

A theoretical basis to enable behaviour change in relationships?

John Tripp
Senior Lecturer and Paediatrician
Peninsula Medical School
Universities of Exeter and Plymouth

Some basic premises

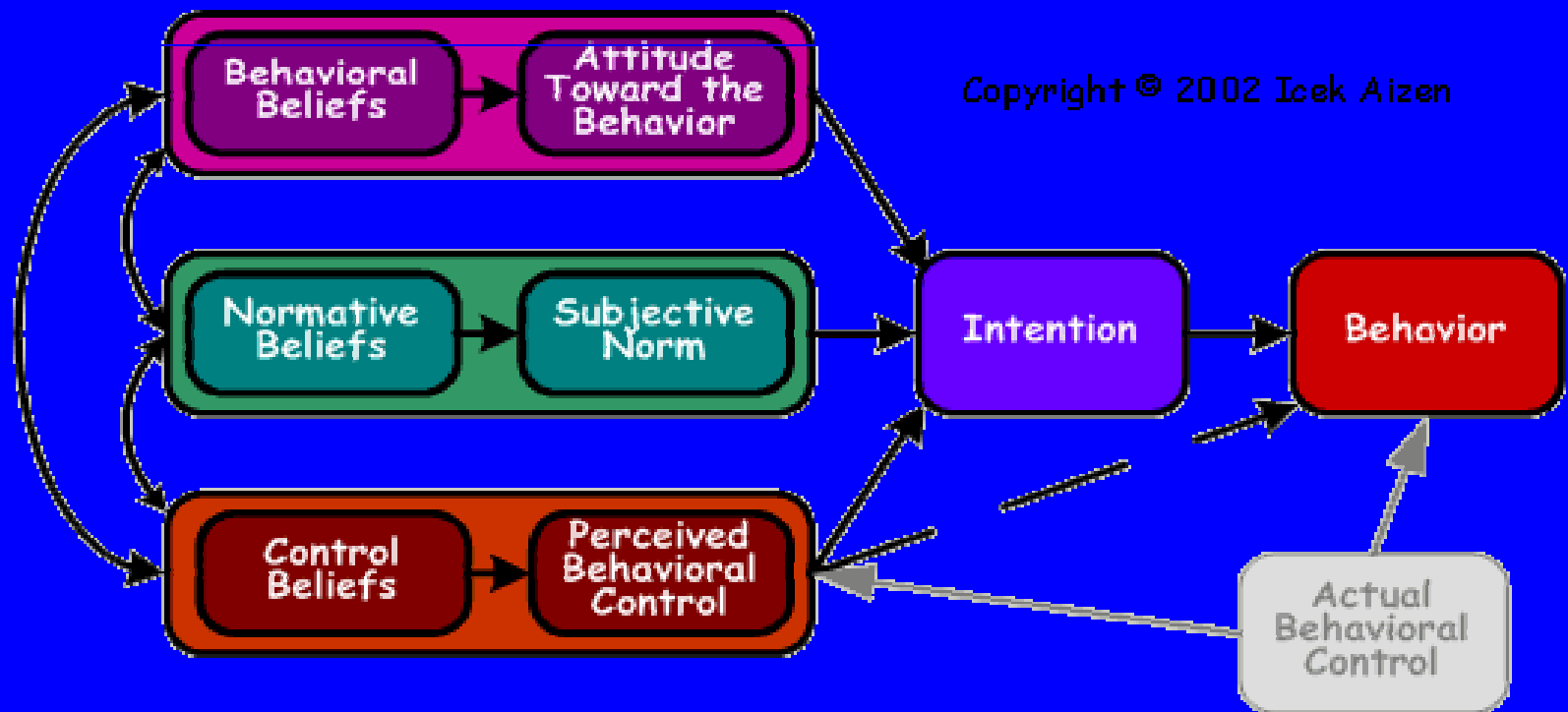
“Successful” relationships are strongly dependent on a set of authentic behaviours.

Unless we can enable helpful behaviours we will be unable to assist couples in their relationships, with each other or with their children.

