

# Social Cognitive Theory

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# Purpose of Theory

- To understand and predict individual and group behavior
- To identify methods in which behavior can be modified or changed
- Used in interventions aimed at personality development, behavior pathology and health promotion

# Social Cognitive Theory: The History

- Albert Bandura – 1970s
- First known as Social Learning Theory with a heaving focus on cognitive concepts
- Renamed Social Cognitive Theory (1986) when concepts from cognitive psychology were integrated

# Bobo Doll Experiment

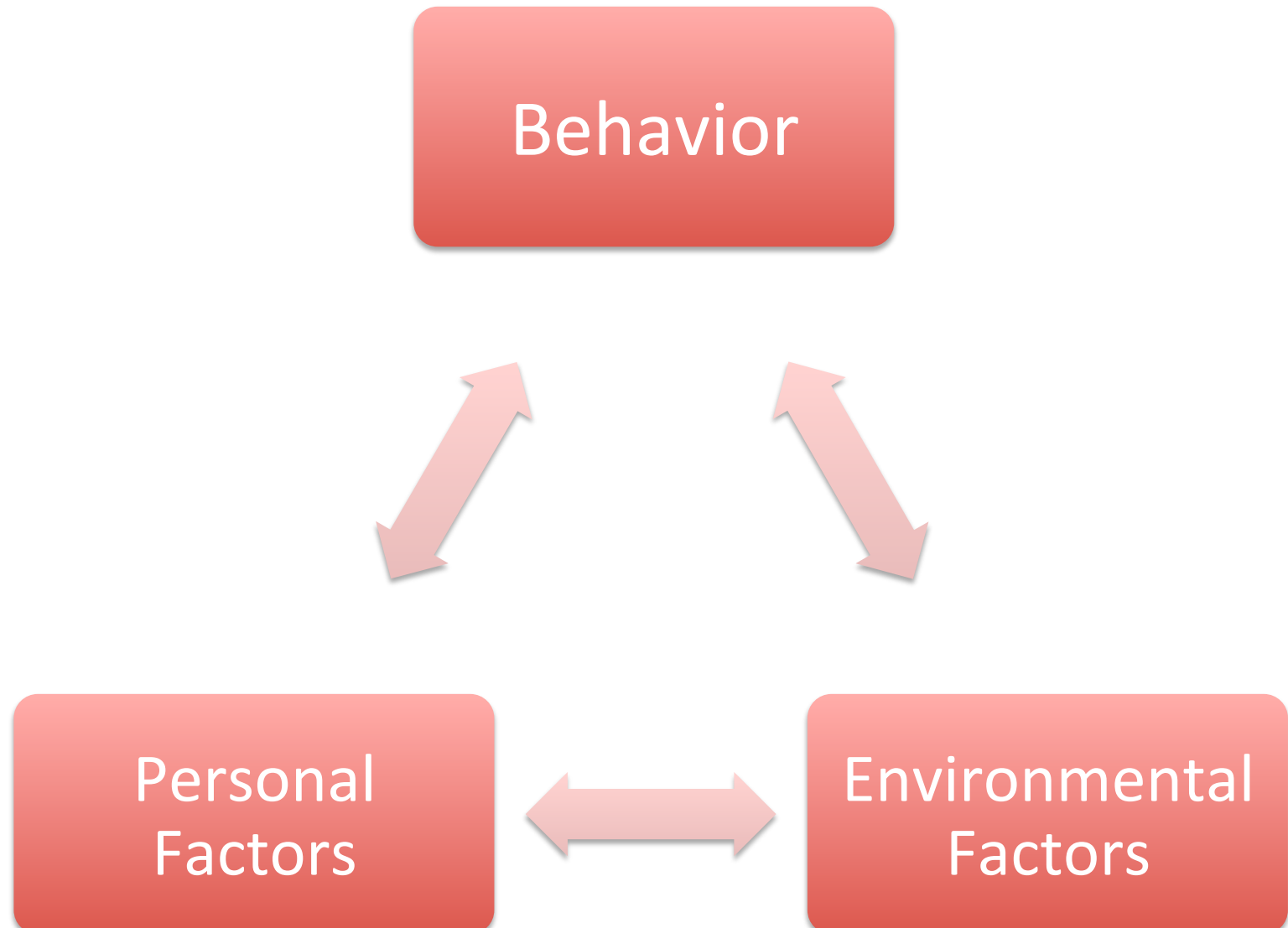
‘Behavior such as aggression is learned through observing and imitating others’



