



Expanding Behavioral Diagnosis with Quirks

SBCC Summit 2022 Workshop: Integrating Behavioral Economics into Program Design

Identifying Barriers (“Things” that Get in the Way of the Behavior)

Consider the factors that are making it hard to do the steps and get to the behavior, called barriers.¹ Under each step (each decision or action), list the barriers – including *potential* barriers – that you think are occurring in that step. Barriers can be structural issues, social factors, or based on behavioral and cognitive quirks.

Some barriers you might already know from literature reviews or previous work in the area. In the first part of diagnosis, think of **all possible** barriers, even if you don't have evidence they are occurring.² Think like the imperfect humans that we all are...

Write the barrier from the point of view of the individual in simple language. For example, instead of “lack of information,” write “doctor doesn't use prescribing guidelines frequently so needs to look them up.” Instead of writing “hassle factors,” write “the prescribing guidelines are kept outside the consultation room and getting them is a hassle”.

Your barriers should be a mix of structural factors, social factors, and behavioral and cognitive quirks. Keep thinking until you have at least some barriers from each.

List all the “things” (barriers) that get in the way of someone doing that behavior. As an advanced step, you can also list the “things” that make it easier to do it.

Remember that context is very important! The steps and barriers for people who live in a peri-urban area with easy access to multiple shops or clinics might be different from those for people who live in a rural area where access to shops is difficult and there might only be one clinic.³ Assuming the same program would work in both contexts sets up the program for failure. (There are thousands of failed programs that didn't take context into account, don't let yours be one of them!)

¹ As a more advanced step, you can list the “things” that make the steps easier to do, called motivators. To distinguish motivators from barriers, add a [B] for barriers and [M] for motivators to the end of each factor you list. Motivators that are already influencing the individual's context can be considered during the design phase, *i.e.*, is there a way to amplify that motivator instead of designing something new or include that motivator in a more comprehensive design?

² As technical leads or program managers, we are accustomed to trying to “fix things” so it might be easy for us to come up with ideas for how people could be motivated. But we don't want to “fix” anything yet - we don't want to assume that we know the answer before we have diagnosed and understand the critical barriers! So only include motivators that you know are occurring, do not include your own ideas for what you think could change behavior. Save those ideas for the design process!

³ Creating individual behavioral profiles for different groups of people is a type of audience/user segmentation.

Questions to get you thinking:

Who?

- Are they deciding or acting alone?
- Who is influencing them (at that moment or previously)?

What?

- Is there an easy and a hard way to do the step?
- Is there a shortcut they can take or an alternative they could do instead?
- What else is happening while doing the step? (What else do they see, hear or observe?)
- Is the step done the same way every time? Or is it different depending on the place, time, or who is doing it?

Where?

- Where are they when making the decision or doing the action?

When?

- Is there a time or space gap between when they made the decision and when they do the action?
- Is there a gap between when they learn information and when they apply it?

Why?

- Why are they doing this behavior?
- How does the person feel doing the step?
- Is there pressure, monitoring, or an incentive to do the step?
- Does someone see them doing the step? Are they being monitored?

How?

- Do they know how to do the step?
- Do they know what to expect when doing the step?
- Do they have everything that they need to do the step at the moment they are doing it?
- Is any information that was given to them clear? Do they think that the information applies to their situation?