



## THE CONCEPT OF "HEALTHY LIFESTYLE" IN PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH

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### Abstract

The article is devoted to the theoretical understanding of the concept of "healthy lifestyle" in psychological research. The analysis of the definitions of the concept of "healthy lifestyle" in the scientific literature has been carried out; approaches to its definition and main features have been identified. Approaches to the study of a healthy lifestyle in foreign studies are considered. It was revealed that along with the concept of "healthy lifestyle" in domestic research, the concept of "self-preserving behavior" is actively used, often as a synonym for the first. The main purpose of the article was to correlate the concepts of "healthy lifestyle" and "self-preservation behavior" in the context of health psychology, highlighting their similarities and differences. A number of definitions of the concept of "self-protective behavior", features of its use in domestic and foreign studies are given. It is shown that in foreign studies the term "self-protective behavior" is used in the study of professional groups in the context of attitudes towards one's health, when issues related to the risk of injuries of various geneses at work are raised, in domestic psychology - as a behavior focused on health and prevention development of diseases. As a result of the analysis, a close relationship was revealed between the concepts under consideration, which together direct human activity towards the strengthening and development of individual and public health, but their identification is not entirely correct. It is shown that "self-protective behavior" is an integral element of a healthy lifestyle. The concept of "healthy lifestyle" is broader than "self-protective behavior", and can be defined as a set of external and internal conditions of a person's life, contributing to a longer work of all systems of his body, as well as a set



of actions aimed at maintaining and strengthening health (self-protective behavior) and the harmonious development of the personality.

**Keywords:** health psychology, lifestyle, healthy lifestyle, self-preservation behavior, health-improving behavior, health.

### Introduction

The problem of health promotion and a healthy lifestyle (HLS) is one of the most relevant in health psychology, as evidenced by the growing interest of researchers in this topic from year to year. Changing a person's behavior to minimize the risk of developing health problems is becoming one of the most important tasks of the 21st century.

In today's world, there are a large number of organizations and programs that promote a healthy lifestyle and encourage people to increase activity to improve physical health. The main objective of such incentive efforts is not so much to inform people about the positive and negative impact of various forms of behavior on human health, but to convince them that it is possible to change their own behavior to improve their health. In this regard, a person's ability to think about the future, set specific goals, strive for self-regulation of behavior will be of decisive importance for maintaining a healthy lifestyle and promoting health. As the results of recent studies show, there is a “significant gap between the declaration of a high value of health and its practical implementation at the behavioral level” [1, p. 223].

Human health is influenced by many factors, including heredity, environmental conditions, socio-economic conditions, lifestyle, etc. Studies show that out of the whole variety of factors affecting human health, about half are the impact is 2–2.5 times higher than the impact of other factors [3, p. 48]. So, among the factors that had a negative impact on the health of the population of the Russian Federation in the period from 1990 to 2007, scientists identified an unhealthy lifestyle: alcohol abuse, smoking and drug addiction, poor working conditions at work, low awareness of a healthy lifestyle and public health [3, p. 63]. In this regard, there is a need to inform the population about the dangers and negative consequences of an unhealthy lifestyle.

Thus, it is worth emphasizing that a person's health is largely determined by his lifestyle and attitudes. From what lifestyle a person adheres to, what



form of activity he prefers, it will depend on whether he will benefit his health or cause irreparable harm.

