

Behavioral Economics Can Help Fight Coronavirus

Déborah Martínez Villarreal
Ana María Rojas Méndez
Carlos Scartascini

Department of Research and
Chief Economist

POLICY BRIEF N°
IDB-PB-334

Behavioral Economics Can Help Fight Coronavirus

Déborah Martínez Villarreal
Ana María Rojas Méndez
Carlos Scartascini

Inter-American Development Bank

April 2020

Cataloging-in-Publication data provided by the
Inter-American Development Bank
Felipe Herrera Library

Martínez Villarreal, Déborah.

Behavioral economics can help fight coronavirus / Déborah Martínez Villarreal,
Ana María Rojas Méndez, Carlos Scartascini.

p. cm. — (IDB Policy Brief ; 334)

1. Coronavirus infections-Psychological aspects-Latin America. 2. Coronavirus infections-Government policy-Latin America. 3. Economics-Psychological aspects-Latin America. 4. Emergency management-Psychological aspects-Latin America. I. Rojas Mendez, Ana María. II. Scartascini, Carlos G., 1971- III. Inter-American Development Bank. Research Department and Chief Economist. IV. Title. V. Series. IDB-PB-334.

<http://www.iadb.org>

Copyright © 2020 Inter-American Development Bank. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons IGO 3.0 Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives (CC-IGO BY-NC-ND 3.0 IGO) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/igo/legalcode>) and may be reproduced with attribution to the IDB and for any non-commercial purpose. No derivative work is allowed.

Any dispute related to the use of the works of the IDB that cannot be settled amicably shall be submitted to arbitration pursuant to the UNCITRAL rules. The use of the IDB's name for any purpose other than for attribution, and the use of IDB's logo shall be subject to a separate written license agreement between the IDB and the user and is not authorized as part of this CC-IGO license.

Note that link provided above includes additional terms and conditions of the license.

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Inter-American Development Bank, its Board of Directors, or the countries they represent.

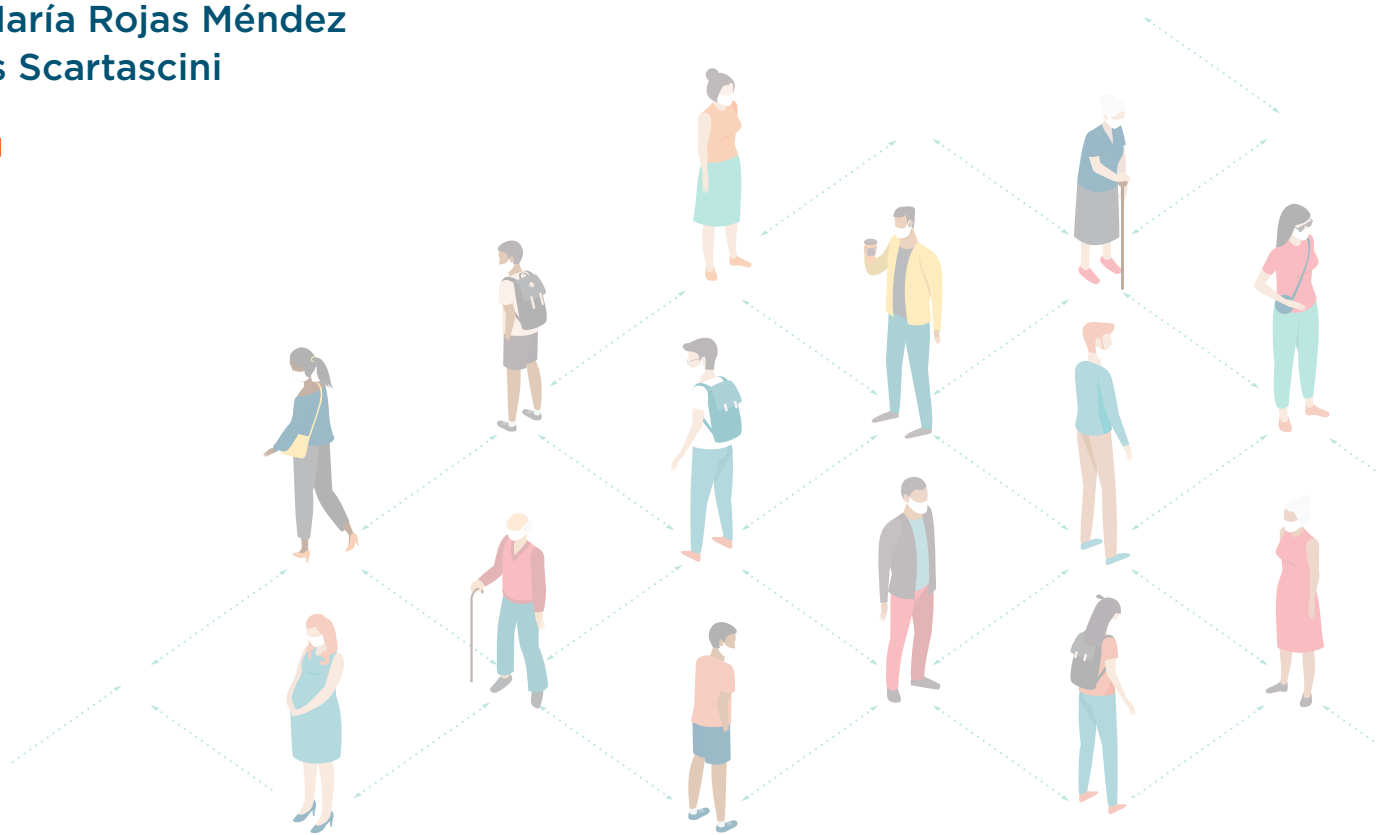


BEHAVIORAL ECONOMICS CAN HELP FIGHT CORONAVIRUS



BEHAVIORAL ECONOMICS CAN HELP FIGHT CORONAVIRUS

Déborah Martínez Villarreal
Ana María Rojas Méndez
Carlos Scartascini



AUGUST 2020

A special thanks to Florencia López Boo and Katherine Flaschen for their invaluable comments.

Cataloging-in-Publication data provided by the Inter-American Development Bank Felipe Herrera Library

Martínez Villarreal, Déborah.

Behavioral economics can help fight coronavirus / Déborah Martínez Villarreal, Ana María Rojas Méndez, Carlos Scartascini.

p. cm. — (IDB Policy Brief ; 334)

1. Coronavirus infections-Psychological aspects-Latin America. 2. Coronavirus infections-Government policy-Latin America. 3. Economics-Psychological aspects-Latin America. 4. Emergency management-Psychological aspects-Latin America. I. Rojas Méndez, Ana María. II. Scartascini, Carlos G., 1971- III. Inter-American Development Bank. Research Department and Chief Economist. IV. Title. V. Series. IDB-PB-334.

Abstract

With thousands of newly confirmed cases and deaths worldwide each day, the novel coronavirus and the disease it causes, COVID-19, are impacting every corner of the planet. Using behavioral insights to design simple messages that promote healthy behavior is essential to stop contagion, manage emotions, encourage handwashing, and when the time is right, help people gradually resume normal life. This policy note describes behavioral biases people may be exhibiting during the crisis and offers recommendations for how to overcome them. Most importantly, it offers practical examples for governments, as well as infographics ready for dissemination, that can be used to fight this pandemic.

JEL codes

I12, I15, D91, C90

Keywords

Behavioral Economics, COVID-19, public policy.

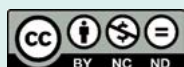
Design: souvenirme.com

Copyright © 2020 Inter-American Development Bank. This work is subject to a Creative Commons IGO 3.0 Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivative License (CC-IGO BY-NC-ND) (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/igo/legalcode>) and can be reproduced for any non-commercial use by granting the respective recognition to IDB. No derivative works are allowed.

Any dispute related to the use of the IDB works that cannot be settled amicably shall be submitted to arbitration pursuant to the UNCITRAL rules. The use of the name of the IDB for any purpose other than the respective recognition and use of the IDB logo are not authorized by this CC-IGO license and shall be subject to a separate license agreement.

Note that the link provided above includes additional terms and conditions of this license.

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Inter-American Development Bank, its Board of Directors, or the countries they represent.



BEHAVIORAL BIASES, TOOLS, AND EXAMPLES IN TIMES OF CORONAVIRUS

6



Behavioral
Biases

7

Behavioral Tools
to Counter Biases

8

Behaviorally Informed Communications Examples Used
During the Pandemic

9

WHO RECOMMENDATIONS ON COVID-19: BEHAVIORAL ANALYSIS TO INCREASE ADHERENCE

17



IDB's Behavioral Economics Methodology
to Change Habits

18

How to Apply the IDB Methodology
to WHO Recommendations

19

SIDE EFFECTS OF COVID-19

34



How to Apply the Principles of Behavioral Economics to Reduce
the Side Effects of COVID-19 on Health and Household Economy

35

TOWARDS FLEXIBLE SOCIAL ISOLATION

50



INTRODUCTION

With thousands of newly confirmed cases and deaths worldwide each day, the novel coronavirus and the disease it causes, COVID-19, are impacting every corner of the planet¹. Curbing contagion is critical to preventing health systems from collapsing. This is particularly important in Latin America and the Caribbean, where there is neither idle capacity nor sufficient human or material resources². The collateral effects of COVID-19 should also be avoided, particularly panic, as this creates direct and indirect disruptions to both health systems and the economy. The side effects of social distancing and quarantine, including weight gain, lack of physical exercise, depression, and substance abuse, among others, cannot be ignored either.

