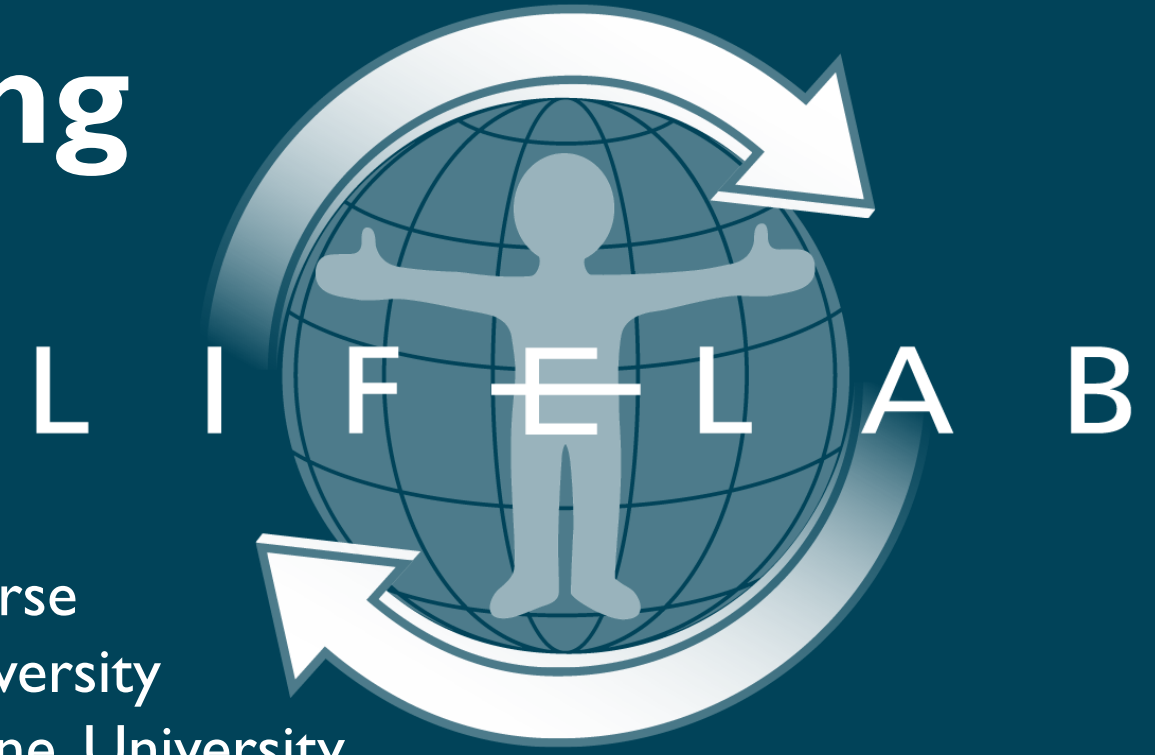


Developing Healthy Conversation Skills Training for Teachers and Education Practitioners



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Healthy Conversation Skills

Healthy Conversation Skills (HCS) is a programme of skills to support behaviour change developed at the University of Southampton.

Introduction

- Childhood obesity is a major public health problem in the UK. Current national statistics show 20% of children aged 10-11 years are classified as obese. Only 18% of children aged between 5 and 15 years consumed the recommended 5 or more portions of fruit and vegetables a day, with 51% consuming fewer than 3 portions a day.
- There is scientific evidence that a healthy lifestyle at an early age can have profound consequences on long-term health, and on the health of future children - we need to get the message across to adolescents before they have children of their own.

Aim

- To train teachers to be confident in using HCS to enable them to support their students in making behaviour changes.



Method

- Our previous research has shown sustained changes in student knowledge and motivation to be healthier over time, but did not indicate changes in related behaviours¹. To address this we extended the intervention by adding HCS training, upskilling teachers in skills to support student behaviour change.
- We modified a previously designed behaviour change training programme developed for health and social care practitioners² and adapted it to this new audience.
- Prior to teaching the LifeLab module, secondary teachers attend a professional development day (PDD) where they are introduced to HCS, and an online version to support them back in school.
- We measured the impact by running focus groups with teachers after the PDD to gauge their views of HCS and by asking them to complete an online questionnaire to evaluate the training day.

What?

How?

The training focuses on developing five key skills:

- creating opportunities for healthy conversations
- asking open discovery questions
- listening more than giving information
- reflecting on practice
- supporting goal-setting using SMARTER action-planning (Specific, Measurable, Action-oriented, Realistic, Timed, Evaluated, and Reviewed)

Results

Since April 2015, 97 qualified teachers have been trained in HCS.

We have shown the positive impact on teachers being trained to support students in making healthy behaviour changes.

100% rated the quality of the training as good (5%) or very good (95%).

"I think that this course will have a huge impact on my personal practice. A complete change in my perspective on questioning."

"I am leaving today with lots of enthusiasm and inspiration."

"It will certainly make me think about my questioning skills. I will also hope to embed this idea of making changes to your health into our non curriculum days."

75% commented on the positive impact the HCS training will have, not only in their own teaching but also in raising their awareness of the potential of affecting the lives of their students.

"Hugely valuable, it will have a massive impact on the way that I interact with, support and encourage my students. One of the most beneficial CPD sessions that I've ever had."

