

A Behavior Change Campaign

Objective

Students will be able to use behavioral insights and communication strategies to motivate people to help solve the marine debris issue in their community.

Introduction

Education about the marine debris issue and how everyday students and community members can be a part of the solution is a crucial component to solving the problem. However, awareness is only the first step to changing behaviors. In addition to education and awareness of the issue, most people need clear guidance and motivation to help them change their habits. Students will learn the motivators and barriers behind changing behaviors and come up with a catered solution to help solve a facet of the marine debris problem by influencing a specific behavior change. Walk students through the process of developing a behavior change campaign and try to implement it in their school, with their family, or in their community.

Next Generation Science Standards

Science and Engineering Practices

- Asking questions and defining problems
- Analyzing and interpreting data
- Engaging in argument from evidence
- Obtaining, evaluating, and communicating information

Crosscutting Concepts

- Cause and effect
- Systems and system models

Disciplinary Core Ideas

- ESS3.C: Human impacts on Earth systems
- ETS1.(A-C): Engineering design

Supplies

Supplies will vary depending on the types of campaigns students develop. Campaigns should be developed within the realm of available resources.

Procedures

1. Intro. Review the other lessons in the Urban Trash Troop Educational toolkit to ensure that students understand the problem (types and sources of debris) and the effects (impacts on wildlife, humans, and habitat) of urban trash and marine debris.

- Ask students to brainstorm simple actions people can take to reduce urban trash and potential marine debris. Make a list titled 'Desired Behaviors.' (For example: Using reusables, picking up trash, using the correct waste bins, upcycling, etc.)
- Go down the list and ask students why they think people would do each behavior. Try to capture the different 'motivations' for doing the desired behavior. Note that sometimes reasons for doing these behaviors have nothing to do with the environment. (For example, people who use a reusable water bottle might do this because they like having cold water all the time or because they like to show off all their stickers on their bottle, not necessarily because using a reusable bottle is better for the environment).
- Then ask students why they think people aren't doing these desired behaviors. What is preventing them or making it difficult for them to do the desired behaviors? Identify what the 'barriers' are for doing these behaviors. Note that these reasons might also have nothing to do with the environment. (For example, people who don't use reusable water bottles might do so because they can never remember to take it with them or because they don't have access to clean water to refill, not necessarily because they don't care about the environment).
- Discuss how not all motivators are the same for everyone but they still end with the desired behavior, and discuss how not all barriers are the same for everyone. This can make the behavior change solutions different for each person. If we want to change someone's behavior, we need to understand their specific motivators and barriers and use them to influence the desired change.

2. Set up. Walk through the example behavior change prompts, focused on plastic bags as a class (available in **Appendix A**, and listed in italics throughout the procedure). Then let students work on their own topics either as a whole class or split into groups. Follow the steps below to come up with a solution to then implement in your school, community, or at home. Student worksheet available in **Appendix B** if needed.

3. Choose your behavior goal - What are you asking people to do? Review your list of 'Desired Behaviors' and narrow down your ideas to one specific behavior that you would like more people to do in order to help the urban trash and marine debris problem. An ideal behavior goal is one that is realistic to achieve, has a positive impact on the urban trash/marine debris issue, and can be achieved with the resources you have available. A behavioral goal is most likely to be achieved when it's:

- Clear and specific
- Something people can *do* rather than something they should *stop doing*
- Focused on one behavioral goal at a time; avoid listing multiple options.

Behavior Goal Example	
We need people to:	<i>use reusable grocery bags every time they go grocery shopping</i>
Instead of:	<i>using plastic bags provided at the store.</i>

4. Choose your audience - Who are you asking? While it is natural to want “everyone” to adopt more environmentally sustainable behaviors, it is not a realistic target audience to reach with the resources we have available. Identifying a realistic audience to focus on and affect change among, offers more opportunity to understand who they are, what challenges they face and their sources of influence. Narrow your audience by answering the following questions for your desired behavior goal. Don't forget to be specific!

