



## AUGUST

# INTRODUCTION TO BEHAVIORAL ECONOMICS

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**Objective:** Explain how behavioral economics influences food choices and how the Smarter Lunchrooms Movement can help students *select, eat, and enjoy healthier foods* in the school lunchroom.

Participants learn the core concepts of Behavioral Economics and the 6 Principles of the Smarter Lunchrooms Movement. They will be able to apply these principles, particularly Visibility and Convenience, in their own homes (if desired) as well as in their lunchrooms. In the Booster Shot lesson, participants view and discuss a video of a real-life Smarter Lunchrooms Makeover.



# LESSON 1: Introduction to Behavioral Economics

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## MATERIALS

- Trainer's Script
  - SLIDE PRESENTATION:  
*No Time to Train: August (Introduction to Behavioral Economics)*
    - Projection capability, screen
  - WORKSHEET: *Behavioral Economics in the Lunchroom: 9 Key Ideas* (page 93)
  - Pens/pencils
  - Lined paper
  - Stopwatch or clock with second hand
  - Large paper, markers (optional)
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### ➔ DO:

- Cue up the **No Time to Train: August (Introduction to Behavioral Economics) slide presentation**. Have stopwatch/clock ready.
- Distribute paper and pens/pencils.

### ■ SHOW SLIDE: August (Introduction to Behavioral Economics), slide 1: title page

### 🗨 SAY:

This year, we will conduct staff development training in 10-minute mini-workshops once or twice per month. As a whole, this will enable us to improve our lunchroom in many areas: arrangement and decor, food marketing, and relationships with students. By helping students *select, eat, and enjoy healthier foods* in the lunchroom, we can improve their health while maintaining or improving our own revenue and operations.

This month, we will learn about **behavioral economics**, the study of how our environment influences our behavior. We will discuss how to use the **6 principles of behavioral economics** in food settings, including school lunchrooms. We will learn about the **Smarter Lunchrooms Movement** and Smarter Lunchrooms Makeover techniques. You can even try them out in your home, if desired.

Let's begin.

### ■ SHOW SLIDE: Intro to BE, slide 2: Warm-Up Challenge

### 🗨 SAY:

Let's do a quick experiment. On the next slide, you'll see a pantry. For 15 seconds, look at the items on the shelves. Then, I'll cover the image and you'll have 45 seconds to write down as many items or brand names as you can remember from the photograph.

### ■ SHOW SLIDE: Intro to BE, slide 3: Pantry Photo

# LESSON 1: Introduction to Behavioral Economics continued



**SAY:**

Study this photo for 15 seconds.

**DO:**

- Wait 15 seconds, then cover the slide or return to the previous slide.

**SAY:**

Now, write down as many items or brands as you remember. (45 seconds)

**SHOW SLIDE: Intro to BE, slide 4: Warm-Up Discussion, part 1**

**SAY:**

Let's review your answers. What items did you remember?

**DO:**

- Review answers as a group. If desired, record answers on large paper. If an answer appears on multiple participants' list, add a tally mark beside it each time it is mentioned.

**SHOW SLIDE: Intro to BE, slide 5: Warm-Up Discussion, part 2**

**SAY:**

You might expect all of the items to be equally noticeable or memorable, but that isn't the case. Typically, certain items appear on many viewers' lists, while others appear on few or no lists. Let's talk about why that is.

- \* First, let's look back to the picture. Where do most of the remembered items and brands appear?
- \* Why do you think you remembered these items more than the others?

**DO:**

- Return to slide 3 (the photo). Allow participants to share their responses. Reinforce these answers:
  - > Many of the most remembered items tend to be located **"front and center"**—at eye level in the center of the middle shelves. Items on the periphery and bottom are more likely to be overlooked or forgotten.
  - > ***What we notice first and most frequently, we remember best.***

**SHOW SLIDE: Intro to BE, slide 6: Front and Center**

**SAY:**

Studies show we notice things located in the center first. For example, in this word cloud, the words "corn," "salad," "soup," "kiwi," and "grab'n'go" probably popped out at you, even though other choices may be larger. The center position is most noticeable.