It is valid to model our methods and assessment on what we know about other health behaviours – how they develop and how people can develop healthier ones.

The theory of planned behavior

Ajzen (2005 from web)



Theory of Planned Behaviour

[Ajzen 1991, 2002]

- A development of the theory of reasoned action [Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980]
- Gives equal weight to
 - Attitude to behavioural beliefs (is it good for me)
 - Subjective normative beliefs (are my friends doing it)
 - Perceived behavioural control (pbc) (is it accessible and achievable)
- Pbc acts through Intention to Behaviour
 - But also minor link from pbc to behaviour (sub-labelled “actual behavioural control”)

The primacy of perceived self efficacy in healthy behaviours.

“Unless people believe they can produce desired effects by their actions, they have little incentive to act or to persevere in the face of difficulties.”

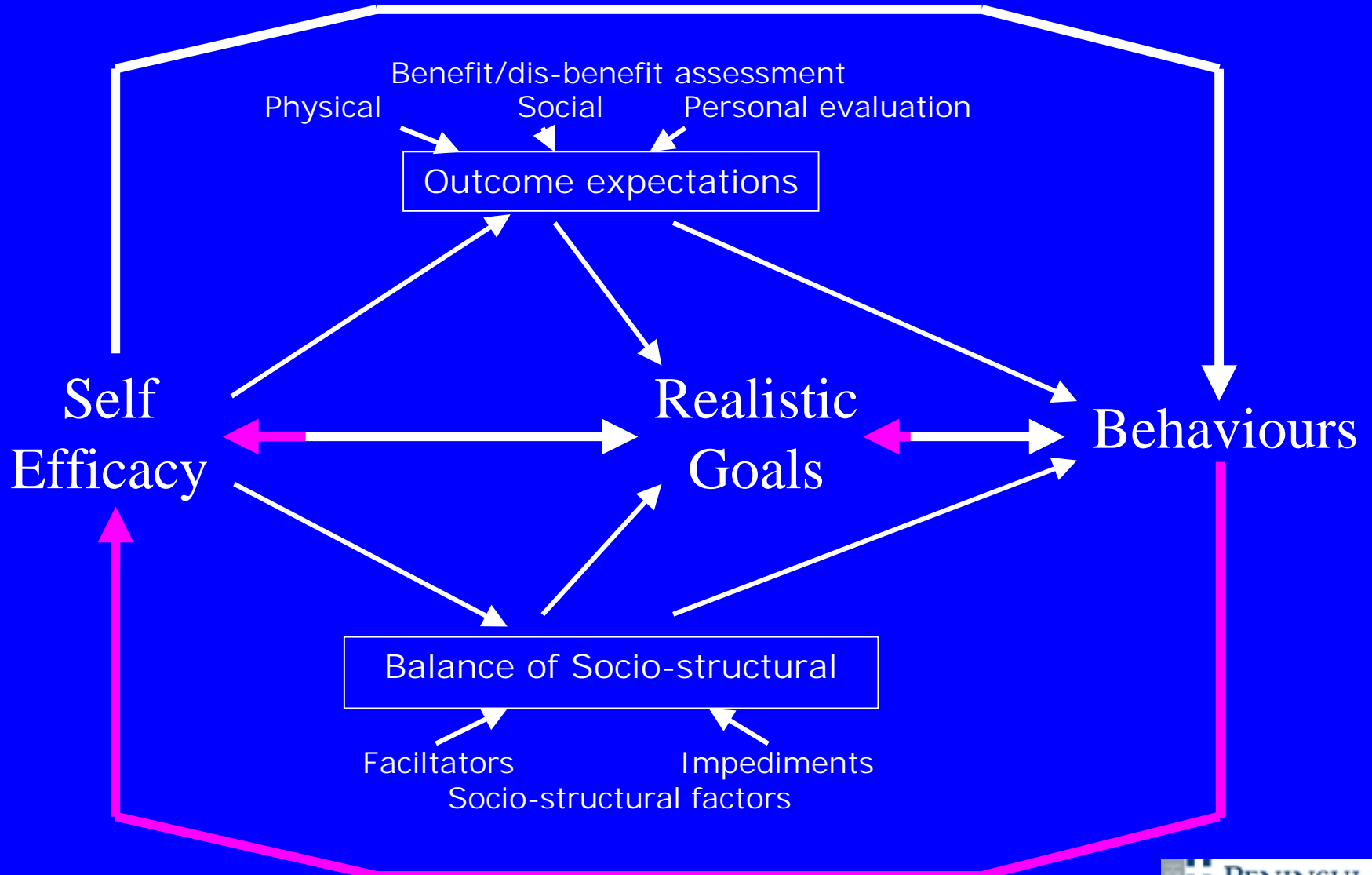
Albert Bandura 2004

The primacy of self efficacy in healthier behaviours: Evidence

