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Sunderland**

Dunnett, Jo, Kilinc, Stephanie and van Wersch, Anna (2018) Theory based intervention on shared family meals frequency and improved dietary consumption within a disadvantaged social class. In: Division of Health Psychology Annual Conference 2018., 5-7th September 2018, The Hilton Gateshead Tyne and Wear. (Unpublished)

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Title: Theory based intervention on shared family meals frequency and improved dietary consumption within a disadvantaged social class.

Eating family meals often results in increased intake of fruit and vegetables and a reduced consumption of energy dense convenience or fast food. Socioeconomic status has been highlighted as a determinant of shared family meal frequency, yet there is limited research targeting those considered most at risk. Intervention mapping identified theory-based variables of Social cognitive theory (SCT) and Theory of planned behaviour (TPB) as suitable to deliver required change. These were translated into practical strategies that matched the change objectives of increasing family meals and improving dietary consumption.

Design: A pre-post design to evaluate a 10-week family cooking intervention, utilising SCT and TPB variables was implemented. Participants included four families (n=16) who reported eating together < 2 times/week and consuming convenience or fast food > 4 times/week. All self-identified both as white British and belonging to a disadvantaged socioeconomic class.

Results: Frequency of shared families increased over time with the proportion of convenience and fast food consumed decreasing. Changes in parental attitudes towards shared family meals, as well as an increase in parental self-efficacy in cooking and eating with their children were demonstrated.

Conclusion: A theory-based cooking intervention targeting family meal frequency, offers promise as an innovative preventative obesity intervention among disadvantaged socioeconomic populations. This is of particular relevance at the present time as the obesity rates within this population are increasing, requiring a growing degree of dietary behaviour change. Further work should explore the intervention in larger samples, as well as the feasibility of sustainable behaviour change.