

Research Methods in Health Promotion
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Lecture 36: Designing messages (Part – I)

Hello, so we are developing our own health promotion research and while discussing the different parts of health promotion research and how to develop your own health promotion research one very important and interesting part is the development of the intervention. Now the development of the intervention particularly in health promotion research it means that how do you develop your change message? That means, in the intervention you are aiming for behavior change in your target audience. So, how do you bring about that change? So, for that you have to have a particular message that is in line with the objective of your health promotion research or particularly the health promotion intervention research and you have to also think about how you deliver the message to your target audience. So, now in this lecture and also in the next one we will be discussing about how do we design an appropriate message for our health promotion research and particularly the health promotion intervention that we are about to implement in the population. So, in this particular lecture the part one of it we will cover the characteristics of a good health promotion message, we will cover the design the general aspects of designing a health promotion message and also the appearance and approach of a health promotion message. Now to start our discussion let us have a look at the characteristics of a good health promotion message.

As you can see we have mentioned a few characteristics like accurate, then focus, specific, clear, use of uncomplicated language, simple to understand, relevant, culturally appropriate and acceptable, then emphasize the options or the practical actions and solutions like this. So, basically what are these and if we can see first we will be discussing the characteristics and next we will be discussing the general aspects of design. So, how do we understand what is the difference between the characteristics and the general aspect of a design. See the characteristics of a good message these are general characteristics of a good message they are applicable for health promotion message as well.

That means, when you are performing your health promotion intervention or the intervention is part of your health promotion research and that message that message carrying the change objective is part of your intervention. So, in this nested component in this in a way in this hierarchy that the message that you are sending it should have the basic characteristics of a good message and based on these basic characteristics you can basically devise this general design of your message. So, what do we mean by accurate? As we as we usually say accurate means it clearly mentions what basically it is supposed to mention. For example, if I am saying that I want you to quit smoking now this is also accurate, but if I clearly mention that I want you to quit smoking from now and this moment now this is even more accurate this is just a simple example. Now when you are devising your own health promotion research and you are planning for the intervention based on the insights that you gain from the the different

qualitative studies or from the baseline of your survey you will understand how you can device your own accurate message.

So, this is the concept of accuracy your message should be very much accurate and in general whatever whenever we want to give certain messages in different disciplines they should be accurate and also for health promotion research as well it has to be accurate otherwise people will not be able to understand exactly exactly what you want them to do. That is why it should focus on a few key points only because if you have more than a few points for example, if you have 10 or 12 points in a given message it will appear very much confusing and people will lose focus on the the major aspects of behavior change that you want them to perform and also as a result of the confusion it will not be accurate because for accuracy you need to mention some different points. Now if your message is carrying 10 or 12 salient areas then what happens is you are not able to fit all the different important points for each and every salient messages in the in the span given to you that is why you will lose focus and also lose accuracy. Therefore a good message must focus on only a few key points traditionally you should include like 4 to 5 key points we will also discuss these aspects and how many points or how many aspects we have to discuss we will discuss it later on as well it has to be specific and clear. Now since the discussion has started on the characteristics I have been repeatedly mentioning that we have to clearly mention certain issues to make it accurate and we have to clearly mention certain issues to to make it focused on those topics.

So clarity is basically the building block for a good message it should not be vague it should be very precise and very clear. Clear means for example, specific means it should be focused on a few key points and then those key points should focus on a specific event only. For example, a change objective may relate you know to the to accident prevention perhaps. Now the message that we want to we want to spread or as part of the intervention it should focus on a few points for example, using seat belts while driving and also maintaining the speed limits. Now how these messages should be specific see our objective here was to prevent or to decrease the incidence of the road traffic accidents.

Now see that the the points the good the the message that we want to give the audience over here they are directly related to the objective and these points they specifically contribute in achieving the objective. So specificity in a way of a good message it relates to the ultimate change objective that the that your message wants to bring in. Clear means there should not be any ambiguity for example, if I mention you should follow the speed limit then also there may be certain degree of ambiguity like speed limits can be different in different places. Now see the situation may be like this that in different in different areas the speed limits are different and we want you to maintain the speed limits in those different areas. Consider a different situation one of our study found out that whenever the the drivers they have you know been driving at a speed of say over 60 kilometers per hour the incidence of road traffic accidents has increased.