# Social Cognitive Theory: Overview

- Bandura believed that direct reinforcement could not account for all types of learning
  - His theory added a social element → people can learn new information and behaviors by watching other people
- Demonstrates how a person's environment, personal factors, and behaviors are all inversely related to one another

“A theory that denies that thoughts can regulate actions does not lend itself readily to the explanation of complex human behavior”-Bandura



# Social Cognitive Theory Concepts/ Constructs

Concept/Constructs	Definition
<b>Reciprocal Determinism</b>	Behavior is the result of a continuous interaction between the person and the environment
<b>Outcome Expectations</b>	Beliefs about the likelihood/value of the consequences of behavioral choices
<b>*Self-efficacy</b>	Beliefs about personal ability to perform behaviors
<b>Collective Efficacy</b>	Beliefs about the ability of a group to perform actions
<b>*Observational Learning</b>	We learn by our own direct experience and by observing the behavior of others
<b>Facilitation/Barriers</b>	Providing tools, resources, or environmental changes that make new behaviors easier to perform
<b>Self-regulation</b>	The process by which we regulate our own behavior

## Behaviors

Reciprocal  
Determinism

Observational  
Learning

## Environmental Factors

Facilitation

Barriers

## Personal Factors

Self-efficacy

Self-  
regulation  
Outcome  
Expectations

# Social Cognitive Theory techniques used in interventions:

- Modeling
- Skill training
- Social skills
- Self-monitoring
- Goal setting

## Limitations

- Many applications of the theory focus on one or two constructs, such as self-efficacy, while ignoring the others
- The theory is very complex which can make it difficult to operationalize

