



# Levers of Behavior Change



**PRINCIPLES AND STRATEGIES**



# ABOUT THE FRAMEWORK

There are many ways of understanding the motivations and barriers to behavior change. Rare's Center for Behavior & the Environment has a behavior change framework that is comprised of six behavioral levers. Each lever represents a category of intervention strategies based on evidence-based principles and case studies from behavioral and social science. The levers are discrete and able to be pulled in different combinations for different effects.

For decades, the traditional environmental toolkit has consisted of these common levers to change behavior: information, rules and regulations, and material incentives.

These levers can be effective. But information does not necessarily lead to action, incentives can backfire or send the wrong message, and rules can be difficult to enforce. Research from behavioral science tells us about other powerful insights that could drive behavior change. For example, people make decisions based on their emotions, what other people are doing and expecting them to do, and how we structure the context for decision-making.

By expanding the toolkit with additional levers, we can design solutions that reflect people's full range of behavioral motivations. These include emotional appeals, social influences, and choice architecture. Read about each of the levers here as well as principles and strategies for applying them.

Learn more at [behavior.rare.org](http://behavior.rare.org).



## INFORMATION

### **Providing information about what the desired behavior is, why it matters, and how to do it**

#### **Provide step-by-step instructions**

- Offer training on the desired behavior
- Provide materials that give instructions on how to do the desired behavior

#### **Build awareness and understanding**

- Provide informational forums, meetings, or materials that describe the desired behavior and its importance
- Communicate about the desired behavior in a clear, concrete, and unambiguous way
- Give feedback on performing the desired behavior



## RULES & REGULATIONS

### Enacting rules that promote or restrict a behavior

#### Mandate behavior

- Enact mandates that require or encourage the desired behavior

#### Prohibit behavior

- Enact prohibitions that limit or forbid the undesired behavior



## MATERIAL INCENTIVES

### Increasing or decreasing real or perceived costs, time, or effort for doing a behavior

#### Make it easy or the alternative hard

- Make the desired behavior more convenient and accessible to do (e.g., remove barriers, provide substitutes)
- Make the undesired behavior more difficult to do (e.g., create friction points, barriers)

#### Give rewards or penalties

- Incentivize or reinforce the desired behavior
- Penalize or fine for cases of the undesired behavior



## EMOTIONAL APPEALS

### Using emotional messages to drive behavior

#### Leverage emotions

- Tap into core emotions that drive specific actions or outcomes important for the desired behavior

#### Personalize the message

- Put a human face on campaigns and focus on a single story over abstract statistics
- Tailor messages to make them personally relevant, relatable, and appealing



## SOCIAL INFLUENCES

### Leveraging the behavior, beliefs, and expectations of others

#### Make engaging or not engaging in the desired behavior observable

- Publicly broadcast who has and has not engaged in the desired behavior
- Provide a way for people to show they are doing the desired behavior

#### Make the desired behavior the perceived norm

- Highlight possibility of social sanctions for doing the undesired behavior
- Share that people are currently doing the desired behavior
- Create conversation around shared beliefs and expectations
- Promote cases of success with the desired behavior
- Leverage credible and trusted messengers doing the desired behavior
- Facilitate peer or community exchanges where others can observe and gain support for the desired behavior

#### Eliminate excuses for not engaging in the behavior

- Encourage public commitments or pledges to drive the desired behavior
- Provide visible indicators that signal support for the desired behavior (e.g., hats, badges)



## CHOICE ARCHITECTURE

### Changing the context in which choices are made

#### Direct attention

- Make the desired behavior the default option
- Draw attention to the desired behavior by making it salient

#### Simplify messages and decisions

- Streamline complex decisions to focus on key information or actions
- Provide shortcuts for a behavior with many steps or options

#### Use timely moments and prompts

- Target moments of transition and habit formation
- Provide prompts and reminders about the desired behavior

#### Facilitate planning and goal setting

- Provide support in making a plan to achieve the desired behavior
- Use commitments to bind or limit future decisions



**Rare inspires change so people and nature thrive**

Learn more at [behavior.rare.org](http://behavior.rare.org) and follow us @Rare\_org