- **Measured personal efficacy beliefs track behaviour change more closely than information, fear of consequences or risk evaluation.**
 - Meyerowitz BE and Chaiken S. *J Pers Soc Psychol* 1987;52:500
- **High perceived self efficacy results in people translating perceived risk into searches for health information and acting on it.**
 - Rimal RN. *J Communication* 2001;8:633-654
- **Both pre-existing self efficacy beliefs and those enhanced by a campaign were associated with adoption of healthy eating and exercise.**
 - Maibach E, Flora J, Nass C. *Health Commun.* 1991;3:1-15

A schema of perceived self efficacy paths of influence in behaviours

Slightly modified from Bandura A. Health Ed & Behav 2004;31:143-164

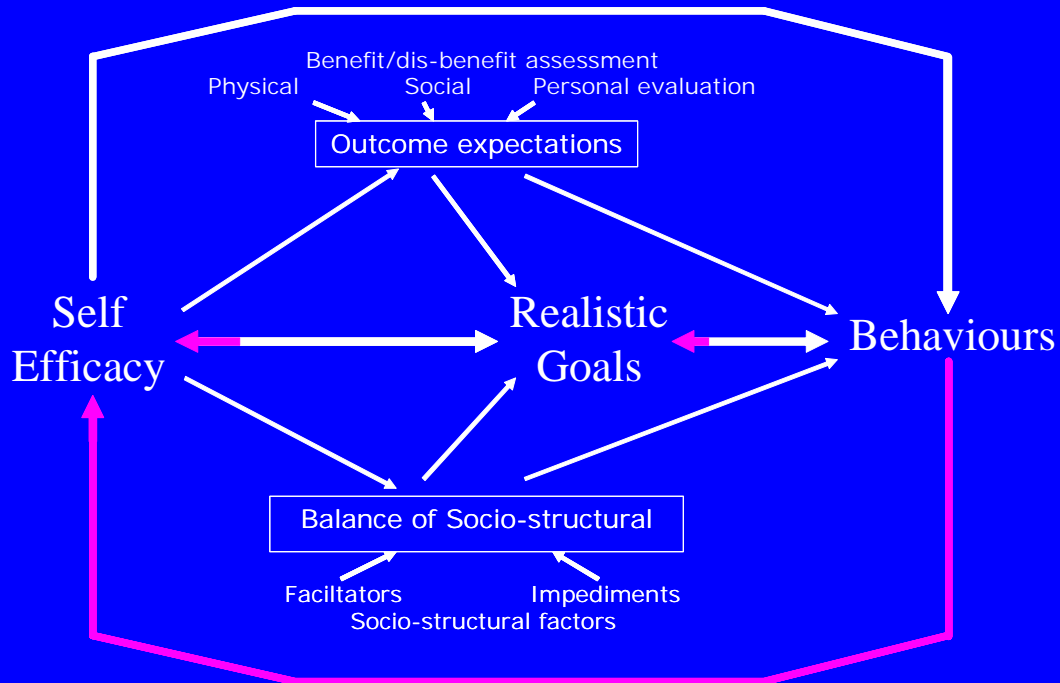


Social cognitive theory

- Social cognitive theory is invaluable as a tool in understanding and influencing behaviours because it both provides an explanation for behaviours and clues as to how to assist people to healthier behaviours even under challenging circumstances.

