

Self-affirmation theory for positive behavior change

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Abstract

Self-affirmation: a statement that affirms a person's sense of global self-integrity, positive self-beliefs, purpose and/or core values. According to the self-affirmation theory, even a single affirmation can buffer against psychological threat, thereby allowing for healthier decisions. Given that increasing numbers of people around the world are overweight, obese, and inactive, new strategies for behavior change are needed. The self-affirmation theory is unfamiliar to many in the health/fitness and medical industries, yet it holds real potential for increasing positivity and helping with the initiation and maintenance of physical activity, as well as other essential health behaviors. The conceptual and theoretical underpinnings of self-affirmation theory will be presented and different client scenarios will be explored in this session, with an emphasis on helping sedentary and overweight clients become more physically active. Research has shown that the use of self-affirmation can help with multiple types of behavior change, including the increase of physical activity, healthy eating patterns, medication adherence, smoking cessation, and even improved study habits. Dr. Yoke will review the scientific literature on self-affirmation theory and will lead attendees through several positive self-affirmation experiences.



Biography

Mary Yoke is a Fellow of the American College of Sports Medicine. She has a PhD. in health behavior, a Master's Degree in exercise physiology, two degrees in music, and has obtained 24 certifications in fitness. She is a full-time faculty member at Indiana University in both Indianapolis and Bloomington, Indiana, teaching for the departments of Kinesiology and Applied Health Science. Previously, Dr. Yoke worked in the areas of cardiac rehab, physical therapy, corporate fitness and health promotion, and taught for 25 years in the commercial health club setting. She is an associate research editor for ACSM's Health & Fitness Journal and has written the Research Bites column 3x/year since 2013. She has presented throughout the U.S. in 49 states, and has led workshops in 19 countries. Dr. Yoke is the author or co-author of five books, including 101 Nice-to-Know Facts About Happiness, and Methods of Group Exercise Instruction. Her research interests include behavior change, physical inactivity, low-intensity physical activity, obesity, older adults, and long-term learning outcomes in the academic setting.

Publications

Mary Yoke, Susan Elizabeth Middlestadt, David K Lohrmann, Andrea K Chomistek, Carol Kennedy-Armbruster. Perceived Behavioral Control is Key for Activity Tracker Usage: 1368 Board #176 May 31 9. 2018. Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise.

Mary Yoke, Susan Elizabeth Middlestadt, David K Lohrmann, Andrea K Chomistek, Carol Kennedy-Armbruster. The Behavior of Activity Tracker Usage in Trained Users: 443 Board #284 May 30 11. 2018. Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise.

Mary Yoke. Physical Activity Beliefs in Sedentary, Middle-Aged, Overweight Women. 2017. Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal.

Mary Yoke. Physical Activity Beliefs in Sedentary, Middle-Aged, Overweight Women. 2016. Human Kinetics Journal

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