

THE PSYCHOLOGY BEHIND DIETARY CHANGES



The first attribute is **attitude**; whether someone believes eating more fish will be beneficial for their health, or not. If a person strongly believes eating more fish will benefit them, they will be more likely to do so. Whereas someone who believes fish will not benefit them is often less aware of the pros and cons of eating fish, which is where education becomes important.

Second is **subjective norms** which refers to social pressures and societal views of a dietary change. For example, a person is more likely to follow popular trends because society has deemed it acceptable or follow advice from people they trust. If fish are perceived as being toxic by the media (which is not true), a person may be less likely to eat fish.

Making a dietary change is undoubtedly difficult and requires time and repetition to become a healthy habit. An approach to understanding how humans decide to make changes can be useful for people looking to make dietary changes.

The Theory of Planned Behaviour:

The Theory of Planned Behaviour is a psychology model used as a predictor of behaviour change. It explains three main attributes that predict whether or not a person may change their behaviour. Eating fish at least once a week will be used as an example of dietary change.

Perceived behavioural control;

the third attribute relates to whether or not a person believes they are able to eat more fish and have the skills to do so (like cooking skills). A person with greater self-belief and knowledge of fish is more likely to make the change as opposed to someone who grew up in a family who never ate fish. They would be less likely to believe they are capable of preparing and cooking fish.

If all of these three factors are favourable, it is most likely that a person will make a dietary change and consume fish at least once a week. If one or two of these factors are unfavourable it becomes less likely. It can be interesting to think about dietary changes you have considered making and exploring the reasons that may have held you back in the hopes to move forwards.