

Nudge Interventions in Groups

A *nudge*, according to Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein, “is any aspect of the choice architecture that alters people’s behavior in a predictable way without forbidding any options or significantly changing their economic incentives” (Thaler & Sunstein, 2021, p. 8).

A group environment lends itself to exploring, identifying, and discussing nudge interventions and their effect on individuals and the community. They may include interventions such as:

- **Provision of information** – health warning on cigarettes and calorie counts on menus
- **Changes to the environment** – more stairs and fewer lifts
- **Use of norms** – supplying information on what others are doing

Each intervention has the potential to positively impact behavior without eliminating or restricting choice or introducing financial disincentives (Thaler & Sunstein, 2021).

Use the following group exercise to explore how nudge techniques can be more successful than the enforced change in behavioral change. Complete the table on the next page.

Step one – ask the group to come up with a list of suggested changes or positive behaviors at an individual or group (society) level. List them in the left-hand column of the table below.

Step two – as a group, discuss how each change could be *enforced* or pushed through *direct* instruction.

Step three – next, consider how we could *nudge techniques* (involving indirect encouragement and enablement) to encourage change.

Step four – discuss the benefits of the nudge technique over the enforcement approach.

Nudges can act as guides for people to act in their best (and other’s interests) without inflicting change.

References

- Thaler, R. H., & Sunstein, C. R. (2021). *Nudge: The final edition*. New York: Penguin Books, an imprint of Penguin Random House LLC.

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Positive behavioral change	Enforced change	Nudge technique	Benefits of nudge technique
Ensuring a child's bedroom is tidied	Instruct child to tidy their room	Play a 'tidy' up game	Less likely to end in arguing and teaches the child that chores can be fun.
Weight loss	Counting calories	Use smaller plates at home	The new portion sizes are smaller yet fill the plate, providing less options for over-eating.
Stopping smoking	Cigarette taxation increases	More graphic health warnings	Smoking is seen as less cool and inviting.
Healthy eating for school children	Banning takeaways near school	Healthy eating campaigns and lessons	Impact all areas of eating (for example, at home, when out, etc.)