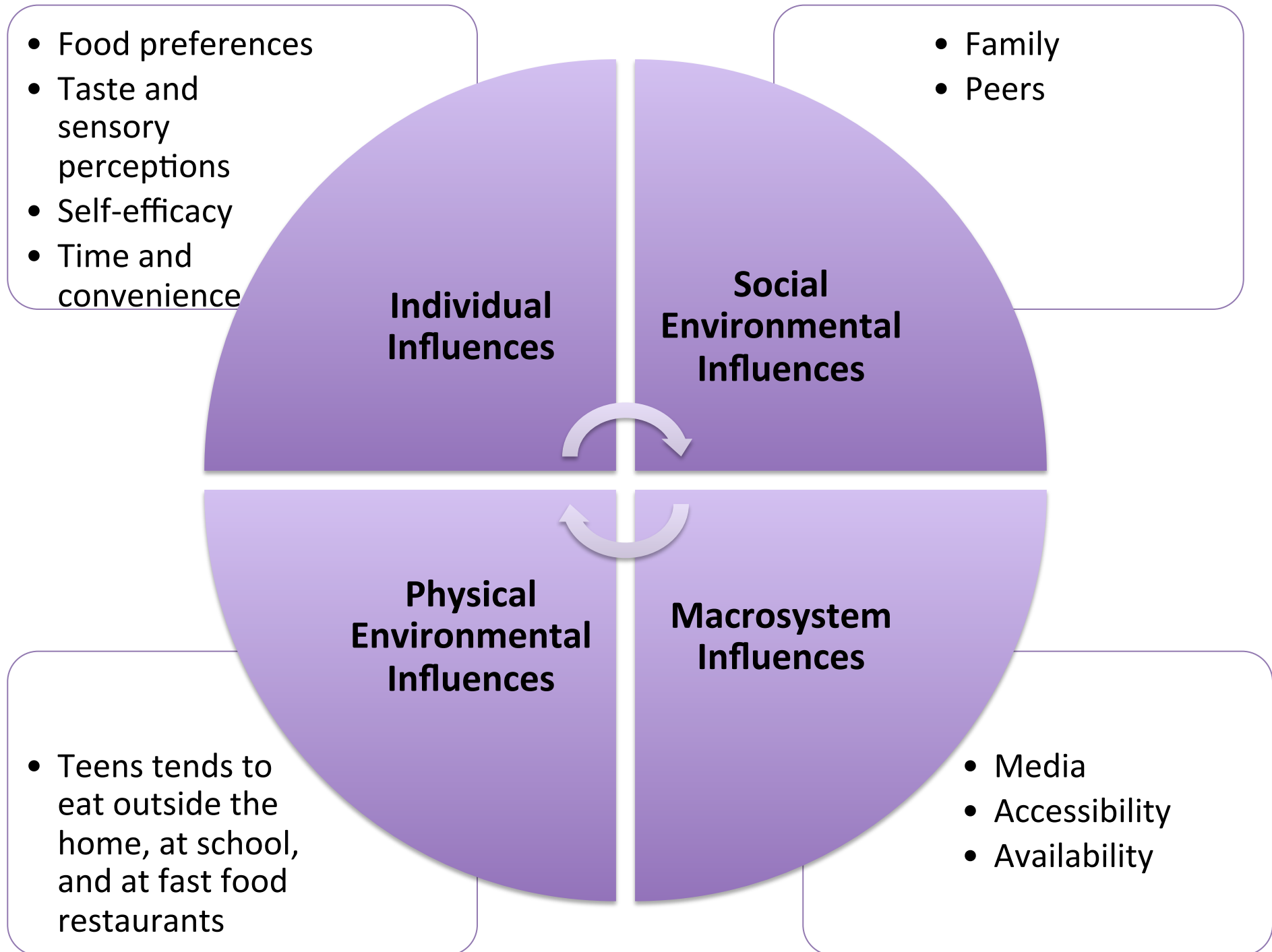
# Individual and environmental influences on adolescent eating behaviors

- **Purpose:** present a conceptual framework for understanding factors that influence adolescent eating behaviors and food choices
- **Four levels of influence**
  1. Individual influences
  2. Social environmental
  3. Physical environment
  4. Macrosystem/societal influences



# Individual and environmental influences on adolescent eating behaviors

- Social Cognitive Theory provides a framework to understand and describe multiple influences that have an impact on food behaviors
  - behavior is explained as an interaction between personal factors, environmental influences and behavior
  - Self-efficacy
  - Observational learning
  - Reciprocal determinism
  - Behavioral capability
  - Expectations
  - Functional meanings
  - Reinforcement

