn't the case the majority of the time. I observe this every day in medicine—providing individuals with additional information does not necessarily result in changing what they do. That totally resonates with the Idea of the Influencer Model that you have to use more than individual motivation; you have to use social and structural forces as well.

For my project, I'd like to make learning more pleasant and useful for heme/onc fellows so they actually retain what they're learning and feel prepared for boards. I'm trying to get down to some crucial behaviors that will have the most influence.

This is where I'm starting:

Fellows who engage with tech-based learning resources (quizzes, modules, etc.) seem to be more prepared, so that's a behavior I'd like to support.

Study habits actually decline during heavy rotations, so I need to determine how to assist them then.

Many of the fellows are already doing clinical work and study time very well, so I prefer to highlight what they're doing.

There's this culture of medicine that we have, of "it's supposed to be hard," and I'd like to push against that with more supportive, technology-based learning.

Using the six sources of influence, I'd focus on making learning easier and more relevant, building a sense of community around studying, and getting leadership buy-in for flexible

schedules and better tools. Both talks really drove home that it's not about more information—it's about shaping an environment where the right behaviors are natural and rewarding.

References:

Cross, J. (2013). Three Myths of Behavior Change - What You Think You Know That You Don't: Jeni Cross at TEDxCSU. In *YouTube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I5d8GW6GdR0>

Common sense often leads us to believe that providing more information will naturally lead to behavior change, but this assumption is misleading. Dr. Jeni Cross (2013) identifies three common myths: that education changes behavior, that attitude shifts drive change, and that people understand their own motivations. These beliefs persist because they seem intuitively correct, yet they overlook how behavior is actually shaped by deeper social, emotional, and environmental factors. The Influencer model reinforces this by showing that sustainable change requires influencing personal, social, and structural sources of both motivation and ability—not just awareness or knowledge (Grenny et al., 2013).

Common sense misleads us into thinking change simple, when it is not. Common sense is deeply influenced by emotional, social, and environmental factors. When you look at the Influencer's Six Sources of Influence, you can connect Dr. Cross's ideas.

1. Personal Motivation – She highlights the power of storytelling and emotional connection to make behavior personally relevant.
2. Personal Ability – Changing behavior requires more than motivation; people must have the skill set and confidence to act.
3. Social Motivation and Ability – Dr. Cross emphasizes the role of social norms and peer behavior, aligning with the influence of social networks.
4. Structural Motivation and Ability – Visual cues and environmental “nudges” that make the right behaviors easy and obvious align with the structural aspects of the model.

When Dr. Jeni Cross says “design trumps intention,” she means that how we set up our environment matters more than just wanting to do the right thing. If a behavior is easy to

do—because the space or system is designed to support, it people are much more likely to follow through. It's not always about motivation; sometimes it's just about making the better choice the easier one (Cross, 2013). This idea fits well with the Influencer model, which highlights that lasting behavior change often depends on more than just personal willpower or motivation it also depends on our surroundings. The model outlines six sources of influence, and two of them structural motivation and structural ability—focus specifically on how our environment can either help or hinder our actions. By redesigning the physical space, systems, or tools people interact with, we can make the right behaviors easier to do and the wrong ones harder. In other words, if we want people to succeed, we shouldn't just tell them what to do—we should also create an environment that supports and reinforces those actions naturally (Grenny et al., 2013). An easy way to think of this is if we want people to change their behavior, we shouldn't just tell them what to do we need to change the things around them. This will make it easier for this easier for them to do the right thing. An example, I saw on line, was that if we want people to drink more water instead of soda, we can put water bottles in easy-to-reach places and make soda harder to get. When the environment makes the good choice the easy choice, people are more likely to follow through—even if they're not super motivated. So, it's not just about willpower it's about setting people up for success by changing what's around them. After reading the Influencer chapters and watching the videos, a lot of it honestly feels like common sense! The key is to design environments that help both you and your learners make better choices. When you provide the best options, it becomes easier for people to choose what's right.

References

Cross, J. (2013, March 14). Three myths of behavior change – What you think you know that you don't [Video]. TEDx Talks. <https://youtu.be/l5d8GW6GdR0>

Grenny, J. (2013, June 19). Change behavior—Change the world [Video]. TEDx Talks. <https://youtu.be/6T9TYz5Uxl0>

Grenny, J., Patterson, K., Maxfield, D., McMillan, R., & Switzler, A. (2013). *Influencer: The new science of leading change* (2nd ed.). McGraw-Hill Education.