Choose Your Audience Example		
Behavior Goal: <i>Use reusable grocery bags every time they go shopping.</i>	Who needs to do the desired behavior?	<i>People who grocery shop regularly.</i>
	Is there a specific geographic area to target?	<i>The town of Poway.</i>
	Are there specific locations where this behavior takes place?	<i>Large grocery stores.</i>
Bring it all together in one statement.	<i>We need people who regularly shop in large grocery stores in the town of Poway to use reusable grocery bags every time they go grocery shopping.</i>	

5. Identify the barriers - What are the challenges with doing the desired behavior? List all the challenges for why you think it is hard for your audience to do the desired behavior. Use everything you know about your audience, plus what you know about doing the action or behavior, plus your empathy for what the experience might be like for them. Challenges or barriers can take many different forms. Write down everything you can imagine that makes the behavior and its steps difficult, or even mildly annoying, for the audience to do. Don't skip the seemingly small stuff! (If students need help, refer to **Appendix C** for more information).

Barriers Examples
<i>I don't have any reusable bags to bring grocery shopping.</i>
<i>It is so convenient to use plastic bags provided by the store.</i>
<i>No one else brings their own bags, I don't want to be the only one doing something different.</i>
<i>The plastic pollution problem is huge, I don't think my individual bag use affects it.</i>
<i>No matter how hard I try, I can't remember to bring bags with me to the store</i>

6. Identify the motivators - Why do people do the desired behavior? Now that we've explored the barriers that may prevent our audience from taking action, we can move on to identifying what motivates people to do the action. Think about people who already do the desired behavior. List all the reasons why you think they do this. Remember that just like barriers, motivators can take different forms and sometimes reasons for doing these behaviors have nothing to do with the environment. (If students need help, refer to **Appendix C** for more information).

Motivators Examples
<i>Bringing bags to the grocery store is so normal, everyone does it!</i>
<i>I like to carry my own personalized bags, they are so much cuter!</i>
<i>I would consider myself an environmentalist and it makes me feel good to do my part</i>
<i>I save 5 cents for every bag I bring!</i>
<i>I know everytime I bring my bags, I am saving countless plastic bags from entering the environment</i>

6. Craft a solution to solve your problem - How can you help your audience achieve the behavior goal? Now that we've thought of some reasons why people *don't* and why people *do* the desired behavior, we can brainstorm how we can help our audience overcome the barriers and leverage the motivators to jump-start action and sustain their momentum towards change. The most common ways to overcome barriers and motivate people to do things are:

- Provide the audience with the access, infrastructure, or tools needed to succeed (if possible)
- Make the behavior the social norm. Provide proof that others take part in the behavior
- Make the behavior fun, easy to do, and rewarding

- Reinforce the positive impact that the behavior has on the environment while also highlighting other benefits besides helping the environment
- Be empowering and inspirational. Make the audience feel good and proud to do the behavior.
- Constant reminders

Using what you know, make a list of different ways you can help your audience achieve the behavior goal.

Solutions Examples
<i>Acquire or make reusable bags to pass out to customers who don't have their own</i>
<i>Take and post pictures on social media or in the store window (with permission) of community members or well known people (like the mayor or a local celebrity) bringing their bags to the store</i>
<i>Set up a display/make signs to place outside the store or in the parking lot (with permission) that reminds shoppers to bring their bags and that by doing so helps the environment</i>
<i>Give every shopper who brings their reusable bag an "I'm a responsible shopper!" bumper sticker</i>
<i>Work with the store to implement a reusable bag stamp card for shoppers to win a gift card</i>

7. Implement your campaign! Now that we've narrowed down the behavior, the audience, and we've brainstormed ways to overcome the barriers and leverage the motivators, it's time to put it to action! Review your list of possible solutions above. Pick one that is most feasible for you to accomplish and try to implement it in your schools, community, or at home. Here are some resources to help you take your next step:

- [NOAA Marine Debris Program - Trash Shouldn't Splash Toolkit](#)
- [One Cool Earth - Marine Debris Prevention Manual](#)

*Note that behavior change campaigns like these can sometimes take time and consistency to obtain desired results.

