

Using interventions to improve mental health during the pandemic

November 17 2020



Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

Interventions increase the chances of succeeding in changing and maintaining a new behavior in the long run. This was revealed in a recently published study from CTF, Service Research Center at Karlstad

University.

"Interventions are about promoting a [behavioral change](#) with targeted programs or services," said Frida Skarin, Doctoral Student in Psychology and main author of the paper. "The study shows that health-promoting interventions are effective ways to increase well-being and reduce [mental illness](#). Changing a behavior and thereby breaking old habits is difficult, but sometimes necessary—especially when it comes to health, which many have experienced during the current pandemic."

Increased chances of successfully introducing and keeping new habits

Increased well-being through mandatory health-promoting interventions: Is it possible? This was the question the researchers started out with when conducting a [field study](#) among university students who, over six weeks, implemented a health-promoting activity in their everyday lives, for example: meditating or exercising.

The purpose was to investigate how motivation and belief in the [intervention](#) affected the [behavior change](#) and well-being, and how a mandatory intervention affected behavioral change and well-being both in the short and long run.

"Generally it is common to succeed in implementing behavior change with the help of interventions during the time of the intervention. But to succeed in keeping the new behavior and turning it into a new habit is more uncommon—which we saw in the study where a large number of participants volitionally continued their intervention-generated behaviors after the intervention was completed. We also saw a continued increase in well-being among the participants who continued the new behavior," said Frida Skarin.

Important to experience increased well-being during the intervention

The study showed that those who maintained the changed behavior experienced an increased well-being during the intervention.

"The chances of maintaining the changed behavior, to make it a habit, increases if you have a positive experience during the intervention period. This means that the design of the intervention is of great importance."

Mental illness, which was increasing before the pandemic, is increasing even faster now, says Frida Skarin. "Interventions, similar to the ones in our study, if carried out correctly with relatively simple means, could help people to implement positive behaviors in their daily lives to increase their well-being. This would benefit individuals, organizations and society at large."

Tips for someone who wants to change a behavior

"Since motivation and belief are crucial, a good tip is to read about positive health-promoting activities and their impact on your well-being. The next step is to make a clear plan, and then it's time to start introducing the new behavior. It is also important to make notes of the new [behavior](#) and the progress to keep track of what you actually are doing and to see the improvement which will encourage you to continue."

More information: Frida Skarin et al. Increasing Students' Long-Term Well-Being by Mandatory Intervention – A Positive Psychology Field Study, *Frontiers in Psychology* (2020). [DOI: 10.3389/fpsyg.2020.553764](https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.553764)

Provided by Karlstad University

Citation: Using interventions to improve mental health during the pandemic (2020, November 17) retrieved 17 January 2023 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-11-interventions-mental-health-pandemic.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.