Insights from behavioral economics can be used to curb contagion, manage panic, promote hygienic practices, and when the time is right, help people gradually resume normal life. **These insights have already proven to be effective in promoting a wide range of human behaviors**, including health behaviors like increasing vaccination rates and adherence to medication.


This policy note describes the behavioral biases people may be exhibiting during the crisis, offers recommendations for how to overcome them, and provides a detailed practical application of the IDB's behavioral economics methodology to desired behaviors during this pandemic³.

1. For up-to-date information, see <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/>

2. BBC. Coronavirus: what capacity Latin American countries actually have to deal with the COVID-19 epidemic. Retrieved on 03/23/2020 from <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-51916767>

3. For more information on the subject, additional materials can be found and downloaded at: www.iadb.org/behavioral





BEHAVIORAL BIASES, TOOLS, AND EXAMPLES IN TIMES OF CORONAVIRUS



BEHAVIORAL BIASES, TOOLS, AND EXAMPLES IN TIMES OF CORONAVIRUS

As humans, we have limited rationality and often do not act in our own best interest. For example, we often have a hard time meeting the deadlines we set for ourselves, either because we forget or postpone them, and we frequently underestimate or downplay the importance of the future. We take mental shortcuts by instinctively overgeneralizing things based on incomplete information, and we believe in nonexistent patterns.

Our daily decisions are guided by hundreds of behavioral biases. Many of these biases are exacerbated under stress and fatigue. Certainly, our biases are not only affecting the decisions we make during this pandemic, but also our behavior during physical and social isolation. For example, the *status quo* bias makes it difficult for people to change their habits, with respect to behaviors like washing their hands or working from home. Optimism and availability biases may be leading young people to underestimate their chances of getting sick and dying. Parents trying to balance work and family responsibilities may experience cognitive overload and decision fatigue, which can lead them to forget simple things like putting on their face masks or coughing into their elbows. The good news is that these errors are systematic and, therefore, can be corrected with simple interventions that reorient our decisions in the desired direction.

The **most important biases** that are likely interfering with good decision-making and preventing people from acting according to their intentions during the coronavirus crisis are described below. Subsequently, behavioral tools are offered to counter these biases.

BEHAVIORAL BIASES

Behavioral biases are systematic deviations from rational behavior. The main behavioral biases are briefly described below.

- **STATUS QUO BIAS OR INERTIA:** Refers to the human tendency to maintain the current state of affairs. This current state, or *status quo*, is taken as a reference point, and any deviation from it is perceived as a loss.
- **COGNITIVE OVERLOAD:** Cognitive load is the amount of mental effort used at a given time. The overload occurs when the amount of offered information exceeds the individual's ability to process it. As our attention and memory are limited, we may be unable to process all available information.
- **SOCIAL NORMS:** Refer to unwritten rules that govern behavior in any given society. It is important to differentiate between "descriptive norms" and "prescriptive norms". The former describes how individuals tend to behave (e.g. "most people arrive on time"). The latter defines what

is considered acceptable or expected behavior, regardless of how individuals actually behave (“Please, arrive on time”).

- **OVERCONFIDENCE:** Is the tendency to overestimate or exaggerate our own ability to successfully complete a task, or to think we are better than the average.
- **OPTIMISM BIAS:** Leads us to underestimate the probability that negative events will happen to us and to overestimate the probability of positive events.
- **LOSS AVERSION:** Is the notion that the discomfort derived from a loss is perceived as bigger than the happiness derived from an equivalent gain.
- **AVAILABILITY HEURISTIC:** Describes the tendency of individuals to estimate the probability of a future event based on how readily representative examples of such event come to mind.
- **REPRESENTATIVENESS HEURISTIC:** Describes the tendency of individuals to estimate the probability of an uncertain event occurring based on how similar it is to other more certain events.
- **HASSLE FACTORS:** Are seemingly small inconveniences, such as having to read a lot of information or needing to take an extra small step to complete an action, that can hinder or disrupt our decision-making process.
- **TIME INCONSISTENCY OR PRESENT BIAS:** Is the tendency to be impatient when choosing between gains today or in the future, but patient when choosing between gains in two different moments in the future.

BEHAVIORAL TOOLS TO COUNTER BIASES

The following is a **brief description of behavioral tools** commonly used to counter the cognitive biases described in the previous section.

- **FRAMING:** Is the tendency to reach different conclusions depending on how the information is presented. For example, decision options can be presented in a way that highlights either their positive or negative aspects, causing each option to be perceived as more (or less) attractive.
- **SALIENCE:** Refers to the tendency of individuals to focus on items or information that are more prominent and ignore those that are less so. Thus, it is important to make key aspects of messages stand out and to display them in an appropriate place and time.
- **DEFAULTS:** Are automatically pre-set actions that are triggered if nothing else is chosen by the decision maker. Generally, they seek to overcome cognitive overload or present bias, supported by our tendency to maintain the *status quo*.
- **COMMITMENT DEVICE:** Is a choice we make in the present that restricts our future set of options to those that reflect our long-term objectives. This helps mitigate future impulsive behaviors. Leveraging our tendency to inertia, this tool can help address time inconsistency and cognitive overload.
- **REMINDERS:** Can take many forms, such as an email, a text message, a letter, or a personal visit reminding individuals of some aspect of their decision-making. Reminders are designed to mitigate procrastination, oversight, and cognitive overload.

→ **MICRO-INCENTIVES:** Are rewards or punishments designed to influence individuals' behaviors or decisions. They can be tangible, such as food or money, or intangible, such as public recognition. Unlike incentives, which are an integral part of public policy design, micro-incentives are small, low-cost, easy-to-apply cues that can complement the original policy design. This tool can be used to mitigate loss aversion and present bias.

→ **PLANNING PROMPTS:** Are messages designed to encourage individuals to make a concrete action plan. Planning prompts motivate people to break down their goal (e.g. attending a doctor's appointment) into smaller, concrete tasks (e.g. leaving work early, finding a babysitter, postponing a weekly meeting, etc.) and to anticipate unforeseen events. These prompts often include space for the individual to write down relevant information such as the date, time, and place of their commitment.

→ **DESCRIPTIVE NORMS:** Describe the behavior of a social group, regardless of whether it is positive or negative. Communicating these norms can help change behaviors. For example, one might think that no one pays taxes, when in reality most people do. In this case, presenting the descriptive norm of how frequent tax payments indeed are can help improve individual behavior.

→ **PRESCRIPTIVE NORMS:** Refer to what society approves or disapproves of (i.e. what is considered to be right or wrong), regardless of how individuals actually behave. These norms are useful for reaffirming or encouraging positive individual behaviors while discouraging negative ones.

→ **RECIPROCITY:** Is a social norm that involves exchanges between individuals, in which one person responds to the action of another with a similar one. It most commonly refers to exchanges involving positive actions, like returning a favor with another similar favor. However, it can also refer to negative actions, such as punishing others in response to being the recipient of a harmful action.

→ **HEURISTICS (RULES OF THUMB):** Are recommendations that can help make decisions easier by offering mental shortcuts, or rules of thumb, to help guide the decision-making process.

BEHAVIORALLY INFORMED COMMUNICATIONS EXAMPLES USED DURING THE PANDEMIC

During this pandemic, policy challenges range from how to effectively communicate new public health guidelines to the limited ability of individuals to adopt them in their daily lives. This section outlines several examples of government communications that **have incorporated behavioral insights in order to increase citizen compliance with best practices** recommended by health agencies. These behavioral principles can also be applied to communication efforts in the future, after social isolation guidelines have been lifted.

SALIENCE OF THE DESIRED ACTION

Effective communications of social distancing practices have focused on increasing the salience of desired behaviors. This has been achieved by using clear and straightforward language, along with graphic elements that reduce the cognitive load required to process such information, as shown in the examples below:

⊗ LESS CLEAR

“Respect social distancing”

- ⊗ New concept
- ⊗ Unclear
- ⊗ Vague
- ⊗ Conceptual

✓ CLEARER

“Stay home. Go to the supermarket once a week”

- ✓ Known Words
- ✓ Clear
- ✓ Specific
- ✓ Concrete

SOCIAL DISTANCING

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Social distancing is the practice of reducing close contact between people to slow down the spread of infections or diseases. Social distancing measures include limiting the gathering of large groups, closing down businesses and schools, and cancelling events.



