



Influencing Behavior Change

Matt Wallaert, Behavioral Scientist and Chief Behavior Officer, Clover Health

As John Maxwell says, “Leadership is influence—nothing more, nothing less.” So it should come as no surprise that leaders are key influencers of behavior change. “All leaders—the service that is leadership—exist to change behavior,” says Matt Wallaert, behavioral scientist and entrepreneur, in his talk at [Leadercast 2020—Positive Disruption](#). He shares that behavior change happens as a result of promoting pressures (reasons to do something) and inhibiting pressures (reasons not to do something). As leaders, if we want to influence and change behaviors, we can either strengthen promoting pressures or weaken inhibiting pressures.

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1. Remove inhibiting pressures. When inhibiting pressures aren’t a factor, people will behave differently. For example, Matt shares that women don’t shy away from asking for raises because they don’t want them. Really, it’s due to the inhibiting pressures that come with them (such as women being less likely to get raises and being socialized not to ask). When those pressures are removed, women are more likely to ask for raises.

2. Encourage promoting pressures. On the flipside, behavior is also influenced when we increase promoting pressures. As an example, Matt imagines a leader’s goal of wanting more men to attend women’s events. There are promoting and inhibiting pressures on both sides, so by having women invite the men it increases promoting pressures by changing the environment to one that promotes men to attend.

3. Know the “why” behind the behaviors you wish to change. In order to change a behavior, you have to know why it exists in the first place, says Matt. This is the only way you’ll learn the promoting and inhibiting pressures that influence the behavior and how you can intervene as a leader.