

Archive 5

Dissonance is the uneasy feeling one gets with knowing that their behaviors do not reflect their feelings about the behavior. In other words, being aware of our own hypocrisies. People naturally do not like to feel that they are acting in a manner with which they disagree, so they either attempt to justify their actions or make a change in behavior. Sometimes people attempt to change how they feel about their behavior through self-affirmation (responding in a way that makes them seem competent in another area) or trivializing the differences between the attitude and behavior. Others make an effort to change their behaviors by putting themselves in situations where a change in behavior is forced, by becoming fully aware of their hypocritical behaviors, or through reward systems that focus on small steps toward a larger goal.

Through a small survey, I was able to compare my attitudes about some ideas with my behaviors (figure below). It was interesting to see that my attitudes and behaviors matched up in only two different ways: my behavior either matched my attitude, or I had greater attitude than behavior. One aspect that I have dissonance in, though not covered by the study, is smoking.

I have smoked on and off since I was about 16. I know that smoking is extremely bad for my health and that I can greatly reduce health complications if I stop. I have this overwhelming feeling of disapproval of myself for doing it, and yet still smoke. I tell myself constantly that I am going to stop, but also that I probably will not any time soon. Though, through my recent understanding of how dissonance can be managed, I may be able to find the key to making a change in my behavior.

