

The contribution of individually customized information processing along with the subject's full involvement and cooperation, to the generation of motivation regarding maintaining healthy body weight over time / Miriam Miller

ABSTRACT

The current study deals with the contribution of an individually customized information processing process and the subject's involvement to the generation of motivation for weight loss and healthy body weight maintenance over time.

The increase in the incidence rate of overweight and obesity constitutes a serious health problem. In the 21st century obesity was defined as an illness, it has spread and became an epidemic throughout the western world. Therefore community healthcare providers are required to address this issue on first priority. So far various intervention methods regarding weight management were taken, however there is still a long way from reaching a holistic solution.

Models for implementing changes in health habits are known from professional literature. Bandura's theory of social learning and the term "self efficacy" (Bandura, 1977) predict weight loss and weight management in the short term. The Transtheoretical Model which is identified with Prochaska and DiClemente (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997) regarding health promotion issues,

can explain long-term weight management but cannot explain long-term stabilization of fixed healthy weight. The Transtheoretical Model, being a spiral model, encompasses the option of repetition and impermanence.

Despite the numerous studies, for the best of the author's knowledge, there are no studies addressing the issue of changing and maintaining a lifestyle through the prism of information processing process and none are incorporating information processing with the subjects' initial knowledge and motivation. In addition, there are no studies which focus on individual customized method which emphasizes the subject's involvement and one being an active agent in the process. Furthermore, the majority of the studies are cross-sectional studies which do not include long term follow up. Hence, the current study focuses on information processing process as the primary motivator for a lifestyle change. Therefore information behavior theories and motivation theories were incorporated and a periodical follow-up was done over one year.

One of the models regarding localization of information (Kuhltau, 1988; Kuhltau, 1991) includes three levels which take part in human information processing: the physical level, the emotional level and the cognitive level. This model is conceptually consistent with the Transtheoretical Model despite the fact that these two models originate from different sources and thus was one of the mainstays of this study.

Empowerment is a process through which a person acquires the ability to make a clear belief regarding one's self and one's life and take responsibility to one's actions, views and feelings. In this study the empowerment process was founded on the Adlerian theory which approaches the individual as a whole. Each person as a whole has a unique lifestyle which reflects similarly upon various aspects of one's life. Thus, information processing is done holistically, with an emphasis on one's unique characteristics and one's active involvement leading to the generation of motivation to reach one's desired goal.

The purpose of the current study was to examine the contribution of individually customized information processing process along with personal subjects' follow up and their full involvement and cooperation in the process of losing weight and maintaining a healthy weight, to the generation of motivation and commitment regarding maintaining their weight-loss over time.

53 subjects completed the individual empowerment process which included 10 weekly sessions followed by 3 more sessions every three months until the completion of one year from the beginning of the process. Each session was dedicated to a pre-known structured issue according to which information from the past regarding weight and its maintenance was processed, with reference to one's beliefs, opinions, values, needs and personal unique coping methods. This process was done with the full active

involvement of each subject in order to generate motivation for action. This "rendezvous" with past experiences gave the subjects a different interpretation which constituted new information which was examined against the previous information. The cognitive and emotional insights were transformed into action, hence led to assimilation of the new information and its transformation into knowledge.

The study's results show that this unique information processing process, taking place through personal Adlerian empowerment sessions in which the subject is an active party, contribute to behavioral change, weight-loss, stabilization at a healthy weight and its maintenance over time. The results show that after one year, the average BMI index of the group, which was heterogeneous regarding gender, age, marital status, education and residential zone, has improved from moderate obesity to overweight. This improvement of BMI index is significant in decreasing the odds of suffering from diabetes and heart and vascular diseases etc.

The unique contribution of the study is the integrative model presented within it, constitutes another level which contributes to the developing knowledge of the field engaged in providing health-promoting habits and their preservation over time. Moreover, the model provides healthcare personnel with tools which will enable them to assist overweight and obese people to embrace new quality of life contributing habits and maintain them over time.

Professionals and policy makers in the field are invited to use the insights that emerge from this model in order to promote this issue in the community within the health consumers. The success of the model enables its implication upon additional health problems.

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