According to the World Health Organization, a healthy lifestyle is a behavior aimed at maintaining and promoting health in terms of interaction with the environment (social, socio-economic, environmental factors). An analysis of modern psychological literature on this issue has shown that, along with the concept of "healthy lifestyle", researchers actively use the concept of "self-protective behavior". In domestic studies, they are often used as synonyms. In our opinion, these concepts are closely related to each other, but not identical. The instability of the concept of "healthy lifestyle" and the many options for interpreting self-protective behavior because a number of difficulties associated with the theoretical understanding of the concepts under consideration when studying the lifestyle of healthy people. In this regard, the purpose of the article was a theoretical understanding of the concepts of "healthy lifestyle" and "self-protective behavior" in the context of health psychology, their correlation and highlighting similarities and differences. The concept of "healthy lifestyle" - As G.S. Nikiforov notes, the concept of "healthy lifestyle" is "a concentrated expression of the relationship between lifestyle and human health" [4, p. 243], "the strategic goal of life, ensuring the harmony of long periods of individual life, all life" [4, p. 272]. Z. F. Dudchenko defines a healthy lifestyle of a person as "an activity of a person who uses the opportunities provided to him in the interests of health, harmonious mental, physical and spiritual development" [5, p. 358]. The researcher refers to the main criteria for a healthy lifestyle of an individual: 1) state of health; 2) quality of life; 3) medical and psychohygienic literacy; 4) life expectancy [5]. Today we can state not only the growing popularity of a healthy lifestyle among the general population, but also the growing scientific interest in this topic. In the scientific literature, a large number of definitions of the concept of "healthy lifestyle" are found. Representatives of various fields of scientific knowledge (biologists, sociologists, teachers, psychologists, physicians, etc.) have made and continue to make attempts to give an exhaustive interpretation of this concept [5–15]. But, despite all the attractiveness of a healthy lifestyle, due to its versatility and insufficient development, the concept is not clearly defined. Analysis of the definitions of the concept of "healthy lifestyle" allows us to distinguish two approaches to its definition. Within the framework of the first one, the authors focus on the ways of human behavior (health-improving measures) that allow one to maintain one's health. As part of the second, it is



emphasized that in order to maintain a healthy lifestyle, the activity of the person himself, aimed at preserving and maintaining health, is necessary.

In addition, as a result of comparing the definitions of the concept of "healthy lifestyle" available in the scientific literature, a number of its features can be distinguished. Firstly, a healthy lifestyle is inextricably linked with the conditions of human activity, goes beyond the scope of activity, and is often determined by these conditions. Secondly, it is obvious that in order to maintain a healthy lifestyle, a person needs to be active, performing a set of actions aimed at maintaining and strengthening health. In other words, a healthy lifestyle incorporates everything that helps a person to perform his social, professional, domestic functions in optimal conditions for his health and development [4].

In foreign psychology, health behavior includes a wide range of activities that promote health: physical activity, healthy eating, medical and protective measures (vaccination, use of contraceptives, etc.), avoidance of health-threatening actions (smoking, alcohol and drug use), and diagnostic measures (rehabilitation, visiting a doctor) [16]. In our opinion, it is legitimate to say that any behavior that has an impact (both positive and negative) on the state of human health can be considered health-related behavior. Daily habits related to diet, exercise, and substance use are not only associated with disease prevention, but also affect chronic disease management and disability [17].

A number of researchers in general health-related behaviors include diet, exercise, smoking, alcohol use, safety practices, and participation in preventive screenings (e.g., cholesterol levels, breast and prostate cancer) [18], as well as psychological well-being and overall longevity [19]. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has shown that regular physical activity is associated with lower death rates among adults of all ages, even when performing the simplest exercise, reduces the risk of death from cardiovascular disease, the development of diabetes, colon cancer, and helps reduce blood pressure.

Researchers involved in the problem of healthy lifestyles are interested in issues related to behavior change, the main goal of which is adaptive results [20]. In their opinion, changing behavior in order to improve health is the result of a complex of direct, indirect and interactive actions of individual, social and environmental factors [20]. Psychologists focus their attention on the psychological factors involved in self-regulation of



behavior, since they are viable targets for interventions, as they lead to behavior change [21]. As a fundamental feature of the assessment of a healthy lifestyle, the authors single out the determination of the content and frequency of the corresponding behavior, i.e., the number of executions of a specific action per unit of time.