Now see the 60 kilometer per hour limit it may be the speed limit in certain roads and in certain other situations the speed limit may be 80 kilometers per hour. Also in different situations for example, in rainy seasons or in other road conditions the speed limit that is mentioned for the particular road they may not be applicable. So, these are the different situations where we need the change objective or the call through an action to be very much specific. What we can do in this situation is we can clearly mention that and drive below 60 kilometers now. This makes it all the more specific and also more clear ok.

Use uncomplicated language. A good message should avoid technical jargons because a good message it should appeal to a general audience and a group of people and not only for the technically savvy people right. So, you have to use the uncomplicated language or the lay terms to make all the people understand of the change objectives that you want them to perform. It should be simple to understand now if you if you consider these two points like clear and use of uncomplicated language it invariably means they are simple enough that the general audience can understand. So, that is why the simplicity of the message it is important.

How do we define simplicity? Obviously, we now have understood that including clarity with uncomplicated language it increases simplicity or it induces simplicity in the message. Another important aspect is to you know to devise the message in a more lucid way that means, do not include more than only a few key points in some instances you should include only one aspect for the behavior change. That means, it should be very much lucid even for the lay audience who who has almost zero knowledge to the technical aspect you know to understand your messages ok. It should also be relevant we discussed in terms of the specificity and the how specific a message should be that it should be relevant to the study that you are doing or it should be relevant to the change objective that you are basically working on. For example, if you have you know you are you have devised a message that leads directly to the the wash practices for example, the hygiene practices then that is not relevant for your health promotion program targeting the road traffic accidents right.

So, specificity and relevance in in in ways they go hand in hand. It should be culturally appropriate this is even more important for you know the health promotion interventions because a good message that asks a people to perform certain activities and that ask some people to you know to perform certain behavior change it should be culturally appropriate and it should be acceptable also to the different community. Because otherwise not only that particular message will be will be at stake, but also your whole intervention may not be accepted by the community. Now, in certain instances what we can consider is certain community practices they are considered normal, but you know for example, if you if you consider the use of prelactical feeds the previous or in even nowadays also some of the some of the earlier generation people they advocate for prelactical feeds, but from our medical knowledge we know that prelactical feed is not really good for the for the child. So, in this situation we have to devise the health promotion message in a tricky way because we we do not want the want the elderly people or those who are more inclined in prelactical feeding due

to certain beliefs or certain religious or community aspects we do not want to hurt their feelings or hurt their beliefs.

Instead what we want we want them to inclusively understand the science and change their behavior that is the essence of health promotion. So, in that situation we have to devise the message in a more culturally appropriate way. We may have to say that we can advocate for prelactical feed, but these are the difficulties or problems with prelactical feedings that other people are finding with their children. We do not want your child to suffer similar kind of problems in that way you are not directly saying that prelactical feed is a very bad thing, but you are also indicating that these are the problems. So, in order to get rid of the problems you should stop using prelactical like this.

So, it should be culturally appropriate and it should be accepted by the community otherwise your whole intervention will go in vain. And therefore, it must clearly emphasize on the options and practical of actions that means, the call to an action what exactly they should do what changed behavior you want them to perform it should be made very much clear. And in a way you can understand that in terms of the health promotion interventions all these issues they are interrelated and they should be presented as a whole in order to make it an effective health promotion message. Now, this brings us to the next question of what should be the overall design of our intervention. Firstly it should be consistent that means, you know the intervention or the message that we have designed it should not change from one people to another or one community to another it should be consistent.

That means, you can replicate the message that you have devised. It should avoid clutter using clutter again makes it makes the message very much confusing and people may not even look at the message ok. Provide guide for finding the key information for example, you usually providing guidance means either if for example, this is a poster again this is the method of delivery of the messages and these are your messages. You can use certain guides that highlight means these and underline means these, but this is not usually how we do things. What we usually do is the guidance that is provided for the participants on finding the key message is in fact, an implicit one.

