



Webinar

Beliefs

**What are they, how are they formed, and
how do we change them**

March 30, 2022 | 10 am PT, 11 am MT, Noon CT, 1 pm ET

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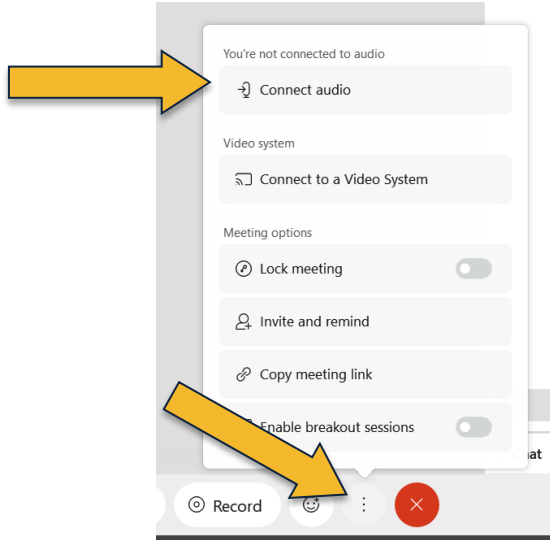
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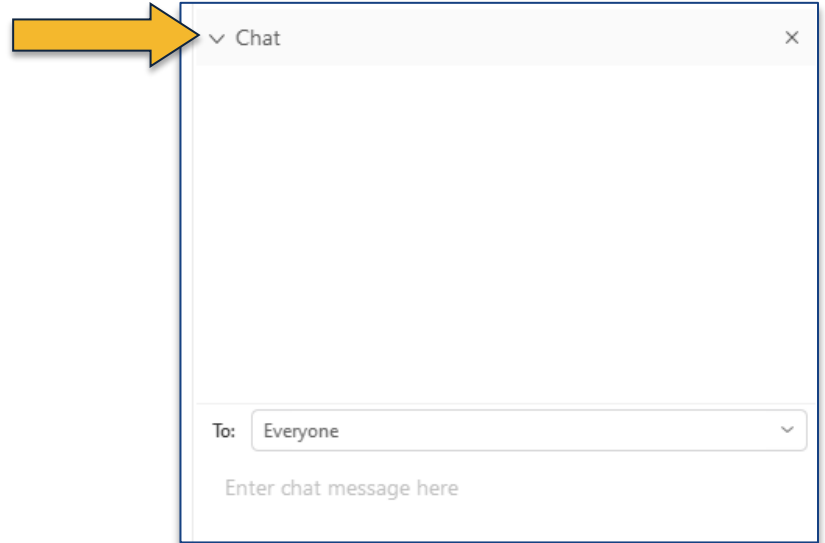
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Use the chat box to send questions. Please send questions to both panelists and host.



About the Center for Health and Safety Culture

We are an interdisciplinary center serving communities and organizations through research, training, and guidance to cultivate healthy and safe cultures.

Core Issues



Traffic Safety

Substance Misuse



Domestic Violence



Child Wellbeing



Quick Poll

Do you see your work to improve traffic safety as primarily about

- a) changing behavior OR
- b) changing beliefs

(Respond in the polling window.)

Traffic Safety Culture

“the **shared belief system** of a group of people, which influences road user behaviors and stakeholder actions that impact traffic safety”

Ward, N., Otto, J., & Finley, K. (2019). *Traffic Safety Culture Primer*. Center for Health and Safety Culture (Montana State University).

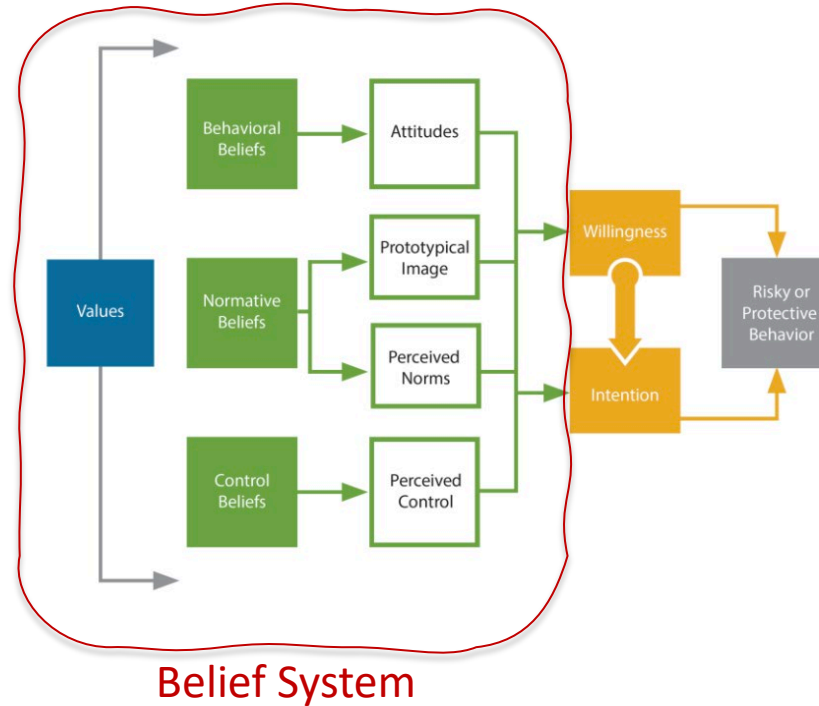
Purpose of this Project

- Understand the processes and conditions that influence belief formation and change
- Provide guidance to traffic safety stakeholders in the design of effective strategies to change traffic safety culture

Agenda

- What are beliefs?
- How are beliefs formed?
- How are beliefs changed?
- Resources
- Questions

Why Beliefs?