Most foreign studies of healthy lifestyles follow the definition of behavior formulated by Kasl and Cobb (1966). According to the authors, the behavior associated with a healthy lifestyle is “any activity performed by a person who considers himself healthy in order to prevent a disease or detect it at an asymptomatic stage” [22]. The main directions of such research are in the field of medical and preventive measures: physical or dental examinations, immunization, prenatal care, restriction of cholesterol intake, not being overweight, regular exercise [23]. In other words, behavior is studied that results from both direct interaction with medical personnel and following the appropriate recommendations of the doctor.

A significant body of research is focused on understanding why and under what circumstances people turn to behaviors aimed at maintaining their health [24]. Most of the research was carried out within the framework of the health belief model developed by I. M. Rosenstock, G. M. Hochbaum, S. S. Kegels, H. Leventhal in the 1950s. It focuses on two aspects of people's perceptions of health and behavior: threat perception and behavior evaluation. "Perception of threat" consists of two beliefs: perceived susceptibility to diseases or health problems and the expected severity of the consequences of diseases. “Behavior assessment” also includes beliefs about the benefits and effectiveness of recommended health behaviors and beliefs about barriers to the implementation of certain health promotion interventions [25]. The health belief model is used to predict health behavior in a wide range of populations.

Nola J. Pender (1987) suggested that health-protecting and health-promoting behaviors could be seen as complementary components of a healthy lifestyle and proposed the Health promotion model - a paradigm for explaining behavior aimed at maintaining health. Health behavior, according to the author, is aimed at increasing the level of well-being, self-actualization and personal fulfillment [26]. As a supportive component of health-promoting behavior, a positive approach to life is used, since it is this that contributes to the realization of potential. To monitor a healthy lifestyle, Professor S. N.



Walker, Nola J. Pender and a group of researchers developed a Health-promoting lifestyle profile (HPLP) [26; 27]. The model proposed by the authors includes an assessment of six aspects of health-related behavior:

- 1) "Spiritual growth" - focusing on the development of internal resources;
- 2) "Interpersonal relations" - the use of communication to achieve a sense of closeness with others;
- 3) "Nutrition" - the choice of a healthy daily diet;
- 4) "Physical activity" (physical activity);
- 5) "Responsibility for health" (health responsibility);
- 6) Stress management [26; 27].

According to the analysis of special literature, it can be noted that the behavior associated with medical and preventive measures is evaluated as the dominant strategies for studying behavior aimed at promoting health. This direction makes it possible to identify the main determinants of maintaining human health in terms of medical and preventive behavior, but does not answer the question of what a person himself can do to maintain his health. In this regard, the researchers needed to find out what actions people consider protective in terms of maintaining health. The authors proposed the concept of self-protective behavior, which was understood as “any behavior performed by a person, regardless of his or her perceived or actual state of health, in order to protect or maintain health, regardless of whether such behavior is objectively effective” [23]. When it comes to behavior aimed at maintaining and strengthening health, it means the rejection of bad habits, food culture, physical activity and sleep hygiene. However, there are other behaviors that affect health, although they are not so obvious. So, as I. N. Gurvich writes, according to D. Gochman (1988), one can distinguish between preventive and protective behavior. Preventive behavior includes adherence to sleep and nutrition, physical activity, moderate alcohol consumption, smoking cessation, compliance with safety rules at work. Protective behavior includes prayer, medication to prevent the development of the disease, the use of vitamins [28, p. 415].

Also among the types of behavior that affect health, one can name the way people cope with stressors and show negative emotions. For example, a number of studies have shown a link between the way a person expresses his anger and the development of coronary heart disease [29; thirty]. The most important factors influencing a person's health will be the decision he makes



about his behavior regarding what is healthy and unhealthy behavior in his daily life.

Correlation between the concepts of "healthy lifestyle" and "self-protective behavior"

Some studies use the term “self-protective (self-protective) behavior” (“self-protective behavior”, “self-preservation behavior”). This concept includes precautions used by people to reduce the risk of damage to their health, and in certain situations in order not to become a victim. It should be noted that in some studies the term “self-protective (self-protective) behavior” is used literally as carrying the subject of self-defense: for example, do not go out at night, lock doors at night, avoid visiting places with increased danger, etc. [31–33].

