

Theoretical Basis for Fitness for Life and K-12 Articulation



The subdisciplinary kinesiological sciences provide the basis for the principles and concepts found in Fitness for Life. Central to the program is the learning of self-management skills that help students adopt lifelong healthy lifestyles. Concepts and principles derived from educational and psychological theory support the importance of self-management skills in making health behavior changes such as becoming more active, eating well, and managing stress as outlined in Fitness for Life. Four theories and three models, on which Fitness for Life is based, are summarized as follows.

Social cognitive theory. Also referred to as social learning theory, this theory emphasizes the importance of self-efficacy and positive expectations in making behavior changes. It also emphasizes the importance of trying ability-appropriate tasks to gradually enhance self-efficacy for a specific task. The theory suggests that a person must value the outcomes of a behavior if a change in the behaviors is the goal.

Self-determination theory. Central to self-determination theory is personal autonomy. Autonomy refers to the ability of a person to make his or her own decisions. Feelings of competence at mastering skills or tasks are also critical to the theory. Personal choice is emphasized rather than choice based on external pressures to comply. Intrinsic (internal) motivation is considered more important than extrinsic (external) motivation (e.g., rewards, payments). Intrinsic motivation makes adopting a behavior fulfilling (rather than forced).

Theory of reasoned action. This theory suggests that a person's behavior is most associated with the person's stated intention to carry out the behavior. According to this theory, a person's intentions are influenced by attitudes (beliefs) and the social environment (opinions of others).

Theory of planned behavior. This theory has many of the tenets of the theory of reasoned action, but includes the concept of perceived control over the environment. If a person is to change a behavior, he or she must believe that he or she has some control over the factors that influence the behavior. Perceived control is in many ways similar to self-efficacy in social cognitive theory.

Health belief model. A model is similar to a theory in that it provides a blueprint for behavior change. This model suggests that a person's health behavior is related to five factors: the belief that a health problem will have harmful effects, the belief that a person is susceptible to the problem, the belief that the perceived benefits of changing a lifestyle will prevent the problem, the belief that overcoming barriers to the problem will solve the problem, and confidence that he or she can do what is necessary to prevent or solve a problem.

Social ecological model. The social ecological model is based on the idea that health behavior change is influenced by the interaction of cultural, social (intrapersonal), and physical environmental factors. For example, when people practice a negative behavior such as smoking, they affect the environment. Others in the environment are then exposed to a health risk. Unlike the other theories and models, the social ecological model emphasizes the importance of social and environmental factors rather than personal health behavior change.

Transtheoretical model. This model is also referred to as the stages of change model. The model uses elements of all of the previously described theories and models. As noted in the student text, the model suggests that health behavior change does not occur all at once. Rather, five stages exist and behavior change occurs when people move from one stage to another. The model also emphasizes the importance of the process of change, including factors such as goal setting, self-monitoring, self-assessment, and self-planning.



K-12 Articulation

The Fitness for Life program was created in 1979 as the result of extensive field testing. Since then, materials have evolved as thousands of teachers have used them and provided feedback. Teacher input and reviews continue to drive program revisions in addition to ongoing field testing of new materials. The materials were developed based on four educational theories (see “Theoretical Basis” section). The stages of change (transtheoretical model) are central to the student learning experience, and the 21 self-management skills for health behavior changes included in the text are based on concepts from the various theories and models (e.g., goal setting, self-monitoring, self-planning, overcoming barriers, finding social support, and building self-confidence).

Fitness for Life, Sixth Edition, is the high school program that coordinates with *Fitness for Life: Elementary School* (K-6) and *Fitness for Life: Middle School* (6-8). The middle school program builds on the elementary program (primarily video based). The high school program builds on the content of both the elementary school and middle school programs, both textbook based with extensive associated physical activities.

