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The Theory of Planned Behavior encompasses the idea of an individual’s intent and purpose behind the actions they choose to do and the way they behave while doing so. There are many factors behind what feeds into the intent which include their attitude, their beliefs or subjective norms, and the control they perceive they have behind the chosen behaviors (Ajzen, 1991). While the model behind this theory shows these three factors meshing to one and then in turn leading to another, the factors behind the initial three are also important to consider. How does one form attitudes, beliefs, and perception of control? This is likely to be different amongst all people and that is why we all behave in different ways. While they all differ, to an individual person this may just feel normal to them because it is what they have experienced their entire life. Our attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions are heavily shaped by the experiences, events, social influences, and exposures we are introduced to throughout one’s life. Yet, these shaping factors are always changing hence why our behaviors change from time to time and area to area. As we mature, individuals tend to learn how to control these factors and the norms accepted in different environments. As we experience more things day-to-day we learn more things able to get out of our actions and in turn shaping and expanding the intent behind these behaviors. This is what causes the complexity of this theory and the idea of human behaviors.

Recently, I just got placed for my first Level I Occupational Therapy fieldwork position at an establishment for adults with a variety of mental illnesses where they are helped to get back into the workplace, societal communities, and educational opportunities. In my previous experiences, I have been drawn to working in primarily pediatric settings. So, when I found out I was going to be working with adults in this type of setting that I did not have much experience with I was extremely scared and nervous. In terms of the theory of planned behavior, I was able to mesh my beliefs, attitudes, my control in the situation to produce an appropriate behavior and find a meaningful intent behind it for me. I believe that is extremely important to diversify myself in all populations whether it is my preferred area, everything does deserve a chance. This goes hand in hand with my attitude in being open-minded and willing to new opportunities and what I can learn from them. Then, the perceived behavioral control I had behind this situation. I know that there was a reason I was placed at this site and that for my educational purposes and benefits. I did feel moments of defeat in that I wasn’t sure how well I would be able to perform my expectations there given the interest I have and the level of knowledge behind it. Using these two more so “positive” effects, attitude and beliefs, and one more “negative” effect, the perceived behavioral control, I used this to shape how I was going to behave at my fieldwork and get the most out of it. This is something I need to keep in mind throughout my entire journey as an occupational therapist. There are going to be days and settings that certain factors are dragging us down but sometimes we need to pause and weigh out the pros and cons as well as the benefits or consequences out of our subsequent behaviors. As we grow and gain experience we gain control in our own personal factors and as occupational therapists we can spread this knowledge in helping others to be able to understand and do the same in accordance to the theory of planned behavior.

References

Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 50(2), 179–211.