Thus, studies of self-protective behavior conducted on a campus revealed its association with a high level of fear [34]. The study of this problem in the gender aspect showed the features of self-protective behavior in men and women. As a self-protective/self-protective behavior in terms of reducing the risk of sexual violence, women were found to use information about their location more often [32], and they mainly reported fear of becoming a victim of violence [31], while men resorted to the use of self-defense means: knives, bits, etc. [35]. In a dissertation study by S. Hoff (2015), it was shown that women more often than men report a decrease in their sense of security and resort to self-protective / self-protective behavior.

The results of the study revealed that the use of self-protective behavior is more characteristic of those participants in the study who witnessed certain incidents in their lives [36].

An analysis of foreign studies of self-protective behavior shows that this problem mainly concerns the study of such behavior in professional groups, mainly among medical workers [37–39]. Interesting data were obtained in a study by Vander Heijden (2017), devoted to the study of the characteristics of self-protective behavior in the context of the fight against Lyme disease, which, if left untreated, causes serious neurological diseases, joint problems and cardiovascular diseases. Basic precautions include the following: properly fitting clothing that minimizes skin exposure, systematic body checks for ticks.

The online study involved people aged 18 to 87 who visit nature (forests, swamps, natural parks or gardens) with different frequency and do not represent the target audience. It was found that self-efficacy (belief in the



effectiveness of the test) and self-esteem (the expected result of the self-assessment was that the person would feel good) were associated with checking the body for ticks after visiting nature. The weakest, although significant, associations were with experience (i.e., a person had previously been bitten by a tick) and knowledge of the possible consequences of a tick bite [40].

Thus, a brief review of foreign studies devoted to the study of self-protective behavior shows that this behavior is studied, as a rule, in connection with the risk of various kinds of diseases or within the framework of professional activity, especially in the field of healthcare. In addition, in foreign studies self-protective behavior is not used as a synonym for the concept of "healthy lifestyle".

In domestic psychology, the first studies of self-protective behavior as a system of actions and relationships that mediate human health and life expectancy were carried out at the Center for the Study of Population Problems under the leadership of A. I. Antonov in 1980–1986. (A. I. Antonov, I. V. Zhuravleva, L. S. Shilova). The researchers studied people's ideas about the desired and expected life expectancy in combination with the conditions that contribute to its increase. D.S. Kornienko associates self-protective behavior with activity aimed at maintaining physical and psychological health [41]. V. Ya. Shklyaruk, studying the health of workers in the system of self-protective behavior, defines it as “a set of knowledge, motives, beliefs, a system of actions and relationships that organize and direct the volitional efforts of the individual to maintain health, a healthy lifestyle for a full life cycle, for the extension of creative longevity” [42]. Most researchers involved in the study of self-protective behavior adhere to the definition proposed by A. I. Antonov. Self-preservation behavior is defined by him as “a system of actions and attitudes of the individual aimed at maintaining health throughout the full life cycle, at extending life within this cycle” [43, p. 313].

According to I. B. Nazarova, self-protective behavior acts as a component of the way of life, and its formation is influenced by culture, traditions, values of the individual and society, state policy and the socio-economic situation in the country [14]. Exploring self-protective behavior, I. B. Nazarova speaks of an ideal model that includes a number of elements: maintaining a healthy lifestyle, preventive measures aimed at improving health, safe living





conditions (place of residence, taxes, housing), favorable conditions for professional activity [fourteen].

