

Exercise 11: Identifying and Overcoming Barriers to Action

Important caution: We are suggesting you do the following exercise with your chosen (or assigned) partner(s). However, due to the corona virus pandemic, we ask you to *do this exercise virtually*, i.e., to talk by phone, Skype, or any other social media app you feel comfortable with. If you cannot use any of the virtual options and are meeting in person, please adhere to all local guidelines on social distancing during the COVID crisis: maintain at least a 1.5 m distance to your partner(s) and other people. Behavioural guidelines during the pandemic are updated frequently and you can see the latest at the [WHO website](#) and, particularly, the [Seychelles Department of Health](#) guidelines.

Purpose of Exercise

The purpose of this exercise is for you to:

- *Understand the importance of and explore the full range of barriers* audiences encounter when trying to make a change.
- *Think strategically how your communication can help lower the barriers or help people overcome them.*
- Consider the possibility that *barriers to action may force you to redirect your communication at a different audience*, namely a key party that can remove barriers for the audience you are interested in.

Needed Supplies

- Pen and paper or Notebook/journal
- Results from previous exercises about the audience, goals, frames, messages, motivations

Time Requirement

30 minutes

Instructions

1. **Connect with your training partner(s)**
2. **Identify possible barriers to behavior/policy/social change in the particular situation you are aiming to address:** What could get in the way of what you want people to do?
 - Think of situational, practical, legal, organizational, financial, social, psychological, educational, cultural and other barriers
 - Consider every instance where people could “check out”, “cop out”, or “opt out” of doing what you hope them to be doing
3. **Adjust your communication strategy to minimize those risks.** Think of ways to:
 - Make the behavior easier (provide more support, adjust timing, creative problem solving etc.)
 - Reinforce opportunities, remind people
 - Increase the social support
 - Be accountable (incentives, reporting, mandates etc.)
4. It is possible that a careful consideration of barriers leads to you having to rethink your target audience and revise/refine your goal. Don't hesitate to do so, as that is the point of developing

an effective communication strategy – that you actually thought through every aspect of the strategy and aligned all aspects into a coherent, powerful approach.

- Thus, if necessary, revisit earlier steps (audience identification, goal refinement, elevating motivations, emotional aspects, framing, key messages etc.) to make sure you actually do everything you can to overcome the barriers you identified.

Note: This is an incredible opportunity! Very rarely do we get to work with others to help us shape and refine our communication. Think of yourselves as supportive coaches who are here to help the other person succeed. (And maybe you like and benefit so much from it that you might want to make that a new habit!?) Ask for help. Offer your help. You both win!