For example, we do not mention any legend or any keys to finding the important information from this text obviously, what we do is we in some places we highlight some issues we provide an underline we provide the use of the boldface like this. So, that the people suddenly understands these are the main areas. See if you use boldface for a few words in a in a whole text in a whole paragraph then obviously, your audience will just while going through the paragraph will stick to those highlighted words. So, that is how we provide guidance to finding the key information that is why certain key points of often we can mention it them in terms of the bullet points and the headings bullet points and then the headings. Now, the headings are again given in a highlight or in a boldface like this people can easily understand what the key information that you want them to act upon.

Next is you have to clearly label all illustrations and charts whenever you are designing your message see this is this is the chart or this is for example, a figure. Now, this figure or this chart you know this this has to be clearly labeled and this should be placed in such a way that they are able to understand this chart is related to this part of the text. Now, see here you are designing of message it is somewhat related to what type of dissemination media you are using. Here we are discussing about posters this is one type of print media this is one type of method of dissemination of your message, but if you are designing your message for a poster or for certain print media then these are the things that you that you must keep in mind. Because otherwise people will fail to understand why you have provided the chart unless the chart is so much self explanatory that the people can just looking at it understand what is actually to be done.

In that scenario certain photographs or pictographs they help the people to understand and, but still it is always a good practice to provide an explanatory label for the illustrations the figures the charts that you use in your message. As mentioned offer explanations for example, this is your heading then you offer an explanation for why you have highlighted this point and why you want them to perform this kind of a behavior. For example, with the same prelactyl feed example if we mention that these are the these are the adverse effects of the prelactyl feed and we we mention in the in the heading that you should avoid prelactyl feed maybe in that case you should provide adequate explanation on why we are considering these as the bad bad effects of the prelactyl feed what are the harmful effects that these habits can bring to the child like this. So, that helps the people understand what is the perspective of your health promotion intervention. Make the legends clear in a figure often we use certain legends to mention which color represents what or which line represents what you have to mention the very much clearly.

For example, if you are using a figure say this is a pie chart now these are the different areas and here you have to put a legend clearly mentioning what what does the single dash mean what does this empty space means and what does this multiple dashes mean you have to make this make the legends part very much clear. Place the charts as close as possible to the explanatory text that is what we have mentioned in the beginning that the chart should be very much close to the text. So, that people can understand exactly what is explained and why how that chart basically fits and see the charts help people in understanding the main concept and also it helps people in understanding the perspective of the whole event. So, place them closer together then use consistent and easily recognized headings again the issue of consistency is there and the heading should be easily recognizable. It should not be like people are you know you are using for example, certain the Shakespearean language or Shakespearean word people will not be able to understand what is actually written or it will take them a good amount of time to basically comprehend the heading of your help promotion message.

So, it is not only regarding the presentation of the text how you are presenting whether in bold or in italics or something like that it is also about how your headings are framed ok. That is also important because otherwise if people are not able to recognize the text or recognize

the heading in a in a go then they will not be really that much engaged in reading your message. For example, if you are even the heading it is mentioned lucidly, but it is part of the text and people see just it is a it is a group of text group of small words I mean group of words those are written in a very small font. For example, 8 or 10 font people will hardly look at the message that you have provided through your poster right. So, it should be consistent and it should it should have certain recognizable headings.

Single main points with bold or highlights that we were discussing even in the last slide that you should use the boldface to make certain things clear that this is the main point that you want to focus on and that you can also use highlights like background highlights or something like that. Even the use of boldface is also considered a part of highlighting the main issue. And in the design you should also consider breaking the monotony because see if you if you have written a text this large and it goes on and on and on in such small fonts people will hardly read the text or read the message after one or two paragraphs. Because it will be monotonous and as a result of the monotony people will not be engaged So, what you need to do is you need to ensure that people do not feel it in a monotonous way or do not see it in a in a monotonous way that is that is the essence of of your overall design. You should break the monotony you can use certain headings you can use certain illustrations pictures photographs.

So, that it does not appear to be a clouded piece of paper where you have clutter of words right. Now this brings us to different considerations when we are designing our message what should be the style of it. Write in active voice that means, you directly say what should be done and how things should be done. Use the everyday words that means, it should be it should be understood by the people otherwise if you use difficult or tough words then people may not be able to understand your message. So, avoid long and complex sentences and explain the technical terms if at all you have to use those technical terms and provide adequate examples.

