The Role of Positive Spontaneous Thoughts in Predicting Future Intake of Fruits and Vegetables
Landry Kuehn, Mia Foglesong

The Upward Spiral Theory of Lifestyle Change postulates that positive affect can lead to long-term continuation of positive health behaviors. The inner loop of this model focuses on how positive affect during a health behavior increases nonconscious motives of the behavior to then increase future behavior. Incentive salience is a nonconscious motive (Van Cappellen et al., 2018) in which positive affect during behavior predicts future continuation. In this study, we tested whether positive affect during the health behavior of fruit and vegetable intake would increase future intake through the mediation of positive spontaneous thoughts as a type of incentive salience. In a longitudinal study of 228 participants that spanned over 4 weeks, we measured the relationship between positive affect and fruit/vegetable consumption. We measured positive affect during fruit and vegetable consumption during week 2, how positive were the spontaneous thoughts on fruits and vegetables during week 3, and cups of fruit and vegetables eaten during week 4. We found significant correlations between each independent path but marginal support for positive spontaneous thoughts as the mediator between positive affect during fruit and vegetable intake and future consumption. Positive feelings that arise from fruit and vegetable intake may increase the future tendencies for individuals to continue that behavior in the future, but this effect was not explained by the occurrence of positive spontaneous thoughts about nutritious foods.

Keywords: incentive salience, positive spontaneous thoughts, fruits and vegetables