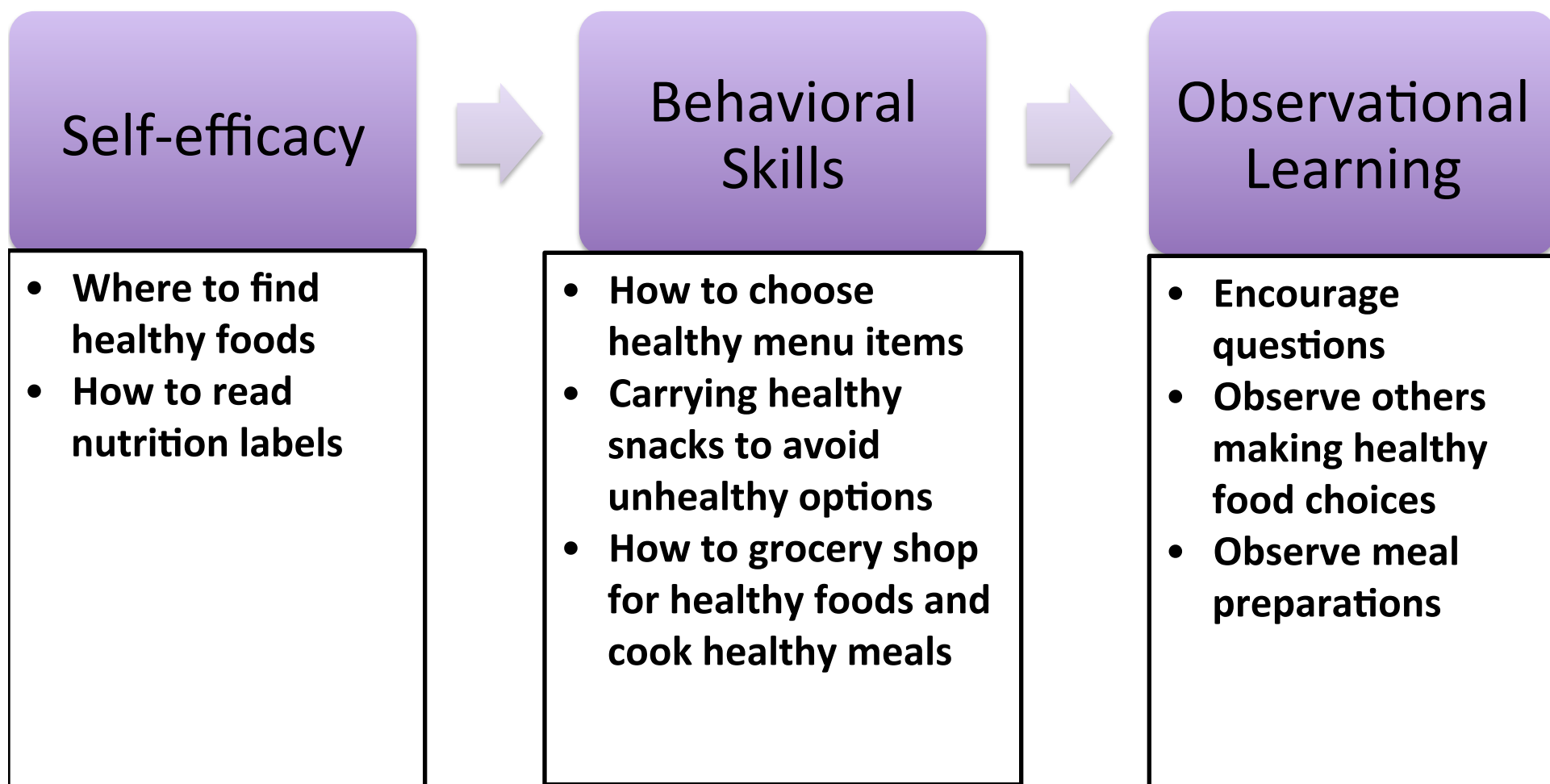


# Putting the Social Cognitive Theory Into Action!

- **Example:** Development of a nutrition education program for adolescents to help them with their eating habits and food choices
- **Educational & Learning Objectives:**
  1. Adolescents will increase their awareness of benefits of healthy eating
  2. Adolescents will come up with solutions to overcome barriers
  3. Adolescents will become aware of how their environment can negatively impact their eating habits (reciprocal determinism)
  4. Adolescents will be able to list four benefits of making healthy food choices
  5. Adolescents will be able to list strategies for changing their environment to facilitate healthy eating