M. A. Miller, studying self-protective behavior as an element of demographic development, identifies three vectors for implementing an individual strategy of self-protective behavior: a healthy lifestyle, medical activity, ecoholization of the conditions of one's own life [44]. It is worth paying attention to the fact that in this case, under a healthy lifestyle as a vector for the implementation of self-protective behavior, the author understands the performance of actions and compliance with the rules that contribute to the preservation and promotion of health: smoking cessation, dosed alcohol consumption, regular physical activity, a balanced diet and regimen. nutrition [44]. On the one hand, I. B. Nazarova and M. A. Miller include a healthy lifestyle as one of the components ("element" - for Nazarova, "vector" - for Miller) in the concept of "self-protective behavior". On the other hand, a healthy lifestyle is presented as a set of certain health-saving behavioral attitudes, and not as a form of organization of all human life.

A large number of studies of self-protective behavior is associated with the peculiarities of its formation among young people (I. S. Karas, M. L. Otavina, V. Ya. Gorbunkov, M. I. Plugina, V. A. Lebedinskaya, N. V. Gulyaevskaya and others). So, I. S. Karas, studying the dynamics of self-protective behavior of cadets of the border institute, identifies a number of components: refusal of drugs, physical activity, and compliance with security measures, work and rest regimen, personal hygiene, refusal of bad habits, use of means of protection against diseases sexually transmitted, seeking medical attention [45].

M. L. Otavina, considering the self-protective behavior of students of the Pedagogical University in connection with self-assessment of health, notes that the quality of a person's life affects his physical and psychological components of health [46]. Particular attention is paid to the formation of a responsible attitude to health in the context of self-protective behavior among students of medical educational institutions [47; 48]. Being the result of upbringing, the attitude to health, according to psychologists, is one of the elements of self-protective behavior, which includes cognitive, emotional, and motivational-behavioral components [49; 50].

Thus, a review of studies devoted to the study of self-protective behavior and a healthy lifestyle within the framework of health psychology reveals the similarity of the concepts under consideration. However, the term "self-



protective behavior" in foreign studies is more often used when studying professional groups in the context of attitudes towards one's health, when issues related to the risk of injury of various origins at work are raised. That is, protective behavior itself is considered as a certain set of human actions in professional activities aimed at maintaining human productivity and preserving the integrity of the organism. In domestic psychology, self-protective behavior is considered as behavior oriented towards health and prevention of the development of diseases. In addition, it is worth mentioning that a number of domestic authors use the concept of "health-saving behavior" [51] as a synonym for the concept of "self-protective behavior". Thus, A. V. Shaboltas considers preventive behavioral practices as health-saving behavior, such as physical exercises, dispensary observation, compliance with the regime of work and rest, giving up bad habits (smoking, alcohol), hygiene measures, etc. [51, p. . 16].

Thus, we can say that health-saving behavior is aimed at maintaining and preserving one's health, as well as at identifying severe symptoms at an early stage with the help of preventive measures.

The concept of "self-protective behavior" implies a system of expedient actions and human relations aimed at maintaining productivity and well-being in the physical, psychological and social aspects [52; 53]. The result of the self-protective behavior of the individual is a certain level of his health and life expectancy. That is, protective behavior itself involves the implementation of a set of actions aimed at maintaining and strengthening human health, as well as increasing life expectancy.

## Conclusion

Summing up, it is worth noting that, of course, the close connection between the concepts of "healthy lifestyle" and "self-protective behavior" is obvious, however, from our point of view, it is not entirely correct to identify them.

Based on the theoretical analysis of the presented concepts, it can be concluded that self-protective behavior is the most important and integral element of a healthy lifestyle, ensuring the effectiveness of the activities performed and contributing to the preservation of a certain level of health of the individual throughout his life, as well as favorably influencing its duration.

The concept of "healthy lifestyle" is broader than "self-protective behavior", and can be defined as a set of external and internal conditions



of human life, contributing to a longer work of all body systems, as well as a set of actions aimed at maintaining and strengthening health (self-protective behavior) and the harmonious development of the personality. Thus, the concepts of “healthy lifestyle” and “self-protective behavior” together direct human activity towards the strengthening and development of individual and public health.

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