



Social Change Tip Sheet

*The greatest revolution of our generation is that of human beings,
who by changing the inner attitudes of their minds,
can change the outer aspects of their lives.*

~Marilyn Ferguson

Essential to preventing family violence, (intimate partner violence, child abuse, elder abuse, abuse of persons living with disabilities), is the understanding that the root causes of all forms of family violence are sociologically engrained and supported. Therefore preventing family violence requires addressing root causes and removing their societal supports; in essence preventing family violence requires social change. (Also see Tip Sheet on The Social Ecology.)

Many models for social change exist. In her book, *Hands-On Social Marketing*, author Nedra Kline Weinreich identifies some of the most common social change theories. These are the Health Belief Model, the Theory of Planned Behavior, the Social Cognitive Learning Theory, Transtheoretical Model (Stages of Change Theory) and the Diffusion of Innovations Theory. While each of the theories is distinct from the others, Weinreich synthesizes key points that seem to positively influence social change. "To achieve behavior change, the audience must possess the following traits:

- Believe that it is at risk for the problem and that the consequences are severe,
- Believe that the proposed behavior will lower its risk or prevent the problem,
- Believe that the advantages of performing the behavior (benefits) outweigh the disadvantages (costs),
- Intend to perform the behavior,
- Possess the skills to perform the behavior,
- Believe that it can perform the behavior (self-efficacy),
- Believe that the performance of the behavior is consistent with its self-image,
- Perceive greater social pressure to perform the behavior than not to perform it (social norms), and
- Experience fewer barriers to perform a behavior than not to perform it."

Others, including Donna Garske of Transforming Communities, suggest that social change occurs when individuals can be moved through steps that increase knowledge of an issue, influence attitudes toward the issue, affect beliefs about the issue and adopt behaviors to address the issue. Garske refers to **k**nowledge, **a**ttitude, **b**eliefs and **b**ehaviors as KABBs. It therefore is suggested that by increasing ones' knowledge (awareness) of a problem, we may in turn seed an attitude that distills into a belief and therefore supports the adoption of a suggested behavior.

Understanding where an audience rests in its knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and behaviors can help those working to prevent family violence to direct key messages accordingly and to design programs which move the audience through the stages of change. When coupling this KABBs model with the traits Weinreich suggests, it is conceivable that the adoption of desired behaviors will be more successful when the cues for the behavior are memorable, barriers and costs are minimized, the action is simplified, the behavior positively resonates with the individual's identity, and when the resulting social capital, personal and global benefits are emphasized.

*"You must be the change you wish to see in the world."
~Mahatma Gandhi*