

October 2024



Health Literacy and Its Impact on Health

Understanding Health Information Can Be Difficult!

Have you ever had difficulty understanding medical terms, test results, PCP (primary care provider) instructions or prescription labels? You are not alone!

What is Health Literacy?

The ability to understand and use health information is called health literacy and can be divided into two categories:

- **“Personal health literacy** is the degree to which individuals have the ability to find, understand, and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others” (4).
- **“Organizational health literacy** is the degree to which organizations equitably enable individuals to find, understand, and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others” (4).

Why is Health Literacy Important?

Poor health literacy contributes to misunderstanding of care instructions, prescription medication errors, poor understanding of nutrition labels, preventable ER (emergency room) visits and hospital admissions and may result in early mortality (4).

Researchers have determined that improving health literacy is so important to promote and maintain health, safety and well-being, it has been declared a national goal for *Healthy People 2030* (5).

Health Literacy’s Impact on Individuals with IDD

Individuals with cognitive difficulties face even greater challenges receiving and understanding information to improve their health (6). But it works both ways, the poor health literacy of healthcare providers relating to individuals with IDD and the Waiver system creates barriers to both healthcare access and the care individuals receive. These challenges result in poorer health outcomes for individuals with DD (7).

Please direct questions or concerns regarding the Office of Integrated Health Supports Network “Health Trends” newsletter to communitynursing@dbhds.virginia.gov

Caregivers who are health literate can be more effective and supportive Care Team members during ISP meetings, SIS assessments, PCP appointments, and at hospital discharge, etc.

OIH (Office of Integrated Health) and DBHDS are currently developing resources and tools for PCPs and are committed to the framework of the [National Action Plan](#) (3) to improve organizational health literacy by:

- Providing everyone access to accurate, actionable health information.
- Delivering person-centered health information and services; and
- Supporting life-long learning and skills to promote good health.

Tips for Improving Personal Health Literacy:

1. Write down questions before the appointment and make sure to ask the **“top three”** questions before leaving (4).
2. Take all medication (prescriptions, non-prescription medication like aspirin or antacids, vitamins, and dietary or herbal supplements) to the appointment (4).
3. Know current medical conditions and past surgeries (4).
4. Take [notes](#) during the appointment (4).
5. Ask [questions](#) if you do not understand what the PCP is saying (4).
6. Download this [QuestionBuilder App](#) to get started on your health literacy journey!

Health Literacy Short Stories *(click on the links to learn more)*

This [person](#) partnered with her doctor and improved her daily health.

This [caregiver](#) learned the importance of asking questions.

This [doctor](#) thanked his patient for sharing important information.

HEALTH LITERACY MONTH
Building Awareness Through Action
October 1-31



<https://healthliteracymonth.org/hlm/hlm-home>

References

1. [Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality \(2024\). Health literacy: Patient education and engagement. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.](#)
2. [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(2023, July 11\). What is health literacy? U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.](#)
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4. [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) \(2023b, May\). Understanding Health Literacy: Health Literacy Affects Everyone.](#)
5. [Healthy People 2030. \(n.d.\). Health communication. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.](#)
6. Roll, A. E. (2018). Health promotion for people with intellectual disabilities—A concept analysis. *Scandinavian journal of caring sciences*, 32(1), 422-429.
7. [Heslop, P., Blair, P. S., Fleming, P., Hoghton, M., Marriott, A., & Russ, L. \(2014\). The Confidential Inquiry into premature deaths of people with intellectual disabilities in the UK: a population-based study. *The Lancet*, 383\(9920\), 889-895.](#)

October 2024



ABA Snippets ...

The Spooky Side Effects of Punishment

Behavioral science largely focuses on how consequences shape behavior, or in other words how changes in the environment after an action impact future actions (3). In this two-part ABA Snippet series, we will delve into the two primary types of consequences: reinforcement and punishment, beginning with punishment and its spooky side effects.

Punishment occurs when a behavior is followed by an immediate change in the environment that reduces the likelihood of that behavior recurring (1). For example, if you tell a joke at a party and receive eye rolls and awkward silence, you're probably less likely to tell that joke again. The terrible reaction serves as a punishment, discouraging you from repeating the joke.

Punishment is a common part of our daily lives and can help us learn how to avoid unfavorable or even painful experiences, like touching a hot stove, getting a parking ticket, or telling bad jokes. While punishment by definition is effective in reducing behavior, it also comes with some scary potential drawbacks (2).

Emotional and Aggressive Reactions: Punishment can sometimes lead to aggressive behavior, which might be more troublesome than the behavior you were trying to correct. If you're considering using punishment on a trickster this Halloween, think about whether getting bit by a little vampire might be worse than just cleaning up a bit of toilet paper.

Escape and Avoidance: People will avoid or escape situations they find unpleasant. Recipients of punishment learn to avoid the person providing the punishment. Trick-or-treaters, for instance, quickly figure out to avoid houses handing out school supplies.

Behavioral Contrast: When punishment is applied in one setting, it can lead to an increase in the same behavior in another setting. For instance, if a child is scolded by dad for eating Halloween candy in the kitchen, they may stop eating it while dad is around but binge on it as soon as he leaves the room.

See Cooper et al., 2020, for more information on these side effects of punishment.

It's important to consider these potential negative effects of punishment when trying to change someone's behavior. Next month's ABA Snippet will explore a more helpful and positive approach to behavior change: Reinforcement.

"A person who has been punished is not thereby simply less inclined to behave in a given way; at best, he learns how to avoid punishment."— B. F. Skinner

You may contact DBHDS about these efforts via nick.vanderburg@dbhds.virginia.gov

References

1. Cooper, J. O., Heron, T. E., & Heward, W. L. (2020). *Applied behavior analysis*. Pearson Education, Inc.
2. Sidman, M. (1989). *Coercion and its fallout*. Authors Cooperative.
3. Skinner, B. F. (1938). *The behavior of organisms: An experimental analysis*. Copley Publishing Group.

October 6th is World Cerebral Palsy Day

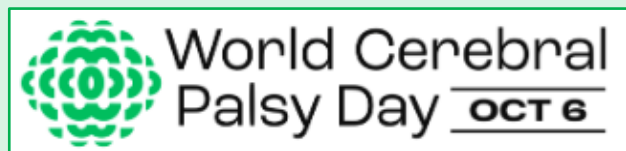
In 2012 the global movement of World Cerebral Palsy Day started with the aim of bring together people living with cerebral palsy, their families, supporters, and organizations from all over the globe. The goal is to ensure a future in which children and adults with cerebral palsy have the same rights, access, and opportunities as anyone else.

- There are more than 17 million people across the world living with cerebral palsy.
- Another 350 million people are closely connected to a child or adult with cerebral palsy.

Cerebral palsy is a physical disability that affects movement and posture. Many people with cerebral palsy have other related vision, hearing, communication and mobility needs. Its impact can range from a weakness in one hand, to almost a complete lack of voluntary movement.

It is a complex disability:

- 1 in 4 children with cerebral palsy cannot talk.
- 1 in 4 cannot walk.
- 1 in 2 have an intellectual disability.
- 1 in 4 have epilepsy.



Download the [What is Cerebral Palsy?](#) and the [Cerebral Palsy: Diagnosis and Treatment](#) infographic posters (PDFs) to learn more.

Reference:

[World Cerebral Palsy Day \[Internet\]. \(2024, September\). About World Cerebral Palsy Day. Ripple Marketing Australia.](#)