BE CAREFUL WHEN

- Shopping at the supermarket
- Picking up takeout
- Shopping at the drugstore



AVOID

- Touching your face
- Visitors at your home
- Places where you cannot stay six feet (or two meters) away from others:
 - Bars*
 - Concerts*
 - Sporting Events*
 - Shopping Malls*
 - Gyms*
 - Playgrounds*
- Mass transport systems



YOU CAN

- Take a walk
- Work in the garden
- Play in the backyard
- Organize the closet
- Read a good book
- Listen to music
- Cook a meal
- Play board games with friends online
- Watch your favorite shows
- Find out how a friend is doing
- Find out how an elderly neighbor is doing

REMINDERS

In South Korea, reminders of public health best practices are ubiquitous. Messages reminding people to wear face masks and to practice social distancing are broadcast on television, via ads in subway stations, and by SMS alerts⁴.

Reminders have also been applied in the U.S., such as in supermarkets that display signs and floor markings reminding customers to remain six feet (or two meters) apart.

4. The New York Times. How South Korea Flattened the Curve. Access on 24/03/2020 at <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/23/world/asia/coronavirus-south-korea-flatten-curve.html?refer-ringSource=articleShare>



Tesco Shop (Source: Twitter)

HEURISTICS (RULES OF THUMB)

In the case of COVID-19, heuristics have been used to communicate information in a way that is easy to remember. For example, messages have utilized acronyms in order to associate a common word with desired behaviors. See figure below, in which “Do the Five” represents the five actions recommended by the WHO.



Public Service Announcement





DO THE FIVE

Help stop coronavirus

- 1 **HANDS** Wash them often
- 2 **ELBOW** Cough into it
- 3 **FACE** Don't touch it
- 4 **FEET** Stay more than 3ft (1m) apart
- 5 **FEEL** sick? Stay home

General public health information



REFERENCE POINTS AND ANCHORING

In order to more concretely indicate what six feet (or two meters) looks like, images have been published showing what the world would look like if people were to adhere to this public health guideline.



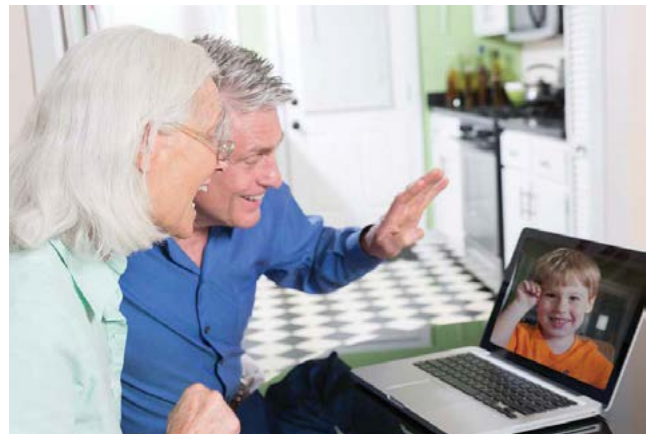
Photo by Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images



Photo by Laura Castañón - March 24, 2020

REDUCING CHOICE OVERLOAD

At the beginning of COVID-19, governments opted for a single simple and clear message about social distancing (i.e. “stay home”). Instead, they could have communicated a wide range of options for practicing social distancing, involving various permutations of how many people could go to which places at what times. However, this likely would have led to choice overload (i.e. the complexity that arises from having to choose between many options).⁶



**Not all heroes wear capes.
Some send love to older adults
from a distance.**

Stay home to save a life.

#CoronavirusBalt
#StayHomeHeroes
health.baltimorecity.gov



BALTIMORE
CITY HEALTH
DEPARTMENT

7

Infographic by Baltimore Joint Information Center

5. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/brucelee/2020/03/14/with-covid-19-coronavirus-here-are-10-ways-to-social-distance-yourself/#1b3787a1606c>

6. Tversky, A. y E. Shafir. (1992). Choice under Conflict: The Dynamics of Deferred Decision. *Psychological Science*, 3(6), 358-361. Access on 20/03/2020 at www.jstor.org/stable/40062808

7. See https://twitter.com/BMore_Healthy/status/1240345600178229248/photo/2

BOX

1

Note on Behavioral Fatigue and Public Policy Decisions

Behavioral fatigue refers to the tiredness that can result from having to comply with a new norm for a long time. During this pandemic, behavioral fatigue has been suggested as a possible barrier to compliance with social distancing norms in the medium term. At the beginning of the pandemic, it was difficult to imagine this actually occurring, as there have

been no recent examples of global pandemics on the same scale as COVID-19 to serve as scientific support for such an argument. However, after months of struggling with the pandemic, it seems that behavioral fatigue has indeed become an issue for sustaining many good practices⁸.

PLANNING PROMPTS

The poster below was created to counter the habit of touching one's face. Importantly, it offers actionable steps for what you should do if you feel the urge to touch your face, rather than simply saying "don't touch your face".

8. See <https://www.wired.co.uk/article/social-distancing-coronavirus-uk>

HOW TO TOUCH YOUR FACE LESS

The average person touches their face over **20 times per hour**. Breaking this habit is really, really difficult. It's so ingrained in what we do, it should be considered human behavior, not a bad habit. That being said, there are still ways to learn to touch your face *less*. These tricks are stopgaps intended to train your foul little fingers to stop prodding that extraordinary, marvelous face of yours.

Touch a different body part

Creating a counter-behavior is a proven way to break a bad habit. Every time you feel the need to touch your face, try touching your arm instead.



I am touching my muscles ...
for safety.

Hold a toy



Try holding a (disinfected) Rubik's Cube, stress ball, or action figure. This will keep your hands busy and cut down on the number of times you touch your face.



Play with me. Play with He-Man.
Do it for the greater good.

Wear a stupid thing

Put on a wristband, costume jewelry, or even colorful rubber bands. This won't stop the spread of disease, but it's a clever way of interrupting your brain's bad habit of jamming your fingers into your eyes, nose, or mouth.

A foreign object can act as a sensory clue that helps turn an unconscious habit into a *conscious* one. It's a way of telling your brain to pay attention to this strange phenomenon happening on your hand.



Don't do it, Cheryl.
Don't put me into
that dark hole again.

* Just be sure to remove and wash the object every time you wash your hands.

Acknowledge the urge

Simply reminding yourself not to touch your face isn't going to get you anywhere. Suppressing urges only makes them worse. Instead, acknowledge the urge and then practice your counter-behavior.



I am once again touching my
extraordinary muscles ...
for safety.

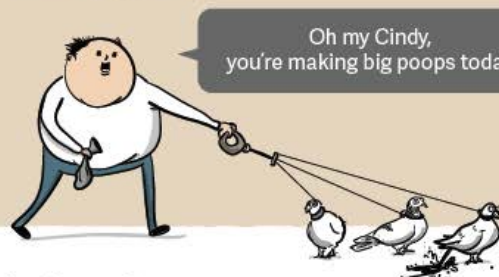
Use a tissue to touch your face.

And wash your hands first, otherwise you're just touching your face with a contaminated tissue.



Remember: your fingers are like pigeons.

they are dirty, mindless creatures.
And unless properly trained,
they will wander.



Oh my Cindy,
you're making big poops today!

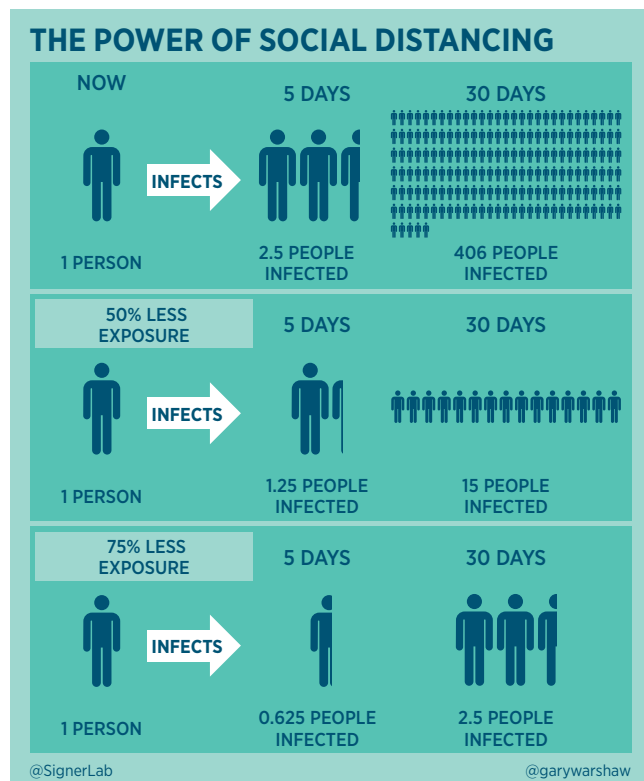
The Oatmeal

REDUCING SMALL COSTS

Small psychological and physical costs can discourage us from acting in our own best interest. Thus, messages that reduce these costs by encouraging people to place trash cans near their desks for throwing away used tissues, or by featuring helplines that can be used to report COVID-19 infections to the authorities, serve as effective communication examples.