"More able to help students evaluate their lifestyle choices and their effects."

"This has made me think about how I address and solve problems with my students, and made me excited to teach health again!"

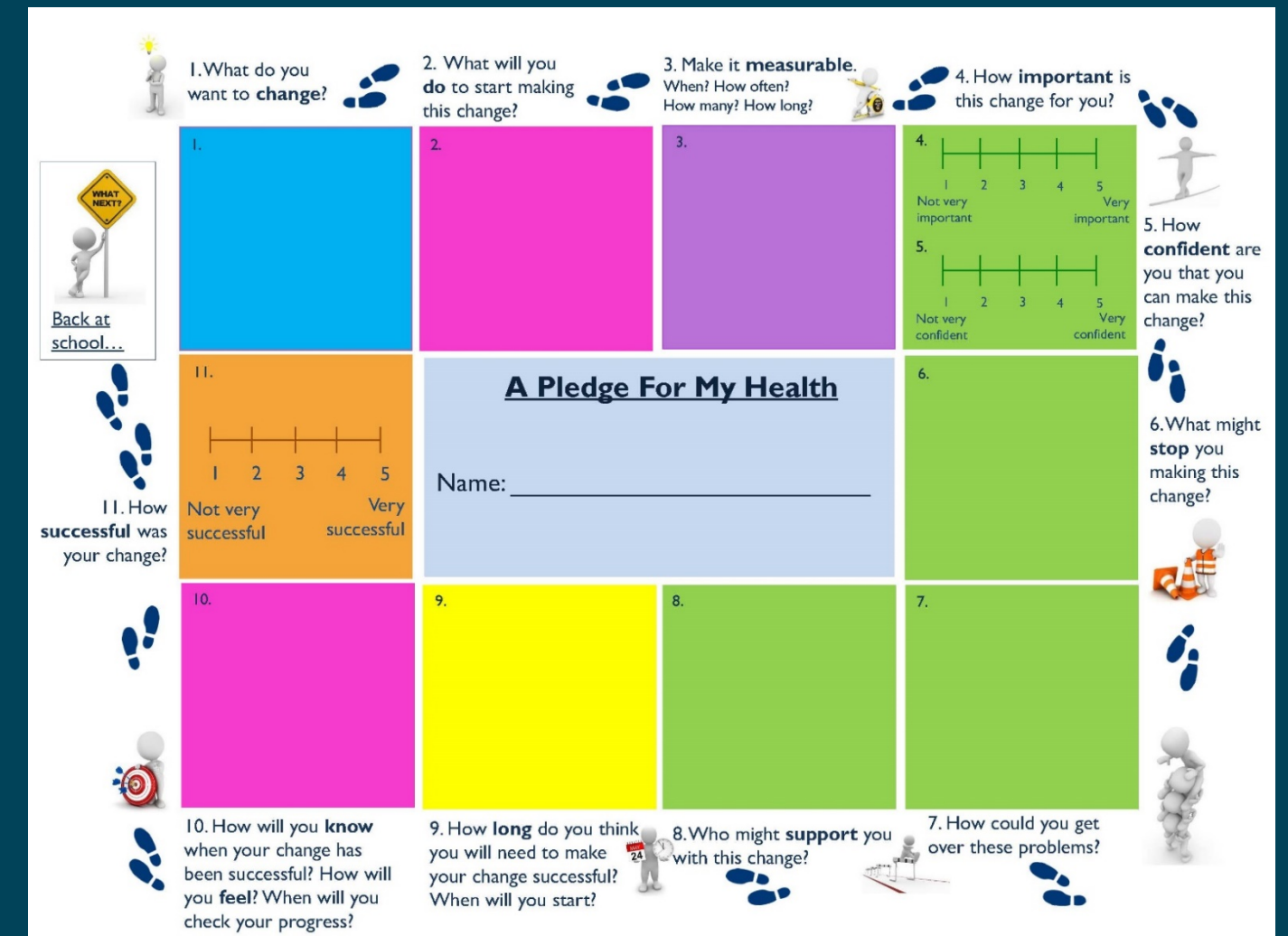


Figure 1: Health pledge worksheet

Discussion

- The next step will be to see how this strategy impacts on the students, i.e. by collecting quantitative data of any behaviour changes made.
- We are developing the current student health pledge worksheet (Figure 1) to further support students and help identify whether changes are actually being made.
- In our current randomised control trial, 'Engaging Adolescents in CHanging Behaviours', (EACH-B) we are collecting quantitative data to measure behaviour change.
- The UK government's new Personal, Social, Health and Economic education curriculum for 2020 makes the Health and Wellbeing curriculum statutory in all schools in England, which offers a timely opportunity to further develop HCS in schools in order to support positive health behaviours.



References

¹Woods-Townsend, K. et al. LifeLab Southampton: a programme to engage adolescents with DOHaD concepts as a tool for increasing health literacy in teenagers – a pilot cluster-randomized control trial. *J Dev Orig Health of Dis.* 2018, ²Lawrence W. et al. 'Making every contact count': longitudinal evaluation of the impact of training in behaviour change on the work of health and social care practitioners. *Journal of Health Psychology.* 2016;21(2): 138-151

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