[Pajares (2002)]

- The Theory of Planned Behaviour is very similar though gives primacy to intention (goals in SCT) rather than perceived behavioural control (perceived self efficacy in SCT).

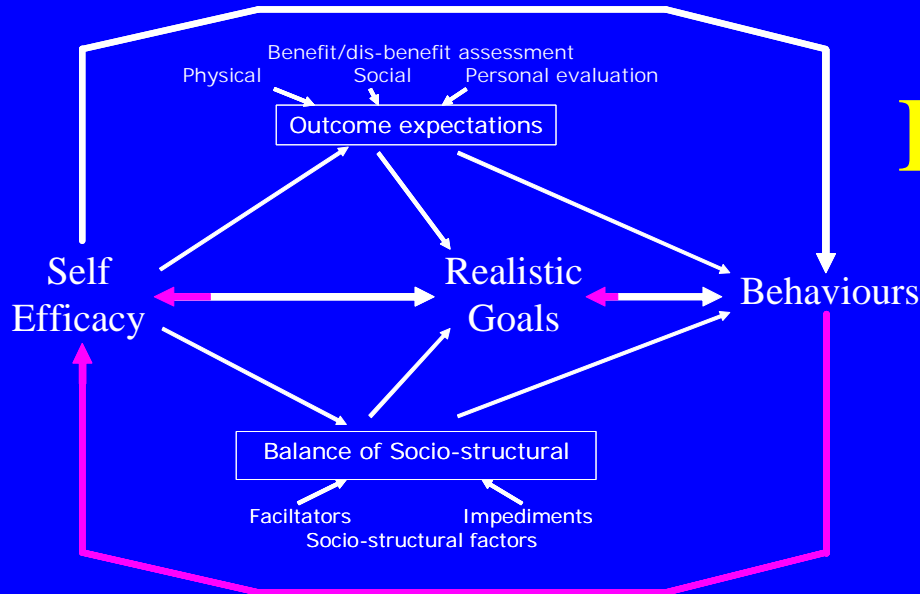


“The Plague of contentious dualism”

[Bandura 2004]