FRAMING

The chart below utilizes the behavioral tool of framing by illustrating the gains that can be obtained from reducing interactions between people. Research has also shown that framing can be used to increase the rate with which people get tested and diagnosed in other health-related contexts⁹.



SOCIAL NORMS

Celebrities and other influencers have been vocal about their adherence to public health guidelines like staying at home or wearing a mask, hence helping to reaffirm desired behaviors for the general population.



9. Banks, S. P., Salovey, S., Greener, A. J., Rothman, J., Beauvais, and E. Epel, (1995). The effects of message framing on mammography utilization. *Health Psychology*, 14,178-184. Available at: <http://ei.yale.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/The-effects-of-message-framing-on-mammography-utilization.pdf>

BOX

2

Designing Public Policy Messages

Communication is a fundamental element in any public policy. The same policy can be a success or an outright failure depending on how it is communicated. In cases like COVID-19, in which it is vital for the population to be informed (albeit without generating panic), proper communication is key. The availability and representativeness heuristics, coupled with overconfidence and the optimism bias, are playing a very important role in people's behavior by:

(i) making it difficult for them to estimate risks, and (ii) preventing them from taking into account the potential negative impact of their behavior on others.

Recognizing these and other systematic biases, the table below describes three recommended principles for the design of communications, which are complemented by real examples that do not align with these principles.

How to Design Public Policy Messages

Recommendation for communication

Make sure information that is disseminated is **simple, clear, and accurate**, especially when communicating statistical or scientific data. This will help reduce misinterpretations and false beliefs that are subsequently difficult to change.

Remain consistent in the guidelines that are disseminated to reduce uncertainty.

Coordinate between levels of government and between agencies and ministries within the same administration.

Examples not aligned with the recommended practice

The initial message about the supposedly low risk of COVID-19 for young people has led them to take fewer precautions than necessary, hence increasing contagion.

Promises about up-and-coming cures for the disease, or home remedies, cause people to let their guard down and increase their chances of contagion. Subsequently, when these promises are not fulfilled, uncertainty will increase, and confidence will decrease.

Many governments continue to change their position on the best strategy to tackle the pandemic and on the necessary severity of measures. However, this only confuses people and discourages compliance with measures.

There are substantial differences in the way that various government departments or agencies within the same administration have communicated about COVID-19, such as when one warns about the seriousness of the situation while another downplays its risks.



WHO RECOMMENDATIONS ON COVID-19: BEHAVIORAL ANALYSIS TO INCREASE ADHERENCE



WHO RECOMMENDATIONS ON COVID-19: BEHAVIORAL ANALYSIS TO INCREASE ADHERENCE

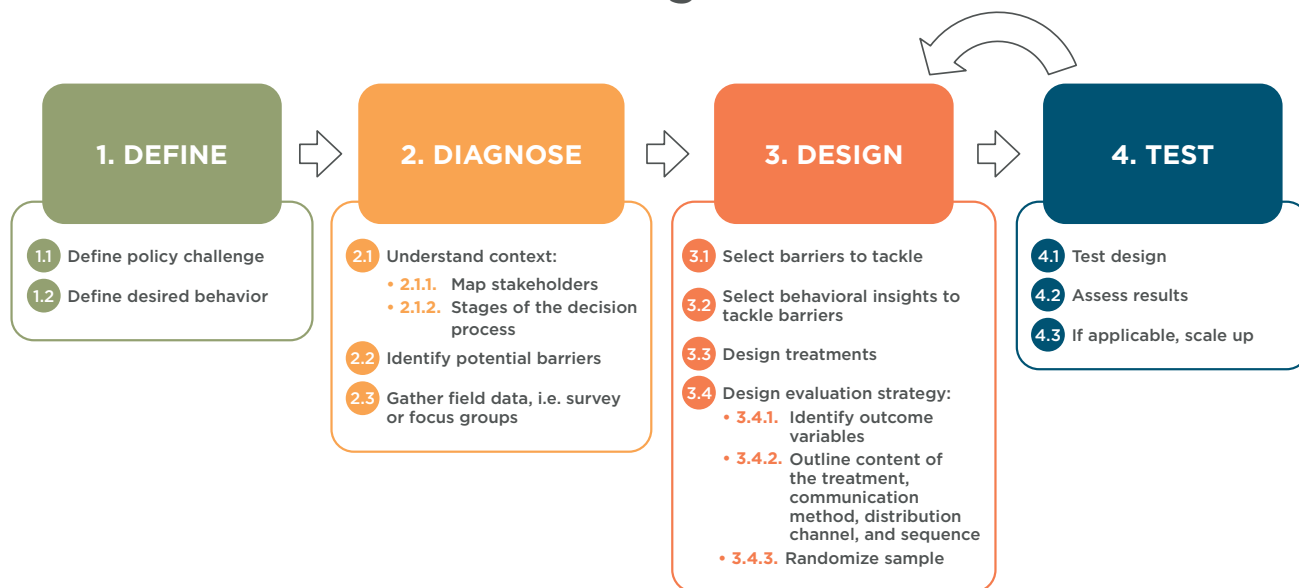
The World Health Organization (WHO) has recommended the following personal practices to curb the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19).

- 1. Wash your hands for 20 seconds.
- 2. Keep frequently touched surfaces clean.
- 3. Do not touch your face.
- 4. Cough or sneeze into your elbow or a tissue.
- 5. Practice social distancing.
- 6. Wear a mask in public spaces.
- 7. Seek medical care if you have COVID-19 symptoms (but call ahead before going to a healthcare facility).
- 8. Wear personal protective equipment if caring for the sick.
- 9. Dispose of solid waste safely.

IDB'S BEHAVIORAL ECONOMICS METHODOLOGY TO CHANGE HABITS

The following chart outlines the methodology used by the IDB's Behavioral Economics Group. It has been pivotal in diagnosing and designing dozens of interventions that the Group, together with LAC policymakers, has implemented to improve public policy outcomes in the region. For more information on these projects, please visit www.iadb.org/behavioral.

Behavioral Economics: Methodological Guide



DEFINING THE PROBLEM

What is the current situation and what do you want to achieve?

DIAGNOSING BEHAVIORAL BARRIERS

Includes performing an analysis of both the context and people's cognitive biases that prevent them from taking the desired actions. Qualitative and quantitative methods are used to validate hypothesized behavioral barriers. In the end, one or more barriers are selected to be addressed with behavioral tools.

DESIGNING THE INTERVENTION

Once the barriers are selected, a literature review is conducted to find evidence of the effect of different behavioral tools on similar problems and contexts, and the most suitable one is selected. Interventions are designed accordingly. At this stage, the empirical evaluation strategy is also designed.

EVALUATING THE IMPACT

Pilot tests are implemented, their results are evaluated, and the successful ones are scaled up.

When designing or improving communications, this methodology is abbreviated and a less extensive audit, such as the one shown below, is conducted.

EACH MESSAGE MUST BE ADAPTED TO FIT THE CULTURE OF ITS INTENDED AUDIENCE AND THE CONTEXT IN WHICH IT WILL BE USED.

HOW TO APPLY THE IDB METHODOLOGY TO WHO RECOMMENDATIONS




This section describes practical applications of the IDB methodology to WHO recommendations for fighting coronavirus (COVID-19). Some of these applications were converted into infographics that are ready to be adapted and used by organizations. Visit www.iadb.org/behavioral to read the detailed process of how they were produced and download their social media-compatible versions.

Note: The infographics under "Designing the message" in the third column of the tables on the following pages have been adapted to the format of this document. Download and share social media-compatible designs at www.iadb.org/behavioral


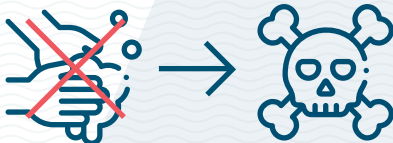
WHO Recommendation: Wash Your Hands for 20 Seconds

Defining the problem: People wash their hands for less than 20 seconds.

Goal: Nudge people to wash their hands for 20 seconds.

Diagnosing Behavioral Barriers	Behavioral Tool(s)	Designing the Message
People have a hard time imagining how long 20 seconds is; hence they do not wash their hands for the recommended time.	Add reference points to communications to anchor the behavior to something easy to recall.	 <p>Sing “Happy Birthday” twice while washing your hands.</p>
Prior to COVID-19, there was no general social norm on the appropriate duration of handwashing.	Include social norms to communicate that the desired behavior is common.	 <p>More and more people understand the importance of washing their hands for 20 seconds to decrease COVID-19 infections.</p>
People forget that they must wash their hands often, especially after any exposure outside the home.	<p>Create well-placed reminders so that people who tend to forget to wash their hands remember to do it at the appropriate times.</p> <p>Create rules of thumb to reduce the cognitive cost of remembering to wash one’s hands after an activity.</p>	<p>In order not to forget about the 20 seconds, post reminders on mirrors and on your front door.</p> 

Note: visit www.iadb.org/behavioral to download the social media-compatible version.