What happens is if you provide adequate examples for example, the the example that we mentioned use of prelactyl feed what happens here you consider this lecture as a good health promotion message itself. If the example of prelactyl feed was not given in the previous slides the problem is as a reader you would not be able to understand what is the exact context of this good message or how do we understand which message is culturally appropriate or not like this. Theoretically you will read many things, but it is the examples that will make the theoretical understanding clear and whenever you are going to the community with your health promotion understanding this is the crux area that you should always work on. Your examples should be solid and relatable to the audience so that the theory is understandable to them because it is based on the theory that you want them to change your behavior because see it is based on the fact that prelactyl feeding is actually bad for health, but because you are now giving the examples of these are the bad things that can happen because of prelactyl feed now people are able to understand why prelactyl feeding should be avoided. So, that is how things work and that should be your style of designing the good health promotion message when you are going to the community.

And adding contextuality to this message makes it more relatable how do you add contextuality we have been discussing that whenever you are providing the examples it provides you with certain degree of contextuality and people are able to understand what actually is being asked for. The text appearance it is again an important part for example, with the same poster thing this is illustration this is the heading and these are the these are the texts that of the poster. So, we have three different understanding of three different considerations whenever we are designing our intervention material in this way first is the font size next is the font style and also we need to consider how should we type it and what are the considerations when spacing the characters characters and the lines. So, font size these are the different examples of font size you can easily understand that this is the best possible way you can easily relate the font 18 you can easily find out the font 18 from this list and font 8 8 point font it is really very small it is very difficult to read as well. So, for the headings you can use the font size of 18 or more perhaps and interestingly what you should do is the text should have a clear contrast in terms of the font size as well.

For example, the heading if the heading is in 18 fonts and your text is also in 18 fonts then it will get jumbled up people will not be able to understand which part is the heading and which part is the text. A good practice in this scenario may be you provide the heading with an 18 font and the text you provide it with say a 14 font or a 12 font because the text part the font size of 12 is a standard font size you can use that as well. Next terms is the important consideration of font style see we have serif fonts and also we have sans serif fonts. Now serif fonts are usually easier to read than the sans serif fonts. Now the sans serif fonts means see the serif fonts hm the the there are the different you know these small ah small lines small verticals that we have this is what differentiate sans serif and serif fonts.

So, what happens is whenever you are using the serif fonts sometimes in in front of your eyes it is somewhat better to look at, but for the headings often the sans serif fonts are even ah even better to understand because they are the broad things and if you if you omit these verticals they appear more clear. So, this is again a consideration whenever you are designing your message see over here we have mentioned that the body of text use fonts with serifs use sans serif fonts in headings and subheadings. That means, the highlighted part that you want your reader to understand so that should be mentioned in serif in sans serif fonts, but for the continuous text for the eyes it is easier to read the serif fonts. So, for the continuous text you can use the serif fonts as well. Now avoid using scripts or decorative fonts we all know that in even in the word processing softwares you have different decorative forms different italicized forms and different you know scripts, but for a good health promotion message consider this example of the poster if you put scripts in this poster it again will confuse the people of what exactly is being conveyed through this poster ok.

So, that is the problem of it. Now how do we actually type and space the characters or the words that we have over here we use appropriate space between the lines and good contrast between the paper and the text we really should not use light gray color over a white piece of

paper people will hardly be able to see what is being written. Instead when we are mentioning for example, in this slide the background is white and the text is written in dark color black and see dark maroon like this. So, this helps people in understanding what is actually being written. Also whenever you are writing something you should use a space of at least it is called the single spacing you should use at least a single space between two lines it is always better to use more than a single space like 1.5 or double space it depends on how you are going to present your poster, but a single space is the minimum recommended standard.

Also whenever you are typing the whole message in your poster or in the print material you should always consider using both the upper and lower case letters instead of a monotonic upper or only the lower case letter. And even see in certain situations the upper case the continuous upper case letters they appear even more monotonic than the continuous lower case letters because we are not used to reading in that way that is why you will be preparing your own health promotion intervention message you should always consider using mixing the upper case and lower case letters and using appropriate different appropriate spacings and also using the different different contrast. So, that people are able to read those things our ultimate motive is to engage people in reading the messages. So, that that can be processed in the minds of the audience and people can take up the change objective. So, approach we have quite a few approaches for health promotion research for health promotion intervention perhaps one is the informative then is the educating approach we have the persuasive approach we have the prompting approach and also we have the entertaining approach.