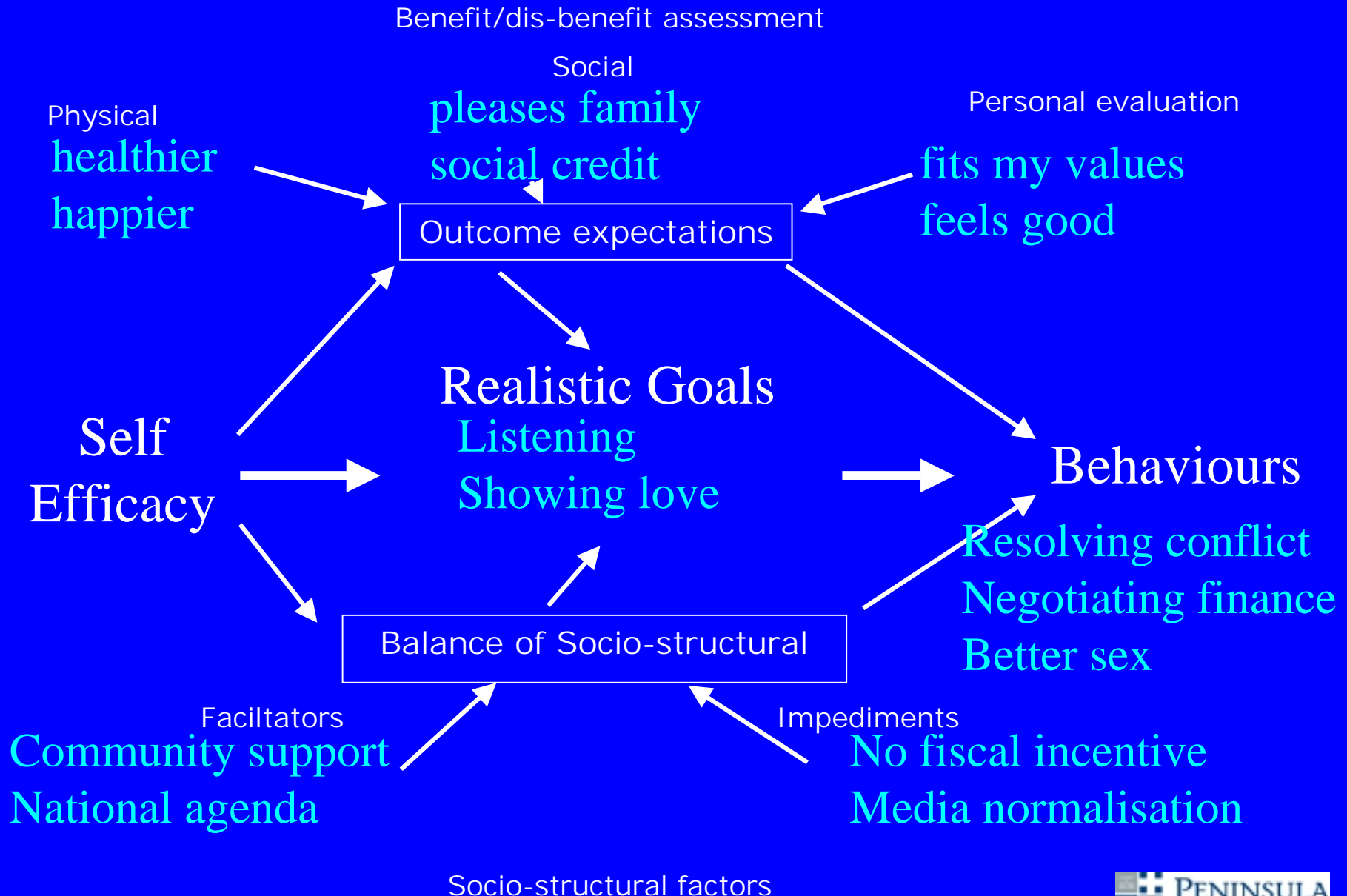
- The individualist believes that since individuals exercise control over many health issues, their health is their responsibility ...
- The structuralist argues that health is largely the product of social, environmental, political and economic conditions over which individuals have little control.
- We need both approaches not contentious debates