Diagnosing Behavioral Barriers	Behavioral Tool(s)	Designing the Message						
		<p>WASH YOUR HANDS</p>  <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. 2. After going to the bathroom. 3. Before and after eating. 4. After handling garbage. 5. After going to the supermarket. 6. After touching money. 7. After petting your pet. 8. After changing a diaper. 						
<p>It is hard for people to imagine the consequences of not washing their hands for 20 seconds in times of COVID-19; hence they do not do it.</p>	<p>Communicate salient messages using loss framing, that is, the negative consequences of some action or inaction.</p>	<p>Forgetting the 20 seconds ne- eded to wash your hands can have fatal consequences for your health.</p>  <table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="1057 1444 1187 1608">You DO NOT wash your hands</td><td data-bbox="1192 1444 1321 1608">You wash your hands but for less than 20 seconds</td><td data-bbox="1326 1444 1471 1608">You wash your hands for 20 seconds</td></tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="1057 1614 1187 1843">Your life is at risk</td><td data-bbox="1192 1614 1321 1843">Sorry; this does not ensure safety</td><td data-bbox="1326 1614 1471 1843">Congratu- lations; you are following the world standards to avoid Coronavirus</td></tr> </table>	You DO NOT wash your hands	You wash your hands but for less than 20 seconds	You wash your hands for 20 seconds	Your life is at risk	Sorry; this does not ensure safety	Congratu- lations; you are following the world standards to avoid Coronavirus
You DO NOT wash your hands	You wash your hands but for less than 20 seconds	You wash your hands for 20 seconds						
Your life is at risk	Sorry; this does not ensure safety	Congratu- lations; you are following the world standards to avoid Coronavirus						

Note: visit www.iadb.org/behavioral to download the social media-compatible version.

WHO Recommendation: Keep Frequently Touched Surfaces Clean

Defining the problem: People do not clean surfaces and objects that are touched frequently and therefore may be contaminated.

Goal: Nudge people to keep surfaces and objects clean.

Diagnosing Behavioral Barriers	Behavioral Tool(s)	Designing the Message
People don't have the habit of cleaning their personal or household items frequently; hence they forget to do it.	Send communication reminders throughout the day that encourage the behavior and remind people of the importance of doing it.	<p>Have you cleaned your keys yet?</p>  <p>#FreeofCOVID-19</p>
People do not think their personal or household items are dirty; hence they don't clean them.	Add information and charts as reference points to help quantify how dirty things are and to help remind people of COVID-19.	<p>Did you know that your cell phone is dirtier than the bottom of your shoes?</p>  <p>Clean it frequently #FreeofCOVID-19</p>

10



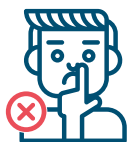
Note: Visit www.iadb.org/behavioral to download social media-compatible infographics related to keeping surfaces clean.

10. See <https://www.thehealthsite.com/diseases-conditions/how-dirty-is-your-phone-305672/>



WHO Recommendation: Do Not Touch Your Face

Defining the problem: People continually touch their face with dirty hands.

Goal: Nudge people to touch their face less.

Diagnosing Behavioral Barriers	Behavioral Tool(s)	Designing the Message
People touch their face without realizing it (they do it automatically, 20 times per hour on average).	Encourage people to wear colorful wristbands, band-aids, or rubber bands around their fingers to serve as a salient reminder to interrupt the automatic habit of touching their eyes, nose, or mouth.	<p>Strategy to not touch your face:</p>  <p>Wrap colorful band-aids or rubber bands around your fingers. You'll see that you will notice your impulse and it will be easier to stop it.</p>
	Suggest that people use strong-smelling soap or hand sanitizer as a reminder that their hands are getting closer to their face.	 <p>Use strong-smelling soap or hand sanitizer.</p>  <p>Every time you feel the urge to touch your face, you will smell the soap and remember that you should not touch your face.</p>




Note: visit www.iadb.org/behavioral to download the social media-compatible version.

Diagnosing Behavioral Barriers	Behavioral Tool(s)	Designing the Message
<p>Young adults know they should not touch their face, but they are overconfident and underestimate the risk of getting infected with COVID-19.</p>	<p>Use the identifiable victim effect to illustrate risks to segments of the population that people can relate to, such as elderly people or other young professionals, depending on the audience of the message.</p>	<div data-bbox="1133 289 1354 422">  </div> <p>Young people all over the world are at risk of catching coronavirus from constantly touching their face.</p> <div data-bbox="1203 590 1292 730">  </div> <p>Are you worried about giving your grandma or your friend's grandma coronavirus? If you keep touching your face, you should be!</p>

WHO Recommendation: Cough or Sneeze Into Your Elbow or a Tissue

Defining the problem: People do not sneeze and/or cough into their elbow.


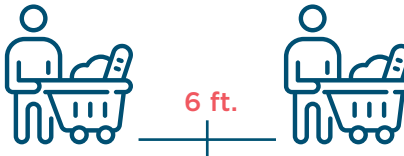
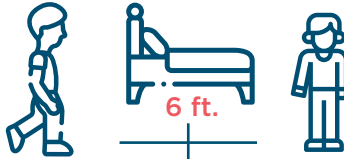

Goal: Nudge people to sneeze and/or cough into their elbow.

Diagnosing Behavioral Barriers	Behavioral Tool(s)	Designing the Message
Before COVID-19, there was no general social norm on how to sneeze. Since it is not known that sneezing into the elbow is one of the most hygienic ways to do it, it is not done.	Use prescriptive social norms to communicate that the desired behavior is expected.	<p>Sneezing into your elbow is the correct way to sneeze.</p> <p>Don't forget to sneeze into your elbow!</p>  <p>Your family and loved ones will be safer if we all do it.</p> <p>#FreeofCOVID-19</p>
People do not believe in the effectiveness of sneezing into their elbow, and because they assume that other people do not comply with this guideline, they don't do it either.	Include descriptive social norms to communicate that the desired behavior is common.	<p>We surveyed your neighborhood, and 98% of your neighbors said that they sneeze into their elbow.</p>  <p>#FreeofCOVID-19</p>
	Use social norms by featuring famous role models coughing and sneezing into their elbow in communication messages to give people desired behavioral models .	




WHO Recommendation: Practice Social Distancing

Defining the problem: People usually interact at a distance of less than six feet (two meters).

Goal: Nudge people to stay six feet (or two meters) away from others during their personal interactions.

Diagnosing Behavioral Barriers	Behavioral Tool(s)	Designing the Message
Small and medium-sized establishments such as cafes or neighborhood stores have limited space to keep their customers six feet (or two meters) apart. Due to this constraint, these establishments do not comply with this guideline.	Communicate easy-to-implement recommendations with rules of thumb and default options for businesses.	<p>If your establishment can be a source of contagion, limit the number of people going in at one time.</p>  <p>Help your customers keep their distance by displaying floor markings that are six feet (or two meters) apart.</p> 
People do not know what a six-foot (or two-meter) distance looks like and therefore continue to maintain shorter distances in their interactions.	Include images in messages to create an easy-to-remember reference point .	<p>When on the street, keep a bed-sized distance between you and the next person.</p> 
People seek to free ride on the good deeds of others without doing their part.	Include moral persuasion and reciprocity messages in communications to encourage personal contribution to the cause.	<p>The battle against coronavirus requires that we act as a community. Your family and your country need your help today!</p>  <p>#doyourpart</p>

Note: visit www.iadb.org/behavioral to download the social media-compatible version.



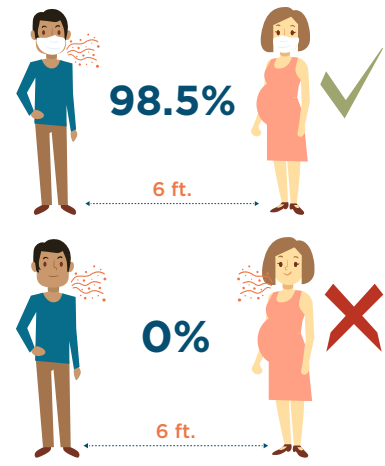
Diagnosing Behavioral Barriers	Behavioral Tool(s)	Designing the Message
<p>People underestimate the probability of becoming ill and suffering from the effects of COVID-19; hence they do not follow the social distancing guideline to prevent contagion.</p>	<p>Include descriptive social norms in communications, using people similar to the recipient of these messages as examples, to make them aware of the risk that the virus presents.</p>	 <p>1 in 3 young adults may face severe COVID-19. Then don't risk becoming one of them!</p> <p>11</p>
	<p>Include content on the consequences of having COVID-19, using loss framing to take advantage of the principle of loss aversion.</p>	<p>A decrease in lung capacity has been found in some COVID-19 recovered patients.</p>  <p>Don't take any chances -- wear your face mask!</p>  <p>It is easier to watch a show at home than being on a ventilator.</p>




11. See https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6912e2.htm?s_cid=mm6912e2_w

WHO Recommendation: Wear a Mask in Public Spaces

Defining the problem: People are not wearing a mask in public.

Goal: Nudge people to use their mask every time they leave their house.


