

be.hav'.ior

It seems that none of us want our behavior discussed, evaluated, or — heaven forbid — changed. The fact that we cling tenaciously to our habits contributes to the key role played in human health by patterns of behavior. The dictionary rather evenhandedly defines “behavior” as “the response of an individual or group to its environment,” but in our careless jargon the word takes on a distinctly negative aura, hinting of mental issues or substance abuse problems. In truth, the term covers a very wide and neutral territory of habits, interactions, and lifestyle, and to Donaghue, human behavior is very important because we repeatedly see its effect on health and well-being. “Behavior” is in the Donaghue Dictionary because voluntary individual or group habits “upstream” often produce health problems resulting in poor quality of life and avoidable costs “downstream” — and therefore warrant research effort. ▣