7. Assessment

- Create a rubric for student campaigns according to the standards or priorities of your learning environment.
- Have students write a reflection or share a presentation with a local organization or conference about what they learned from their campaigns.

8. Extension

- Combine this activity with the Urban Trash Monitoring activity to conduct a before and after assessment of the behavior change campaign to see if changes are able to be detected.

References

- This lesson was adapted from behavior change marketing consultant, Brooke Tully, and her Making Moves - Behavior Change Campaign Course.

Appendices

- **Appendix A: Example Behavior Change Process: Plastic Bags**
- **Appendix B: Start a Movement Worksheet**
- **Appendix C: Common Barriers and Motivators**



Example Behavior Change Process: Plastic Bags

Behavior Goal Example	
We need people to:	<i>use reusable grocery bags every time they go grocery shopping</i>
Instead of:	<i>using plastic bags provided at the store.</i>

Choose Your Audience Example		
Behavior Goal: <i>Use reusable grocery bags every time they go shopping.</i>	Who needs to do the desired behavior?	<i>People who grocery shop regularly.</i>
	Is there a specific geographic area to target?	<i>The town of Poway.</i>
	Are there specific locations where this behavior takes place?	<i>Large grocery stores.</i>
Bring it all together in one statement.	<i>We need people who regularly shop in large grocery stores in the town of Poway to use reusable grocery bags every time they go grocery shopping.</i>	

Barriers Examples
<i>I don't have any reusable bags to bring grocery shopping.</i>
<i>It is so convenient to use plastic bags provided by the store.</i>
<i>No one else brings their own bags, I don't want to be the only one doing something different.</i>
<i>The plastic pollution problem is huge, I don't think my individual bag use affects it.</i>
<i>No matter how hard I try, I can't remember to bring bags with me to the store</i>

Taking it to the Streets!

Urban Trash Educational Toolkit

Start a Movement!

Motivators Examples

Bringing bags to the grocery store is so normal, everyone does it!

I like to carry my own personalized bags, they are so much cuter!

I would consider myself an environmentalist and it makes me feel good to do my part

I save 10 cents for every bag I bring!

I know every time I bring my bags, I am saving countless plastic bags from entering the environment

Solutions Examples

Acquire or make reusable bags to pass out to customers who don't have their own

Take and post pictures on social media or in the store window (with permission) of community members or well known people (like the mayor or a local celebrity) bringing their bags to the store

Set up a display/make signs to place outside the store or in the parking lot (with permission) that reminds shoppers to bring their bags and that by doing so helps the environment

Give every shopper who brings their reusable bag an "I'm a responsible shopper!" bumper sticker

Work with the store to implement a reusable bag stamp card for shoppers to win a gift card

Worksheet: Start a Movement

Choose Your Audience!		
Behavior Goal:	Who needs to do the desired behavior?	
	Is there a specific geographic area to target?	
	Are there specific locations where this behavior takes place?	
Bring it all together in one statement.		

Choose your behavior goal!	
We need people to:	
Instead of:	

Behavior Goal:	Barriers
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•••••

Taking it to the Streets!

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Start a Movement!

Behavior Goal:	Motivators:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•••••

Behavior Goal:	What could your solution look like?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•••••



Common Barriers and Motivators

People struggle to change behaviors because...	People tend to change their behaviors because...
there is a lack of accessibility, infrastructure/tools, or the skills to do the desired behavior	other people are doing it
there is no clear action or next step to take	it's fun and easy to do and (bonus!) it has an impact
they have a fear of change - wanting to stay comfortable and socially acceptable	the audience feels they are part of something bigger than themselves
there is a lack of trust that the behavior will actually make a difference	doing the action or behavior benefits them personally
it's just difficult to do	they feel empowered to make a difference