Diagnosing Behavioral Barriers	Behavioral Tool(s)	Designing the Message
People don't like the way masks feel or they get tired of wearing them.	<p>Include social norms to communicate that the desired behavior is common.</p> <p>Give clear rules of thumb that removes the uncertainty of choosing where and when to use a mask.</p>	<p>Wearing a mask won't cramp your style.</p>  <p>Wear your mask:</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. At the supermarket b. At the bank c. In the elevator d. When you meet someone that doesn't live in yourhouse
People have a hard time understanding the importance and effectiveness of masks because they are facing a new and uncertain context.	<p>Add reference points to your communications that make it easier for people to compare benefits and costs.</p> <p>Use a loss framing so that people can visualize the negative consequences of their actions (or inactions).</p>	 <p>Which would you choose?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Following stay-at-home orders b. Wearing a face mask when you leave your home c. Risking your life and the lives of your loved ones <p>The answer is obvious and doing the right thing is worth the effort!</p>

Diagnosing Behavioral Barriers	Behavioral Tool(s)	Designing the Message
People know the importance of wearing a face mask, but they have a hard time incorporating it into their daily routine.	Create catchy rules of thumb for people to remember what to do at all times.	Put a mask in your bag or next to your keys. You'll never forget to take it with you when you go out! 
People are not feeling the social pressure of using face masks when meeting with friends and family.	Utilize prescriptive norms in communications to encourage people to wear face masks at all times (even when with friends and family) and to set new social norms.	Want to go to the park? Sure! Great! Just don't forget your face mask! 
People are overconfident and believe that they are not going to get COVID-19.	Add elements of identity to communications so that people will take actions that are in line with their positive image of themselves.	"Some of us are strong and healthy. But with great power comes great responsibility. Be a coronahero — protect yourself".
People feel uncomfortable and react when they feel that someone or something is taking away their choices or limiting their range of alternatives.	Add elements of identity to communications so that people will take actions that are in line with their positive image of themselves.	No one will force you to wear a mask, but you can show you are smart by wearing one in public.
People don't know the correct way to wear a mask.	Show, in a salient way, the correct way to wear a mask and compare it to the incorrect way.	 Make your effort worth it. Wear your mask correctly.

WHO Recommendation: Seek medical care if you have COVID-19 symptoms (but call ahead before going to a healthcare facility)

Defining the problem: People do not seek medical care when they have COVID-19 symptoms (or if they do, they go straight to a healthcare facility).



Goal: Nudge people to seek appropriate medical care according to their symptoms.

Diagnosing Behavioral Barriers	Behavioral Tool(s)	Designing the Message
People do not know what to do or who to turn to when they think they have COVID-19, especially if their symptoms are mild; hence they don't seek medical care.	Include salient information about helplines and assistance in communications.	<p>Are you feeling ill, but you don't know if it is COVID-19?</p>  <p>Call or send a WhatsApp to [healthcare facility]: [Phone # here].</p> <p>ALWAYS REMEMBER TO CALL AHEAD BEFORE GOING TO A HEALTHCARE FACILITY.</p>
People are unable to distinguish between symptoms that require medical care versus those that do not.	Help people understand when they should seek medical care by providing an action plan with a list of COVID-19 symptoms that require medical attention.	<p>Are you feeling ill, but you don't know if it is COVID-19?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Cough <input type="checkbox"/> Fever <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Difficulty breathing <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pressure in the chest <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Confusion and inability to wake up <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bluish lips or face <p>IF YOU HAVE ANY OF THE SYMPTOMS MARKED IN RED, YOU SHOULD SEE A DOCTOR.</p> <p>Always remember to call ahead or send a WhatsApp to the healthcare facility.</p>

WHO Recommendation: Wear Personal Protective Equipment if Caring for the Sick

Defining the problem: Personnel who care for the sick and handle contaminated material do not wear appropriate protective equipment to minimize the risk of contagion.









Goal: Nudge health professionals and cleaning personnel to wear appropriate protective equipment.

Diagnosing Behavioral Barriers	Behavioral Tool(s)	Designing the Message
Healthcare and cleaning personnel are not accustomed to taking the appropriate COVID-19 measures, since it is not part of their usual protocol.	Use simple images to increase the salience of new protocols, and strategically locate them to serve as reminders.	<p>Protective equipment for healthcare personnel.</p> <p>Disposable medical protective goggles</p> <p>Face mask approved by NIOSH</p> <p>COVID-19</p> <p>Scrubs</p> <p>Latex or nitrile gloves</p> 
		<p>COVID-19</p> <p>DANGEROUS AREA</p> <p>DO NOT ENTER UNLESS WEARING PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT</p> 
	Use heuristics , such as designing acronyms, to make it easy for people to remember how and where to wear protective equipment.	<p>Remember to wear the SMC</p> <p>Scrubs</p> <p>Mask</p> <p>Cap and gloves</p> <p>to Save Many from COVID-19</p>

WHO Recommendation: Dispose of Solid Waste Safely

Defining the problem: People with COVID-19 incorrectly dispose of their contaminated waste.

Goal: Nudge people to handle and dispose of waste correctly.

Diagnosing Behavioral Barriers	Behavioral Tool(s)	Designing the Message
People are used to disposing of waste in a manner that does not take into account the high risk of coronavirus contagion.	Communicate, in a salient way, a new protocol for disposing of contaminated household waste that is easy to remember.	<p>Safe Disposal of COVID-19 Contaminated Waste.</p>  <p>Throw your tissues into a separate bag.</p>  <p>Close the bag tightly and keep it separate from the rest of your trash for 72 hours.</p>  <p>Put that bag in another bag.</p>  <p>Now it is safe to take the trash out.</p> <p>Don't forget to wash your hands!</p>
Because people do not think about the risk that garbage collectors are exposed to when doing their job, they do not dispose of their waste in a safe manner.	Leverage and highlight empathy when communicating new protocols for disposing of contaminated household waste.	<p>Keeping our city clean can put garbage collectors at risk</p> <p>Let us take care of them according to the following protocol:</p>  <p>Throw your tissues into a separate bag.</p>  <p>Close the bag tightly and keep it separate from the rest of your trash for 72 hours.</p>  <p>Put that bag in another bag.</p>  <p>Now it is safe to take the trash out.</p> <p>Don't forget to wash your hands!</p>

Note: visit www.iadb.org/behavioral to download social media compatible version.

The background is a vibrant orange with various geometric shapes, including large circles and triangles, some with a wavy texture. A grid of small dots is located at the top left, and a vertical line of dots is on the right. In the bottom right corner, there is a small illustration of a pregnant woman with blonde hair, wearing a teal dress and a white face mask, standing with her hands on her hips.

SIDE EFFECTS OF COVID-19

SIDE EFFECTS OF COVID-19

This crisis requires policies and interventions with clear, appropriate, and effective messages. These messages are a fundamental part of the effort to stop the virus' transmission, as well as to reduce the pressure faced by our health systems, avoid panic, and manage people's expectations¹². One of the measures that has been mandated by the majority of governments is staying at home, except for essential outings.

Due to this mandate, people have been faced with the challenge of getting used to a new normal. This includes being with family members 24/7, having to manage family and work responsibilities in a new way, and facing a lack of social gathering and exercise opportunities.

Literature in psychology and public health suggests that isolation can present a high health risk. A review of 24 studies on this topic describes potential effects like irritability and stress during quarantine, as well as long-term effects such as depression and substance abuse (up to three years after quarantine)¹³. There is also evidence that working from home can have adverse effects on how people divide their time between work and family. The duration of isolation is a key factor, as longer periods have been associated with poor mental well-being¹⁴.

In addition, during isolation people tend to consume a large amount of negative news and information about the crisis, which triggers additional stress to that already generated by changes in routine.

Isolation is likely to decrease people's mental and physical well-being. This can contribute to a decrease in people's productivity while staying at home, and in extreme cases it could even increase the burden on health systems. It is therefore imperative that governments also send messages to the population about good practices for staying healthy and managing day-to-day stress and anxiety.

HOW TO APPLY THE PRINCIPLES OF BEHAVIORAL ECONOMICS TO REDUCE THE SIDE EFFECTS OF COVID-19 ON HEALTH AND HOUSEHOLD ECONOMY

The following chart shows the methodology used by the IDB's Behavioral Economics Group to address the side effects of COVID-19 on health and household economy. This methodology has led to the diagnosis and design of dozens of interventions that the Group, together with policymakers, has implemented to improve public policy outcomes in Latin America. For more information on these projects, please visit www.iadb.org/behavioral.

12. WHO. "Who for behavioral insights on COVID-19". Access on 21/03/2020. <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies/coronavirus-covid-19/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-technical-guidance/who-tool-for-behavioural-insights-on-covid-19>



13. Lunn, Pete et al. "Using behavioral science to help fight the coronavirus". ESRI. March 2020. <https://www.esri.ie/system/files/publications/WP656.pdf>











14. Idem








Managing Mental Health

Defining the problem: People find it difficult to take care of their mental health during isolation.

Goal: Nudge people to take care of their mental health during isolation.

