



Psychological Reactance and Moral Disengagement



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MDT

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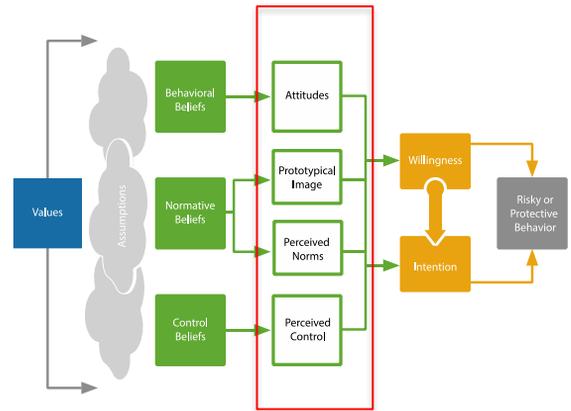
[Sources: unsplash.com, icon8.com]

Traffic Safety Culture

Definition

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

Belief System





Psychological Reactance

Why our messages fail.



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Source: trafficsafetymarketing.gov



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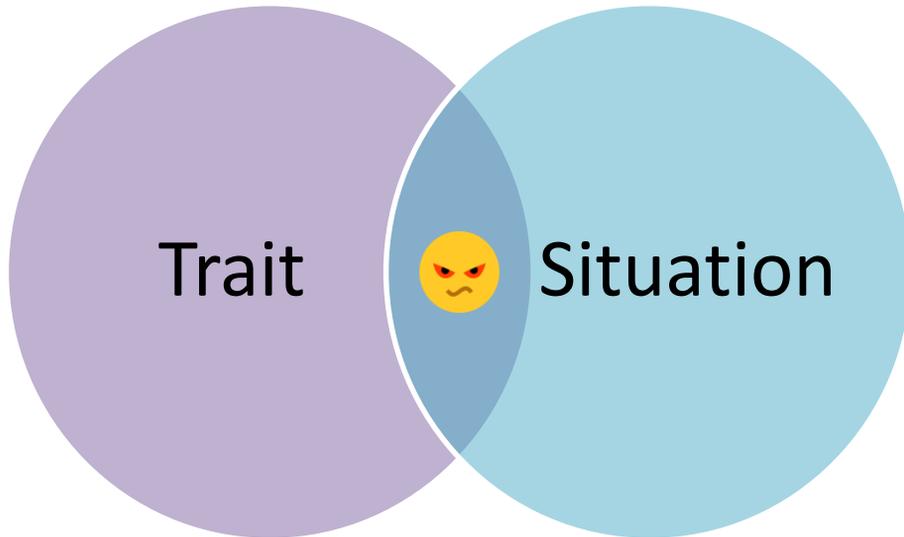
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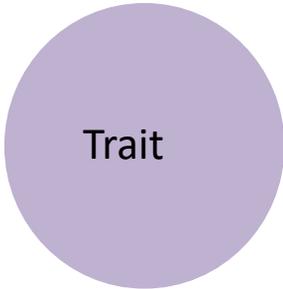
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Psychological Reactance is...

- a negative response ...
- to a perceived threat ...
- against our freedom(s)!







- ✓ I become frustrated when a threat to my freedom to choose is imposed on me.
- ✓ I become angry when the message to make a decision for me is imposed on me.
- ✓ It irritates me when the message to participate in a program is imposed on me.
- ✓ Regulations trigger a sense of restriction on me.



5.

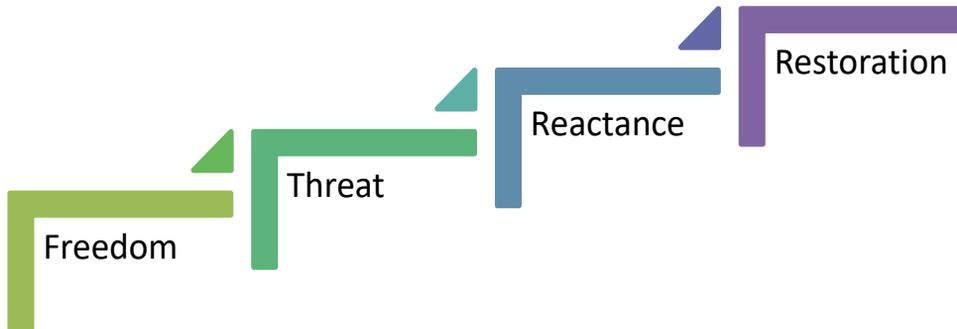


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Process



Freedom

- Our ability to affect ourselves (thoughts, emotions) and the environment (actions).
 - "the exercise of self-influence to bring about desired results" (Bandura, 1977).
- Freedoms are subjective.
 - Anything I perceive to be a freedom IS a freedom.
 - Freedoms vary widely.