## LESSON 1: Introduction to Behavioral Economics continued

Items that are **easy to see and reach** attract our attention first and become our **default setting**. For instance, if you open your pantry for a snack, you're likely to end up taking something from the front of the eye-level shelf. The same goes for the refrigerator. This can be a problem when fruits and veggies are stored in hard-to-see, hard-to-reach drawers instead of in plain sight. Out of sight and out of mind, they go uneaten.

### ■ SHOW SLIDE: Intro to BE, slide 7: Let's Get Scientific

#### 🗨️ SAY:

**Behavioral economics** is the study of how environmental cues (like placement) subconsciously “nudge” our decisions—and we can **use those tendencies to help us make healthier choices**.

There are six main ways behavioral economics can nudge food choices. The two most important for us are **Visibility** and **Convenience**.

- \* **Easy-to-see = Visibility**
- \* **Easy-to-reach = Convenience**

An interesting point about the environment's influence on decision-making is that it continues to happen even when you are “in the know.” It's not a magic trick that stops working once you know the secret. Learning about behavioral economics can help us **be proactive** and **reorganize our space to encourage us to make the choices we want to make**, and the changes *will work*. Conversely, just knowing about behavioral economics won't help people make better choices if their surroundings don't change—they must *act, not just think*, for it to work.

### ■ SHOW SLIDE: Intro to BE, slide 8: The Smarter Lunchrooms Movement

#### 🗨️ SAY:

We are going to use the power of behavioral economics to help students *select, eat, and enjoy* healthy food options in the lunchroom. This can help us in many ways:

- \* Increase participation and revenue
- \* Increase efficiency
- \* Improve relationships with students
- \* Improve feedback from students and parents

We'll use Smarter Lunchrooms techniques from the Cornell B.E.N. Center. These interventions are great because:

- \* They have been tested in real schools around the country
- \* We can mix-and-match our favorite interventions to address our lunchroom's specific needs and goals
- \* They are easy
- \* They are inexpensive or free
- \* They do not limit choices or cause negative backlash (“reactance”)



## LESSON 1: Introduction to Behavioral Economics continued

- \* They are effective
- \* They keep working long-term

These customized interventions are called Smarter Lunchrooms Makeovers.

### ■ **SHOW SLIDE: Intro to BE, slide 9: Let's Make Ours a Smarter Lunchroom!**

#### 🗨️ **SAY:**

Let's use behavioral economics to improve our lunchroom this year!

Each month, we'll have one or two mini-workshops to introduce and practice one Smarter Lunchrooms topic. To finish up today's lesson, let's review the key concepts of Behavioral Economics.

#### ➡️ **DO:**

- Distribute a **Behavioral Economics in the Lunchroom: 9 Key ideas worksheet** to each participant.

#### 🗨️ **SAY:**

Look over the core ideas of behavioral economics. These are the most important "take-aways":

- \* **Environmental cues** such as placement, lighting, ambiance, and prompts really do affect our purchasing and eating decisions.
- \* Therefore, **proactively arranging the environment** can prompt people to make **healthier choices and habits**.
- \* People make more impulsive, less healthy choices when in a **hot state** (emotional, rushed, or stressed) than when in a **cold state** (calm, relaxed, and logical).
- \* The **6 Principles of Behavioral Economics** are *Portion Size, Visibility, Convenience, Taste Expectations, Suggestive Selling, and Pricing*.

(Pause to let participants look over the worksheet.)

Now that you are "in the know" about the ways the environment influences habits, look for examples in your own life.

- \* **Hang your worksheet somewhere prominent** where you will see it every day, such as near the bathroom mirror or on the refrigerator. **Read** and **think** about one concept each day.
- \* **Observe your environment.** Look for behavioral economics at work in your life: the visibility of items in your pantry or refrigerator, the convenience of restaurants along your commute, the location of items on store shelves, and the messages you see and hear in commercials. Ask yourself:
  - What are the cues around you prompting people to do?
  - Is this what you, objectively, want to do?
  - How can you help yourself make the choices you want to make?