Diagnosing Behavioral Barriers	Behavioral Tool(s)	Designing the Message
People often ignore the signs that indicate negative changes in their mental health.	Use loss framing to highlight the negative consequences associated with a decline in mental health.	<p>Mismanaging your mental health can affect your work and family relationships.</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irritability • Depression • Stress • Anxiety <p>can significantly jeopardize your family and professional relationships.</p>
People are not used to talking about mental health issues.	Use descriptive social norms that help people recognize that struggling with mental health is common, in order to reduce the stigma of the problem and encourage people to seek help.	 <p>"Many of your neighbors are struggling with irritability, stress, and anxiety while staying at home."</p> <p>This is a good time to seek professional help.</p>







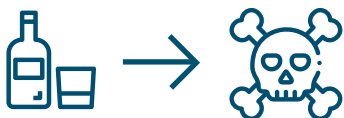
Diagnosing Behavioral Barriers	Behavioral Tool(s)	Designing the Message
People find it very difficult to implement experts' recommendations.	Simplify experts' recommendations using rules of thumb , images, and actionable lists.	<p>In times of coronavirus, here is how you can fight irritability, stress, and anxiety:</p> <div>  <p>Listen to your body and identify the feeling.</p> </div> <div>  <p>Meditate/breathe when you feel discomfort.</p> </div> <div>  <p>Make a list of things you are grateful for.</p> </div> <p>Get help from mental health experts. Send a WhatsApp to [healthcare facility]: [Phone # here].</p>
People don't have time to implement experts' recommendations.	Include in communications an action plan for when, where, and how to implement these recommendations.	<p>Three steps to take care of your mental health:</p> <div>  <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sit in a quiet place. 2. Close your eyes. 3. Take 20 deep breaths. </div> <p>Get help from mental health experts. Send a WhatsApp to [healthcare facility]: [Phone # here].</p>
Fewer social interactions outside the home contribute to people developing bad habits that affect their mental health.	<p>Promote the establishment of systematic plans to video chat with family and friends, using reminders such as recurring invitations and shared calendars.</p> <p>Give people who don't have the option to video chat information about playful activities to do at home such as drawing, painting, reading, doing a puzzle, playing sudoku, or cooking.</p>	<p>Schedule a recurring call with your friends!</p> <div>  <p>Let us use technology to stay together in times of social distance.</p> </div> <div>  <p>Is anyone bored at home?</p> <p>Try:</p> <p>.....</p> <div>     </div> </div>

Diagnosing Behavioral Barriers	Behavioral Tool(s)	Designing the Message				
Too much information increases states of stress and anxiety, threatening mental health.	Help people use commitment devices and planning prompts to limit their use of smart phones, television, etc.	<p>Overwhelmed by the huge amount of information on the web and social media?</p> <div><p>Choose to read reliable sources ONLY.</p></div> <div><p>Choose ONE or TWO moments in the day to read coronavirus-related news.</p></div> <p>For example:</p> <div><p>I am going to read about coronavirus on the most reliable site I know, only during breakfast.</p></div>				
Uncertainty about the financial and health situations of family and loved ones can trigger anxiety, depression, and/or panic attacks.	Set up care and support help-lines for people to call and make sure they are salient in communications.	<p>Overwhelmed by news on the stock market, quarantine and the future of the country?</p> <div></div> <p>Call [phone] for support.</p>				
Being cooped up with family or others can cause irritability, which in turn affects mental health.	Promote good interaction practices by encouraging the use of planning prompts to manage the sharing of household spaces.	<p>Everyone needs their own space. Talk to your family about sharing space and time.</p> <div></div>				
Children's mental health is also suffering, but parents have no information to identify signs that are concerning.	Simplify information about stress signs in children and suggest an action plan to counter it.	<p>Help your children maintain their mental health.</p> <div></div> <table><tr><th>IF YOU SEE THIS</th><th>TRY THIS.</th></tr><tr><td><ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Excessive concern.▶ Excessive sadness.▶ Unhealthy eating or sleeping habits.▶ Difficulty paying attention or concentrating.</td><td><ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Talk openly about the pandemic.▶ Allot hours for exercising at home.▶ Suggest a phone or video chat with a friend or loved one.</td></tr></table>	IF YOU SEE THIS	TRY THIS.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Excessive concern.▶ Excessive sadness.▶ Unhealthy eating or sleeping habits.▶ Difficulty paying attention or concentrating.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Talk openly about the pandemic.▶ Allot hours for exercising at home.▶ Suggest a phone or video chat with a friend or loved one.
IF YOU SEE THIS	TRY THIS.					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Excessive concern.▶ Excessive sadness.▶ Unhealthy eating or sleeping habits.▶ Difficulty paying attention or concentrating.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Talk openly about the pandemic.▶ Allot hours for exercising at home.▶ Suggest a phone or video chat with a friend or loved one.					

Combating Substance Abuse

Defining the problem: People turn to psychoactive substances (e.g. cigarettes, alcohol, hallucinogens, etc.) during isolation.

Goal: Nudge people to refrain from using psychoactive substances in response to isolation.



Diagnosing Behavioral Barriers	Behavioral Tool(s)	Designing the Message
People turn to psychoactive substances when they feel unwell or bored and do not know what to do about it.	Offer people actionable alternatives to turning to psychoactive substances.	<p>Is anyone bored at home?</p>  <p>Try:</p>  <p>CHOOSE TO DO SOMETHING FUN INSTEAD OF USING DANGEROUS SUBSTANCES.</p> <p>Before smoking:</p>  Listen to your body and identify the feeling that makes you want to smoke.  Take a deep breath.  Choose an activity in which you can channel your energy.
Because the consequences of using psychoactive substances seem less severe compared to coronavirus, people choose to use them.	Help people visualize the consequences and counter present bias by leveraging loss aversion .	<p>Stay healthy one day at a time.</p>  <p>Bad habits are hard to change.</p>
People do not refrain from using psychoactive substances because they believe that when quarantine is over their usage will decrease.	Help people visualize the consequences and counter present bias by leveraging loss aversion .	<p>Be careful what you do.</p>  <p>Millions of people die from alcohol abuse.</p>

Diagnosing Behavioral Barriers	Behavioral Tool(s)	Designing the Message
<p>People do not know what is considered moderate alcohol consumption.</p>	<p>Provide reference points to facilitate identification of when to stop consumption of alcoholic beverages.</p>	<div data-bbox="1063 283 1469 357"> <p>IF YOU CHOOSE TO CONSUME ALCOHOLIC</p> </div> <div data-bbox="1063 367 1469 525"> <div data-bbox="1144 378 1193 483"></div> <div data-bbox="1291 378 1396 483"></div> <div data-bbox="1112 493 1218 514">Woman</div> <div data-bbox="1315 493 1372 514">Man</div> </div> <div data-bbox="1063 535 1469 609"> <p>MAKE SURE YOU DO IT IN MODERATION</p> </div> <div data-bbox="1063 630 1469 829"> <p>REMEMBER THAT A MODERATE DRINKER CONSUMES THE EQUIVALENT OF ONE (WOMAN) OR TWO (MAN) BEERS OR GLASSES OF WINE WHEN DRINKING.</p> </div>

Managing Chronic Diseases

Defining the problem: People have trouble taking medication for their chronic conditions during isolation.




Goal: Nudge chronic disease patients to increase adherence to medication.





Diagnosing Behavioral Barriers	Behavioral Tool(s)	Designing the Message
<p>The cognitive overload of teleworking, coupled with other responsibilities like caring for and raising children, cleaning, cooking, etc., make people forget to take medication for their chronic conditions.</p>	<p>Provide planning prompts that allow people to identify when they will take their medication over the course of the day.</p>	<p>Don't let your bad memory keep you from staying healthy!</p>  <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make a list of all your medications and the times they need to be taken. 2. Set an alarm to remind you when to take them. 3. Reward yourself for getting organized.
<p>Changing routines, tasks, and schedules causes people to lose the habit of taking their medications.</p>		
<p>People are so immersed in coronavirus-related subjects that they neglect their chronic illnesses and do not take their medications.</p>	<p>Help people visualize the consequences of their actions (or inactions) and counter present bias by leveraging loss aversion.</p>	<p>Stay safe and take your meds.</p>  <p>It's not a great time to end up at the hospital.</p>

Managing Weight and Eating Habits

Defining the problem: : During isolation, people lose their healthy eating habits.

Goal: Nudge people to maintain or improve their eating habits during quarantine.





