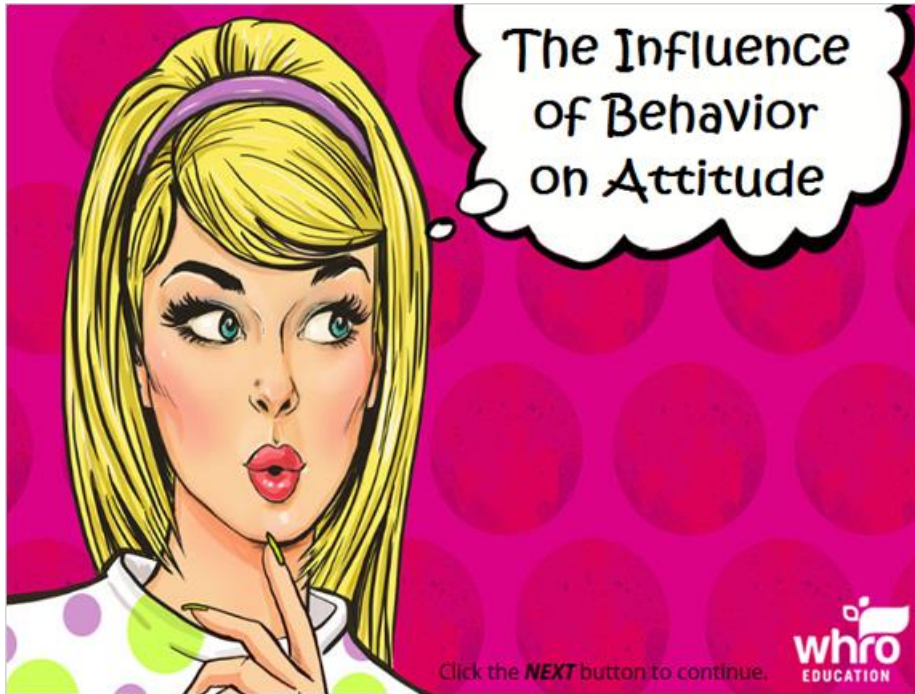


Module 10: Social Psychology
Topic 1 Content: The Influence of Behavior on Attitude

Introduction



Click the **NEXT** button to explore how behavior influences attitude.

Module 10: Social Psychology

Topic 1 Content: The Influence of Behavior on Attitude

Roles

Roles




Psychologists define a role as a set of expected behaviors from an individual in a particular social setting. For example, imagine you get elected as the president of an after school club. When you first assume this role, you are expected to run meetings, and this feels a bit uncomfortable and awkward for you. It almost feels like you are putting on an act. Over time, as you continue as a leader of the group, you likely feel more comfortable in your role, and assume the attitude of a leader. The idea that you can "fake it 'til you make it" might sound like somewhat glib advice, but in the case of assuming a new role, it is often true.

Module 10: Social Psychology

Topic 1 Content: The Influence of Behavior on Attitude

Cognitive Dissonance Theory

Cognitive Dissonance Theory



When your behaviors do not match your attitude, you will often change your attitude instead of your behavior

Another line of research shows that when your behaviors do not match your attitude, it is often more convenient to change your attitude than your behavior. This is called **cognitive dissonance theory**. For example, if Alex thinks singing in the choir is silly and something he would never do in a million years, this initial negative attitude might seem rock-solid. However, imagine Alex discovers that a girl he has a crush on is in the choir. When he decides to join, he might initially still hold his negative attitude toward the choir. Alex may think, "I'm just doing this to hang out with Sheila." After several practices, however, Alex may find that his attitude toward choir has changed, and he actually enjoys getting to sing almost as much as he enjoys getting to stand behind Sheila. In this case, Alex had a phase of cognitive dissonance, meaning a mismatch between his stated attitude ("choir is lame") and his behavior (singing in choir). Rather than resolve this conflict by changing his behavior (quitting the choir), he instead changes his attitude to fit the existing behavior. Given a dissonance between what you do and what you believe, you may find that your beliefs change in order to bring the two back into harmony.