Health promotion in schools and worksites

Lesson 5.5.2 | Health psychology

Core ideas

School health promotion often targets habits early because children eat, learn and copy social behaviour in a setting that can be organised by adults.

Healthy-eating programmes can use peer modelling, repeated taste exposure and small rewards to encourage children to try fruit and vegetables.

Worksite health promotion can target safety by changing the consequences of behaviour, making safe actions more visible and reinforcing safe routines.

Token economy programmes reward desired safety behaviour, so workers have an immediate reason to follow protective procedures.

Longitudinal follow-up matters because a short-term increase in healthy eating or safety behaviour may fade once rewards or attention stop.

Evaluation should consider ethics, generalisability, quantitative accident or consumption data and qualitative information about how participants experienced the programme.

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Key terms

School health promotion: Health intervention delivered through a school setting.

Worksite health promotion: Health or safety intervention delivered through a workplace.

Healthy eating: Food choices that support health, such as eating more fruit and vegetables.

Peer modelling: Learning by watching people of a similar age or role perform a behaviour.

Taste exposure: Repeated chances to try a food so it becomes more familiar.

Token economy: A reward system where tokens or points are earned for desired behaviour.

Safety behaviour: Actions that reduce risk of accidents or injury.

Longitudinal follow-up: Checking outcomes again after time has passed.

Further detail and evidence

Food Dudes combines peer models enjoying fruit/vegetables, repeated tasting, praise and small rewards. Tapper et al. (2003) describe programmes using adventure videos, themed rewards, letters and home support. The combined components increased consumption more than provision or modelling alone in the reported evaluations.

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Continued

Learning mechanisms differ: attractive peer models provide observational learning; rewards reinforce trying/eating; repeated exposure can increase familiarity. Tasting a small amount and eating a target portion are different behavioural outcomes.

Fox et al. (1987) introduced trading-stamp tokens at two open-pit mines for injury-free work, group safety, useful safety suggestions and preventative acts. Stamps were exchangeable for goods. Reported injury-related lost time and costs decreased, with benefits sustained over several years.

Applying the ideas

A school programme can reward tasting before expecting a full portion, use models pupils identify with, and maintain support at home. A workplace programme can reinforce observable safe actions rather than merely give a safety lecture. The reinforcer must be linked clearly to the intended behaviour.

Evaluation and connections

Real consumption and long-term injury records improve practical relevance. Packages make individual components difficult to isolate. Injury-based rewards can discourage reporting, so examine reporting safeguards and near-miss data. Children need assent/guardian consent, fair inclusion and sensitivity to dietary needs. Assess maintenance when reinforcement becomes less frequent.