

UC Merced

Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society

Title

Motivation for Healthy Lifestyle Behavior

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2b71706q>

Journal

Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society, 48(0)

Authors

Wiedemann, Elisa

Fiedler, Susann

Publication Date

2026

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Peer reviewed

Motivation for Healthy Lifestyle Behavior

Elisa Wiedemann

Institute for Cognition and Behavior, Vienna University of Economics and Business

Susann Fiedler

Institute for Cognition and Behavior, Vienna University of Economics and Business

Abstract

The adoption of healthy lifestyle behaviors is essential for long-term health and disease prevention, yet engagement varies widely across individuals. Motivational processes play a central role in how health-related behaviors are evaluated, initiated, and maintained. In this study, we examined associations between self-determined motivation, basic psychological need satisfaction, self-efficacy, knowledge of health guidelines, and social network size and multiple health behaviors in a nationally representative sample (N = 1,321). Self-determined motivation and basic psychological need satisfaction were associated with higher levels of physical activity and fruit and vegetable consumption. Self-efficacy was associated with lower levels of tobacco and nicotine consumption, and alcohol intake. Knowledge of health guidelines and social network size did not emerge as consistent significant predictors of health behavior. These findings highlight motivational processes as key cognitive mechanisms underlying healthy lifestyle behaviors and suggest that interventions should focus on supporting motivation in addition to providing relevant health information.