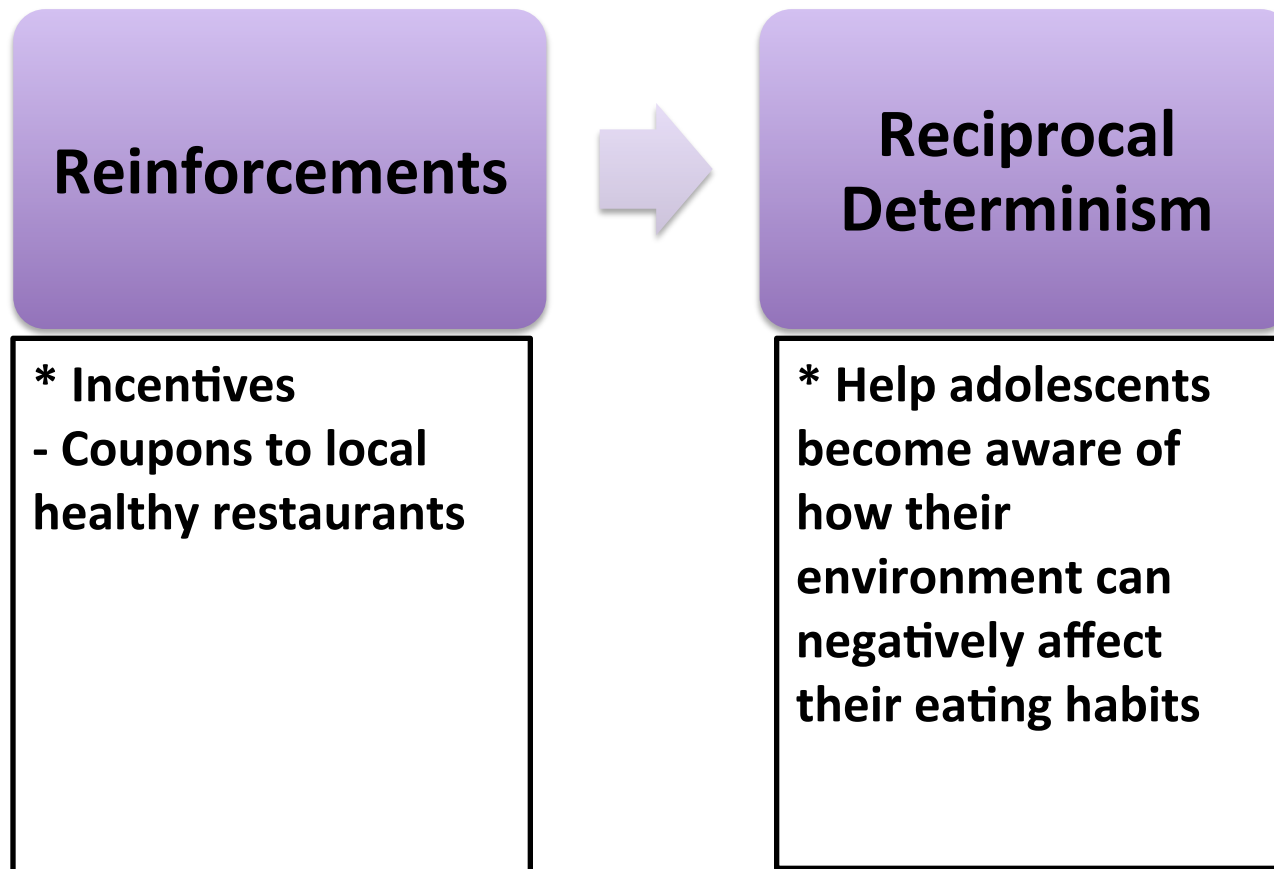
# The Social Cognitive Theory: Constructs