Diagnosing Behavioral Barriers	Behavioral Tool(s)	Designing the Message
People have unlimited access to their pantry and they lack the self-control required to avoid eating more than they did before isolation.	Design communications that incorporate reference points on recommended daily calorie intake.	<p>Having trouble maintaining a healthy diet?</p> <p>Some ideas</p> <p> Download a calorie-counting app on your phone.</p> <p> Compete with your friends to see who succeeds in maintaining a healthy weight. Choose a challenge and set a target!</p> <p> Reward yourself with a prize (nothing edible, please!) that keeps you motivated during the process.</p>
People don't plan what to buy at the grocery store, so they buy too much food or they buy unhealthy things.	Provided planning prompts to reduce the total amount of food (or the amount of unhealthy food) that they buy.	<p>Having trouble maintaining a healthy diet?</p> <p>Before you go grocery shopping, make a note of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How many meals do you want to eat per day? 2. What would be your ideal diet? 3. What foods do you normally buy that do not fit your ideal diet? <p>Visualize your meals, buy only what you need, and avoid buying on impulse.</p>



Diagnosing Behavioral Barriers	Behavioral Tool(s)	Designing the Message
People do not have their day planned out and eat at odd times.	Encourage people to create social groups as a commitment device to maintain an eating schedule.	<p>Do not eat alone!</p>  <p>Set a time meals. Organize an online group. Compare and comment on your meals.</p> <p>An online group is a good commitment device for maintaining a meal schedule.</p>
When people experience anxiety or boredom, some people turn to food to soothe these feelings.	Validate such feelings and recommend actionable alternatives to eating out of boredom and offer professional help.	<p>Before eating at odd hours:</p>  <p>Listen to your body and identify the feeling that makes you want to eat.</p>  <p>Take a deep breath.</p>  <p>Choose an activity that helps you channel your energy.</p> <p>Get help from mental health experts. Send a WhatsApp to [healthcare facility]: [Phone # here].</p>

Managing Telework and Work Habits

Defining the problem: Work productivity is declining because people have difficulty working from home.

Goal: Nudge people to maintain their work productivity during their time in isolation.




Diagnosing Behavioral Barriers	Behavioral Tool(s)	Designing the Message
People find it difficult to complete all the work they need to do each day because they have new distractions inherent to teleworking, such as taking care of children, cleaning, watching TV, using social media, and even napping.	Provide people with actionable steps that can be used to more effectively organize their day.	<p>Working from home can be a big challenge.</p>  <p>Start by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Defining a strict work schedule. ▶ Clearly communicating your working hours to your team and family. ▶ Designating different work and leisure spaces in your home.
People find it difficult to stop working when they are working from home.	Encourage people to set reminders to signal the end of the work day or to schedule something that helps them remember to stop working.	<p>Work during quarantine might feel like it never ends.</p>  <p>Make sure you have a healthy balance:</p> <div>  <p>Set alarms to remind you of the times to start and stop working.</p> </div> <div>  <p>Schedule a fun activity for the end of the work day that motivates you to end work on time.</p> </div>

Diagnosing Behavioral Barriers	Behavioral Tool(s)	Designing the Message
Home is not the work environment to which workers are accustomed.	Promote a change to people's physical space within the house to make it more conducive to productivity.	<p>Learning to work from home?</p>   <p>Clearly define where you are going to work and where you are going to rest.</p>

Managing Distance Learning and Building New Healthy Learning Habits

Defining the problem: Most students are used to learning in a school environment, rather than at home.




Goal: Nudge students (and parents) to build new healthy habits for learning at home.

Diagnosing Behavioral Barriers	Behavioral Tool(s)	Designing the Message
Students are used to having a teacher constantly guide them through learning material. Without the physical presence of a teacher, they have difficulty navigating the material.	Use descriptive social norms about how other classmates are learning, as long as these behaviors are positive.	<p>Thousands of boys and girls in your city are studying from home, just like you!</p>  <p>You can do this!</p>
Students are more distracted because they are not used to their homes being a learning environment.	Promote the use of specifically designated study spaces at home and recommend actionable steps to get kids ready to study.	<p>Learning to study from home?</p>  <p>Get Dressed Choose a place where you can focus.</p> <p>Prepare as if you were going to school!</p>
Parents don't feel capable of helping their children with distance learning and don't know how to promote healthy distance learning habits.	Disseminate rules of thumb and the recommendations of experts in a salient way.	<p>DISTANCE EDUCATION IN TIMES OF COVID-19.</p>  <p>Do you have your child at home and don't know how to start getting organized?</p> <p>CONSIDER:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establishing direct communication with the school. 2. Creating a daily routine to help your child with distance learning. 3. Helping your child to virtually connect with other children.

Maintaining Physical Exercise

Defining the problem: People are exercising less during isolation.

Goal: Nudge people to maintain (or start) physical exercise.

Diagnosing Behavioral Barriers	Behavioral Tool(s)	Designing the Message
People are confined to their homes with no places to exercise.	Use communications that promote a change to people's physical space within the house to make it more conducive to exercising.	<p>No gym to go to?</p>  <p>Create a dedicated space in your home to exercise. This is the first step to starting a workout routine.</p>
People forget to set aside time to exercise.	<p>Promote the identification of an exercise partner in order to generate peer pressure and serve as a commitment device.</p> <p>Also, provide actionable advice.</p>	<p>During quarantine, the gym has moved into your home.</p>  <p>1. Choose a partner</p> <p>Exercise partners are an excellent commitment device for maintaining a workout regimen.</p> <p>2. Use online resources</p> <p>The best personal trainers have put their exercise routines online and can now come straight to your living room. Take advantage of this!</p> <p>3. Choose an activity</p> <p>It doesn't always have to be the same! There are many fitness classes you can choose from, like dance, yoga, Pilates, or kickboxing.</p>
People have neither the resources nor the knowledge to exercise on their own.	Design communications that include rules of thumb to reduce the cognitive cost of exercising.	<p>Do you want to stay in shape but don't know how?</p>  <p>30 Push-ups 30 Abdominals 30 Squats</p> <p>Do it for a week and feel the difference!</p>

The background is a vibrant red with various shades of red geometric shapes, including large circles and triangles. Some of these shapes have a fine, wavy texture. In the top left, there is a 2x8 grid of small red dots. In the top right, there is a solid red circle. To the right of the main title, there is a vertical column of five small red dots. In the bottom right, there is a 5x8 grid of small red dots. An illustration of a person with a beard and glasses, wearing a grey jacket and tan pants, stands on the right side of the page. The title 'TOWARDS FLEXIBLE SOCIAL ISOLATION' is written in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters, flanked by two short blue horizontal lines.

TOWARDS FLEXIBLE SOCIAL ISOLATION

TOWARDS FLEXIBLE SOCIAL ISOLATION

Thus far we have focused on suggesting solutions to increase adherence to WHO's recommendations for curbing the spread of COVID-19, as well as for managing the potential negative social and physical consequences of social distancing. These massive and mandatory around-the-clock isolation measures will not last forever. For one, their economic cost is catastrophic, particularly for the world's most vulnerable groups. Additionally, isolation has harmful effects on health. This is why many countries have already started to transition to a new stage in the fight against the pandemic.

The transition stage requires several key measures while vaccines and treatments against the virus are being developed, namely: (i) making testing universal; (ii) expanding the capacity required to monitor those who have had the disease and their contacts, in order to identify and isolate possible new infections; and (iii) maintaining personal hygiene and physical distancing recommendations to reduce transmission. In particular:

- Washing hands for 20 seconds.
- Maintaining physical distance between people.
- Wearing masks, face coverings, and other elements that reduce transmission of the virus.
- Keeping frequently touched surfaces clean.
- Coughing or sneezing into one's elbow.

This document has shown how biases operate in people's behavior, as well as how to counter them in government communication campaigns. Some of the recommendations should be adapted for this new transition stage, which will likely be characterized by people on the move, the reopening of businesses, and regulations that vary by population segment (e.g. age or immunity to coronavirus)¹⁵.



This photo, taken on March 23, 2020, shows employees eating lunch at a Dongfeng Honda auto plant in Wuhan, in China's central province of Hubei.

15. Implementing these practices will require adequate and sufficient facilities, which is a particularly difficult challenge in the context of common workspaces, community kitchens, etc.

We again recommend that outreach campaigns take into account the biases mentioned in this document, and in particular, people's tendency to:

- Estimate the probability of a future event based on how readily representative examples of such event come to mind (availability heuristic). Example: *'My friends went back to work and did not catch the virus, and that is why it's safe to go back to work'*.
- Estimate (often mistakenly) the probability of uncertain events by how similar they are to other more certain events (representativeness heuristic). Example: *'Low-income people are more vulnerable to contagion and that's why you have to stay away from them'*.
- Overestimate or exaggerate (i) your own ability to successfully complete a task (overconfidence) and (ii) the probability of positive events and underestimate the probability of negative events occurring (optimism bias). Example: *'I am healthier than other people, and that's why I am more capable of fighting the disease'*.

→ Be impatient when choosing between gains today or greater gains in the future. Example: *'I can't stand staying home anymore; I don't care if I get sick'*.

→ Perceive a loss (the discomfort it generates) as bigger than a gain of the same magnitude (the happiness it generates) when relatively comparing two options that involve risk and uncertainty. This is why individuals are more willing to take risks in order to avoid a loss. Example: *'I'd rather keep my job and my income than be well and healthy'*.

All of these biases will influence people's adherence to good practices that reduce the risk of contagion when quarantine measures have been relaxed. Being aware of such biases and addressing them in communications can determine, to a certain extent, how quickly we will overcome this crisis.