Threat to Freedom

- Anything that I perceive to make it more difficult for me to exercise my free choice is considered a threat. (Dillard & Shen, 2005)
- A threat to freedom occurs whenever I feel my capacity for “self-influence” is restricted.



Reactance

- Reactance is a counterforce to a perceived threat, motivating the restoration of freedom.
(Brehm & Brehm, 1981)
- Both a cognitive and emotional process
 - Cognitive: rationalizing (counterarguing)
 - Emotional: anger (irritation, annoyance, rage)



Restoration of Freedom

- Behaviors, thoughts, and emotions that are triggered in order to restore that freedom, thereby reducing reactance.

(Dillard & Shen, 2005)



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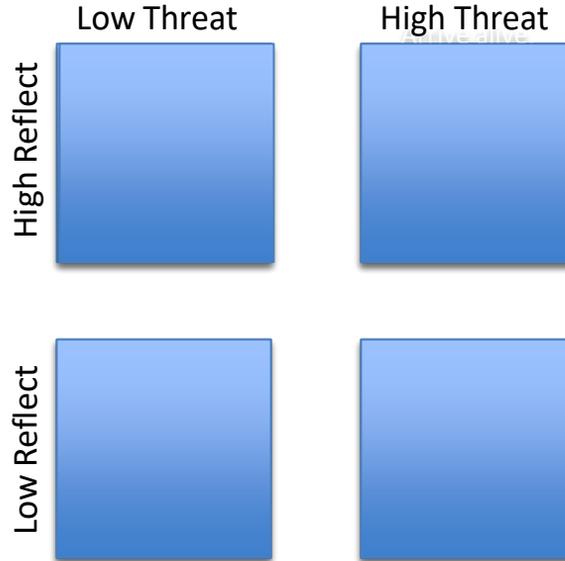
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Reactance Factors

1. Strength of freedom (“self-influence”).
2. Importance of freedom.
3. Number of threatened freedoms.
4. Extent and scope of threat (consequences).



Guidance





Source: trafficsafetymarketing.gov



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Vicarious Reactance

- Occurs when a person experiences reactance when witnessing someone else's freedoms being threatened or lost even when the person's own freedoms are not threatened.

(Miron & Brehm, 2006)



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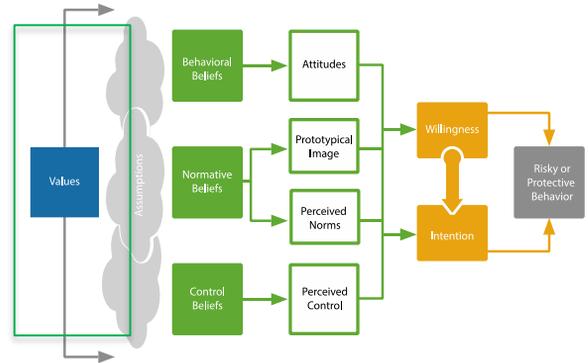
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Belief System



Emotionally committed to the wellbeing of his dogs and friends.

“Drunk driving is a victimless crime.”

“I drive well drunk.”

“There is no crime if no one is injured.”

“Drunk driving is less dangerous than texting.”

“Injuring someone drunk is no different than if speeding.”





Moral Disengagement

Why good people do bad things.



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Moral Disengagement

- Moral disengagement occurs when:
“individuals detach themselves from their usual **self-regulatory processes** in order to behave in ways that run counter to their **normal moral standards.**”

(Clear, Lennon, & Allison, 2016, 1-17).



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Self-regulation

(Bandura et al., 1996)



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Self-regulation

Activated

- Activated self-regulation motivates moral conduct – behaviors that are consistent with one’s internal set of standards.

(Bandura et al., 1996)

Disengaged

- “individuals are freed from the self-sanctions and the accompanying guilt that would ensue when behavior violates internal standards”
- allowing individuals to act in ways that are counter to their personal moral standards.

(Detert, Trevino, and Sweitzer 2008, 375).

Disengagement Factors

1. Empathy Skills
2. Aggression
3. Chance vs. Internal Locus of Control
4. Trait Cynicism (frustration, distrust)
5. Moral Identity
6. Moral Emotions (Guilt and Shame)



Guidance

1. Message frame: positive, gain, values
2. Message content: (moral) norms, empathy.
3. Education:
 - a. Critical thinking
 - b. Social regulation
 - c. Emotional intelligence





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