Nutrition education program to teach adolescents to make healthy food choices



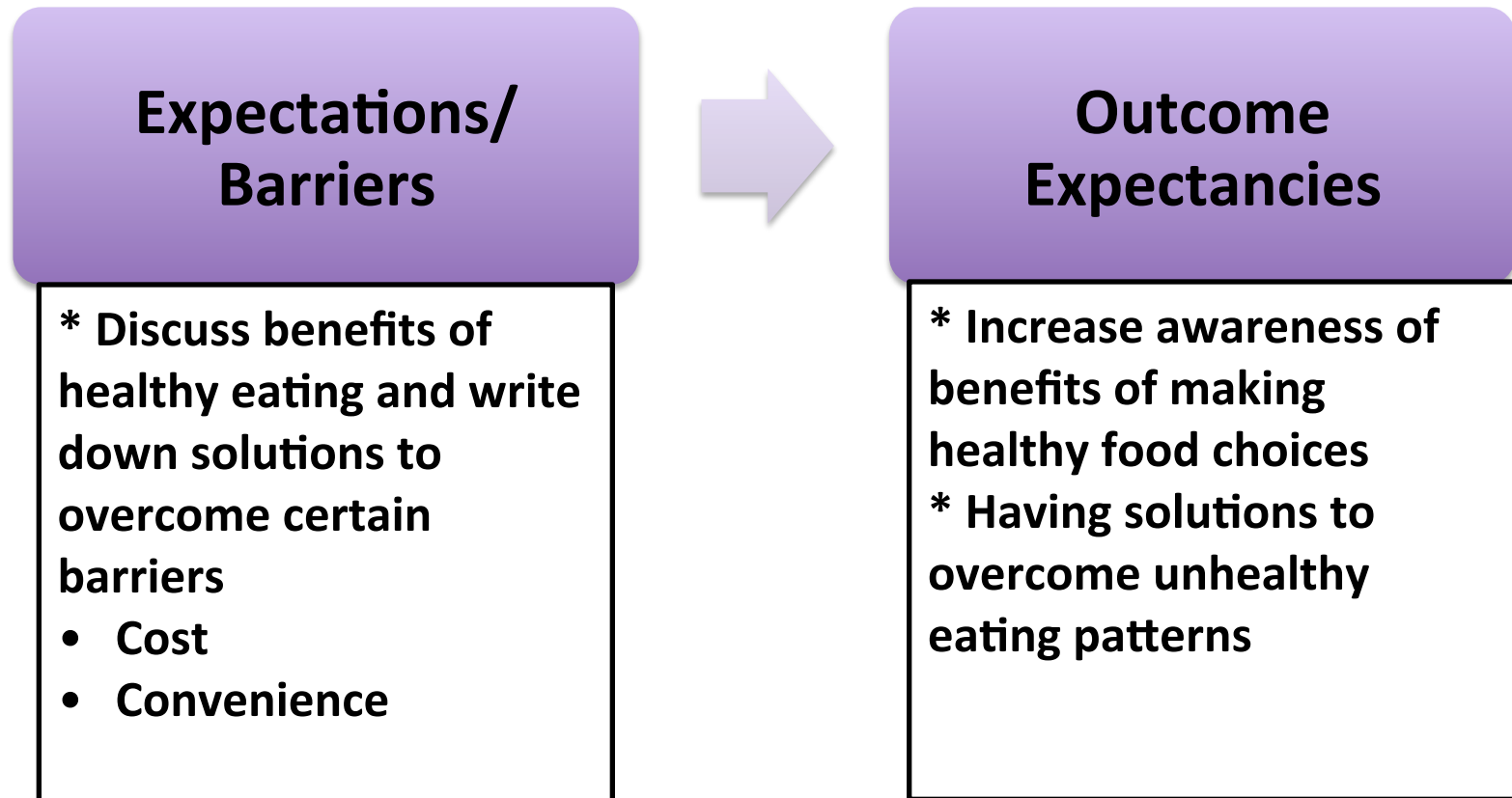
# The Social Cognitive Theory: Constructs

**Nutrition education program to teach adolescents to make healthy food choices**



# The Social Cognitive Theory Constructs:

**Nutrition education intervention to teach adolescents to make healthier food choices**





- *"Learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do. Fortunately, most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action."*

**-Albert Bandura, Social Learning Theory, 1977**