You can even try Smarter Lunchrooms techniques in your home.



## LESSON 1: Introduction to Behavioral Economics continued

\* **Optional challenge: Change two things** in your home environment to help you and your family make healthier choices. The easiest ways are in boldface. **Discuss:**

- Which changes will you make?
- Why do they appeal to you?
- How could they help you and/or your family make healthy choices at home?

### ➔ DO:

- During the remaining time, allow participants to read the worksheet and discuss home interventions. Encourage them to follow the home recommendations.

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### FOLLOW-UP

Over the next week, spot-check for understanding and cooperation. Keeping the worksheet and recommendations visible on a daily basis is key to helping lunchroom staff members (and you) develop these habits of mind:

- *Thinking* about how behavioral economics affects our daily lives
- *Observing* these techniques in action
- *Implementing* them purposefully

You can unobtrusively encourage compliance in a number of ways:

- **Display** the worksheet prominently in a place staff see every day, such as on a tabletop or door, by the coat rack, or on the door to the restroom
- **Highlight** one concept per day with an eye-catching color
  - › Fun idea: Write the daily concept on a tabletop card or placemat using colored paper, ink, or an eye-catching font
- **Talk about** one concept per day as a group or with individuals
- **Ask** which changes they have tried at home
- **Check in** regularly—daily at first, then every few days



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**Remember: You cannot make anybody do this.** Being angry, rigid, or overly forceful will create reactance (resistance and bad feelings). Instead, encourage cooperation by leaving reminders in **visible, convenient places** and **prompting** in a **friendly, relaxed, interested manner**.

# BOOSTER SHOT 1: Lunch'd Video & Discussion



*Before the workshop, pre-screen the 9-minute movie. If you wish to reserve more time for discussion, plan which portions of the film to show vs. skip.*

*Note: This highly engaging video of a real-life Smarter Lunchrooms Makeover was made before the new USDA standards were implemented. Some suggested changes should be tweaked to suit current lunchroom scenarios. Focus this session on whichever ideas will be most valuable to your participants.*

## MATERIALS

- Trainer's Script
- **VIDEO: Lunch'd** (incl. all necessary technology)
- Large paper, markers

### ➔ **DO:**

- Cue up the **Lunch'd video**. Confirm internet connectivity and test the A/V system for compatibility.

### 💬 **SAY:**

Now that you've learned the essential ideas of behavioral economics and perhaps tried out some of the techniques at home, let's see Smarter Lunchrooms changes in action. The B.E.N. Center leaders, Cornell University professors Dr. Brian Wansink and Dr. David Just, conducted this Makeover at a middle school in Ithaca, NY.

### ➔ **DO:**

- Play **Lunch'd video**.
  - › <http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/healthierus-school-challenge-resources/lunchd-part-one>
  - › <http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/healthierus-school-challenge-resources/lunchd-part-two>
- Allow time for viewing (up to 9 minutes) and a brief discussion (varies) of participant responses.

### 💬 **SAY:**

*Instructor's Note: Discussion length and depth will vary with time allotment. Choose 1-3 of these questions for a whole-group discussion. Use remaining questions, one at a time, to prompt mealtime discussions.*



## BOOSTER SHOT 1: Lunch'd Video & Discussion continued

Let's discuss what you saw in the video.

- \* What did you like about the video?
- \* Which changes were most interesting and/or effective?
- \* Which changes looked inexpensive, easy, or fast to implement?
- \* Which ideas could we use in this lunchroom?
- \* What did you think of the students' reactions?

### ➔ **DO:**

- Record interesting responses or suggestions (primarily those related to making changes in the participants' lunchrooms) on large paper. Hang the list prominently in the staff area to inspire future discussions and brainstorming.



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### FOLLOW-UP

Use the remaining discussion questions as mealtime discussion prompts.