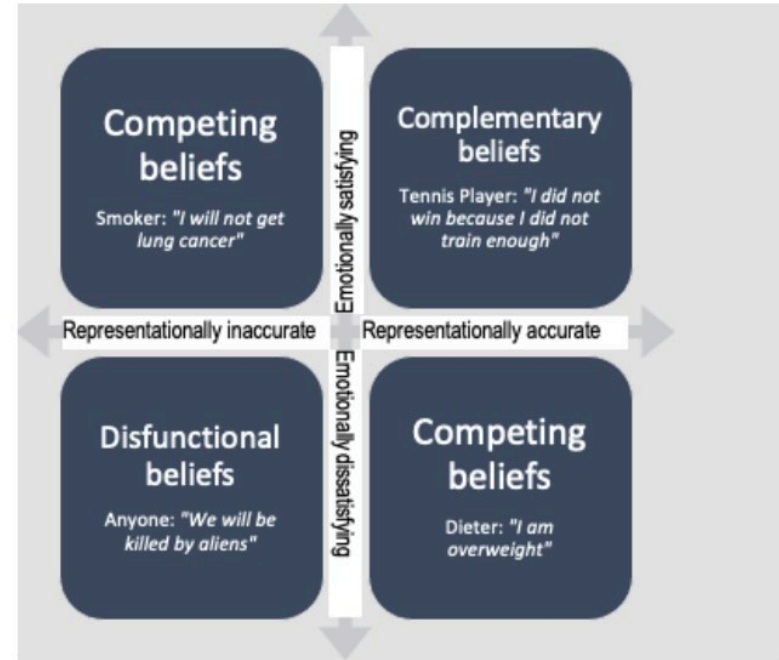


What are beliefs?

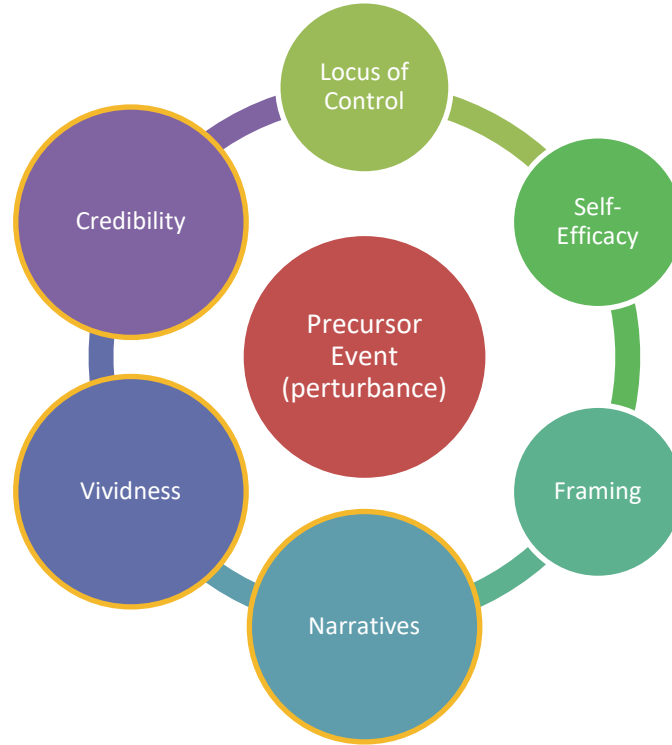
- Our minds function as “belief engines” that automatically seek meaning from our environments.
- Beliefs serve two functions: to understand the world (representational accuracy) and to influence how we feel (emotional control).
- **Formed as propositions (statements):** For example, the perception that “Everyone I know drives above the speed limit” could be distilled into the statement (belief) that “Most people speed.”
- Beliefs explain past behaviors and motivate future behaviors.
- Beliefs support higher-order cognitive functions such as decision-making and planning.
- Beliefs shared among a group of people support social functions such as establishing group identity (culture).

How are beliefs formed?

1. Perturbance: an unfamiliar, contradicting, or emotionally salient event.
2. Generate "proto-beliefs" (personal hypotheses)
3. Evaluate plausibility (accuracy, emotions, consistency).
4. Accept and integrate beliefs.
5. New beliefs determine future perturbances.



How are beliefs changed?