Implications of self efficacy in social cognitive theory

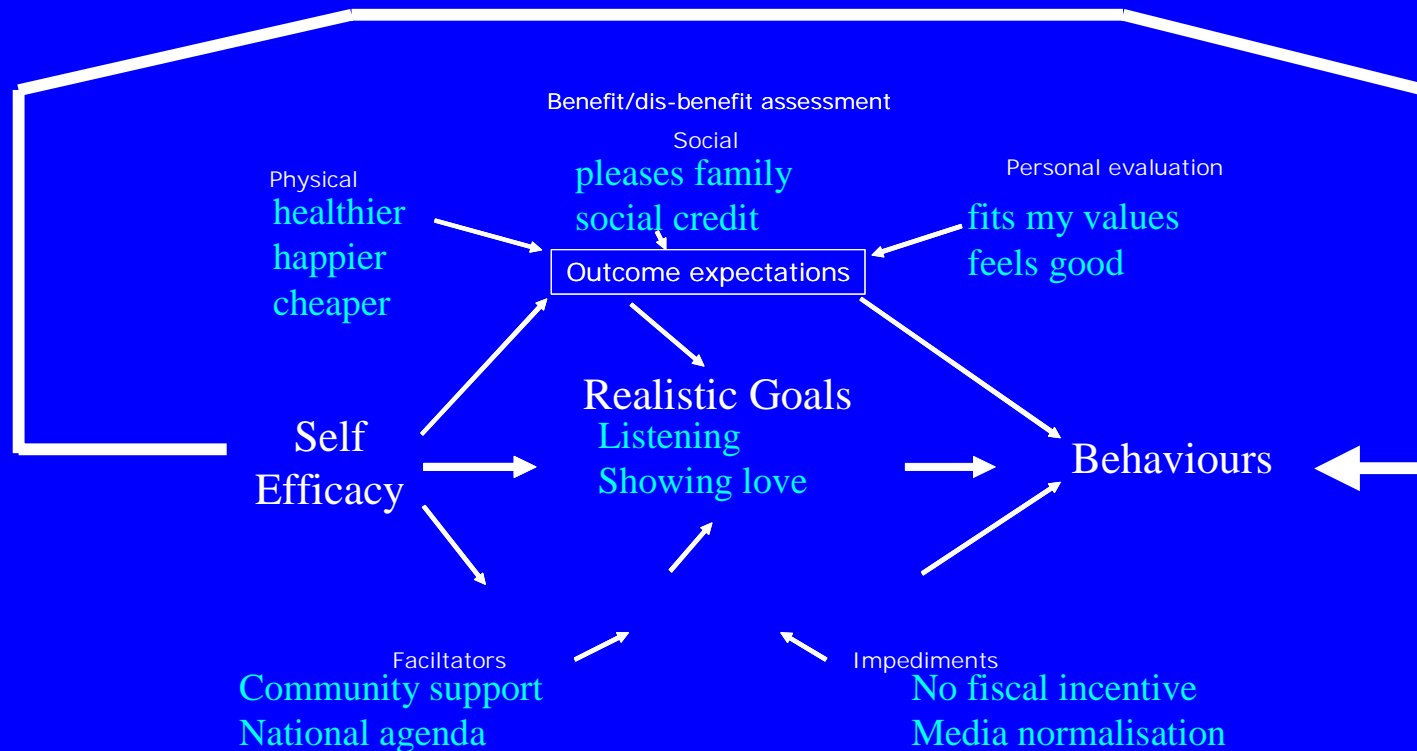


- People with high self efficacy will
 - set advanced goals anticipating positive outcomes and overcoming impediments
 - respond to information and be able to change their behaviour
- People with low self efficacy will
 - not believe they have control over their lives
 - set low goals, if any, believing outcomes will be poor and beyond their control
 - not be able to change their behaviours without intensive support through guided mastery
- People with intermediate self efficacy will
 - set intermediate goals
 - be able to change some behaviours but need support in times of difficulty

An application of social cognitive learning to couple support



We must build self efficacy



Tentative conclusions

If we wish to enable “healthier” couple relationships we need to use a sound theory of practice.

- We must enhance self efficacy by
 - clarify and inform outcome expectations
 - collect evidence to change the political climate
 - help people to set and reach achievable goals
- This may enable a virtuous circle of more successful behaviours

The future is **RELATIONAL**

- “We” are winning the battle to convince governments
 - that human relationships are key,
 - not only to happiness
 - but also to
 - what is nearer to their policy ambitions : prosperity
- Keep up the good work and strive for
 - sound theoretical models,
 - viable methods of implementation and
 - effective social diffusion
- **THANK YOU**

jhtripp@ex.ac.uk

References

- Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 1991; 50: 179-211
- Ajzen I (2005) Home page. <http://www.people.umass.edu/aizen/> accessed January 2005
- Ajzen, I., & Fishbein, M. *Understanding attitudes and predicting social behavior.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1980.
- Bandura A Social foundations of thought and action: a social cognitive theory. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1986.
- Bandura A Health promotion by social cognitive means. *Health Education and Behavior* 2004; 31:143-64
- Meyerowitz BE and Chaiken S. The effect of message framing on breast self-examination attitudes, intentions and behaviour. *J Pers Soc Psychol* 1987;52:500-510
- Rimal RN. Closing the knowledge-behavior gap in health promotion: the mediating role of self-efficacy. *J Communication* 2001;8:633-654
- *Maibach E, Flora J, Nass C. Changes in self-efficacy and health behavior in response to a minimal contact community health campaign. *Health Commun.* 1991; 3:1-15
- Pajares (2002) Overview of social cognitive theory and of self efficacy. <http://www.emory.edu/EDUCATION/mfp/eff/html> accessed 4 Jan 2005.
- *Note: ref for Maibach from Bandura 2004 not located or read.