Now we have discussed the different types of approach in a greater detail in the other course on health promotion education that is the basics of health promotion education intervention and in this course for understanding on the research methods in health promotion we will just give you an outlook of what are these different approaches. See the informative approach means it creates awareness about a new idea people do not know what is coming or what is to be done. For example, during the COVID 19 pandemic people did not know how to maintain the respiratory hygiene. The health education messages that were even spread through the digital media or through the telecommunications they spread the awareness on what to do for example, using the trick of the elbow to cover your nose and mouth while coughing or sneezing then the use of mask what are the needs of using the mask and what are the benefits like this they created awareness people came to know and this is the importance of informative approach. Usually we were discussing that the mass media it is most mostly used for the wide coverage and reaching to a larger audience and the informative approach is more suited for mass media type of delivery ok.

Now the next question is the educating approach here we want to educate our audience it is not really providing only the information. So, that the people will process the information and act likewise. Here the new idea is explained including its strength and weaknesses see in the informative approach we mentioned that why you should use the mask for example, it should prevent from the disease like this. Here we are educating the patient or the beneficiaries on what are the strengths and weaknesses of that particular behavior for example, use of mask

people may sometimes say that whenever I am using the mask I am feeling nauseated or I am feeling discomfort I cannot breathe properly. Now the educating approach this helps them understand what are the drawbacks and how to overcome the drawbacks or how to mitigate the weaknesses of these approaches like this and also highlights the strengths what benefits you will gain and why these benefits are ultimately useful for you.

For example, if you are using mask you are in a good way protected against the COVID 19 pandemic like this ok. So, this is how the educating approach moves forward and the interpersonal communication with individuals or small groups this is usually helpful for educating approach because see in the mass media we can only make people aware of certain issues, but in order to explain those things people will not hear to a very long message over the over the telephone perhaps. But if it is a small group discussion people will ultimately hear the things and they will participate in the discussion and they will learn on what are the advantages, disadvantages, how to overcome the disadvantages like this. Next is the persuasive messages as the name suggests you are pursuing the people on doing certain behavior. It promotes a positive change in behavior and attitudes which encourages the audience to accept the new idea.

So, persuasive message is basically you are pursuing the people or taking up the new behavior that that is there in the intervention. For example, you may you may you know provide certain incentives to pursue them in taking up say tobacco quitting behavior like this. So, again here interpersonal communication is the most effective way to get across the persuasive messages you cannot do it in a mass media. So, interpersonal communication is again important for persuasion right. Prompting messages are designed so that they are not easily ignored or forgotten you device certain kinds of prompts.

For example, using certain pictures may help people understand or remind them of certain activities that they want to do. See see no spitting kind of prompting it is mentioned in certain areas this is again in the example of prompting this indicates that you should not spit over here and that is again a good behavior that you want them to perform people should not spit over spit on the roads like anywhere that is to be prohibited and that prompting message it helps them to take up the good behavior or bring out the positive change. Entertaining the attention of the audience is drawn to the new idea by using messages with entertain for example, you can use good humor you can use certain songs or films like this you can put the messages through these kind of entertainment, but be very careful whenever you are using the humor component because humor is not always relatable in the same way to all the people. So, in conclusion we discussed what are the different aspects or characteristics of the good message should be accurate it should focus on a few key areas it should be specific clear uncomplicated language must be used simple to understand relevant most importantly culturally appropriate and should provide what exactly it needs to be done. We also discussed these messages must be represented clearly without any form of clutter and it should be recognizable in a in a simple way to the audience.

The different approaches in health promotion messages we discussed the informative approach where we are only aware in making people aware the mass media is a very commonly used I mean medium for this educating persuasive approach. Now, again in this in these two situations we can use interpersonal communication prompting means you provide certain prompts that makes people perform certain good behaviors and entertaining means you are providing that through the entertainment medium as well. So, these are the resources that you can go through that is all for this lecture see you in the part 2 of this.