Key Take-Aways

- We may form a new belief when we perceive an event that we cannot explain.
 - These types of events tend to be unexpected
 - Our goal is to form a belief that accurately represents the event.
- We may form a belief because it makes us feel good
 - This can include forming a belief that removes an existing negative emotion.
 - Our goal is to regulate our emotions.

Resources

Written Documents

- Guidance for Traffic Safety Practitioners
- Summary Poster
- Final Report

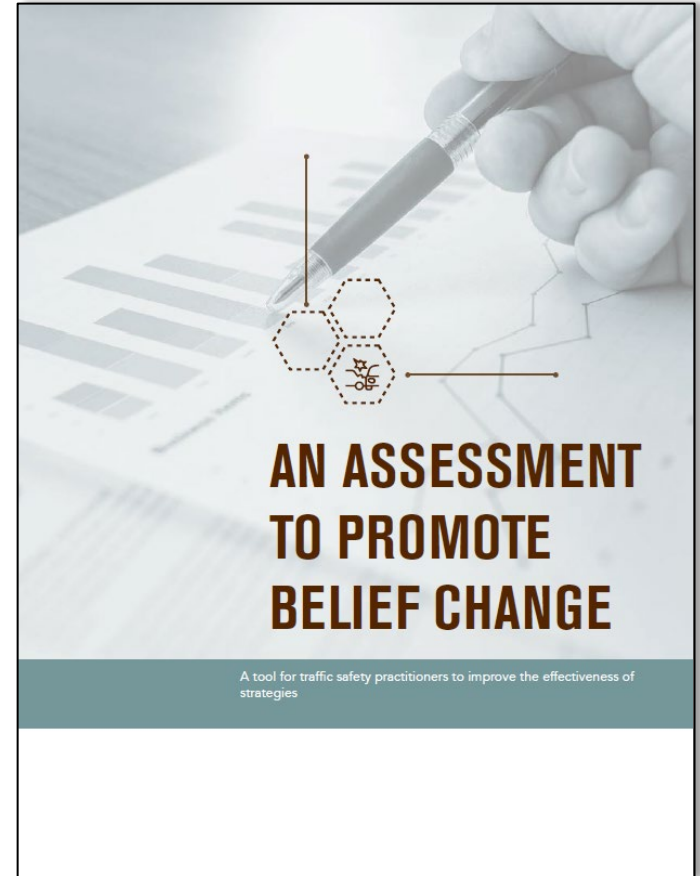
Visit <https://www.mdt.mt.gov/research/projects/trafficsafety.shtml>

[Google MDT Traffic Safety Culture]

Guidance Document

Assessment

- 11 Questions with supportive guidance
- Purpose
 - Motivate deeper understanding of strategies
 - Identify areas for improvement
 - Facilitate shared understanding



Assessment

1. How well does the strategy seek to change specific beliefs that are linked to specific behaviors?
2. How well does the strategy foster slow thinking?
3. How well does the strategy create cognitive dissonance (without shame)?
4. How well does the strategy grow perceived self-efficacy?
5. How is emotion used in the strategy?

Assessment

6. How does the strategy use a narrative?
7. How vivid is the strategy?
8. How credible is the source?
9. To what degree might the strategy evoke psychological reactance?
10. To what degree does the strategy grow misperceptions of normative beliefs or behaviors?
11. To what degree does the strategy stigmatize certain people?

Supportive Guidance

For each question:

- Background
- Why this matters
- Suggestions / Examples

SUPPORTIVE GUIDANCE

HOW WELL DOES THE STRATEGY SEEK TO CHANGE SPECIFIC BELIEFS THAT ARE LINKED TO SPECIFIC BEHAVIORS?

BACKGROUND

Research has revealed a relationship between beliefs and deliberate behaviors (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010; Gerrard et al., 2008; Oreg & Katz-Gerro, 2006). Various behavioral models have identified different kinds of beliefs including:

- Values
 - Ideals to which we aspire that define the goals for our behavioral choices and direct the formation of our belief systems (e.g., "I must protect my family," "I desire a life without stress").
- Behavioral Beliefs
 - Expectations about the physical and social consequences of a behavior (e.g., "If I speed, I will likely get an expensive fine," "If I drink and drive, my friends will exclude me," "If I text and drive, I may hit a vehicle or pedestrian").
- Normative Beliefs
 - Beliefs about what behaviors are most common in a group (e.g., "All my friends speed") and what important people in that group expect (e.g., "My family expects me to wear a seat belt").
- Control Beliefs
 - Beliefs about an individual's ability to engage or not engage in the behavior based on factors that are either internal or external to oneself (e.g., "Crashes are determined by fate," "I am comfortable not speeding even if everyone around me is," "I am comfortable asking someone else to use a seat belt").

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Questions

Please enter any questions in the chat box.

Related Research



Current Projects

- Resources and Tools to Reduce Multi-Risk Driving Behaviors
- Resources and Tools to Improve Pedestrian Safety

<https://www.mdt.mt.gov/research/projects/trafficsafety.shtml>

[Google MDT Traffic Safety Culture]

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