

# Our roles in social change

Living a Science More Worthy of the Challenge of the Human Condition

*Priscilla Almada, Magnus Johansson, Anthony Biglan & Dennis Embry*



## The questions


- We will transparently discuss personal, cultural and institutional barriers and enablers experienced in working with dissemination and implementation.
- How do we create support structures to sustain ourselves over time?
  - How to support resilience when things are hard. How to “tap out” when you need to rest, so that someone else can take the baton for a while?
- Where would you start if you were beginning this kind of work now?
- Strategically outline where community efforts would be best invested over the course of the next 3-5 years for all ACBS members.

# An initiative


- Please join our network: [bit.ly/ACBSnurture](http://bit.ly/ACBSnurture)
- More interviews and resources to come

Journal of Contextual Behavioral Science 1 (2012) 1–16

Contents lists available at SciVerse ScienceDirect



**Journal of Contextual Behavioral Science**



journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/jcbs](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/jcbs)

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Review Article

## Contextual Behavioral Science: Creating a science more adequate to the challenge of the human condition

Steven C. Hayes<sup>a,\*</sup>, Dermot Barnes-Holmes<sup>b</sup>, Kelly G. Wilson<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Department of Psychology, University of Nevada, Reno, NV 89557-0062, USA  
<sup>b</sup> National University of Ireland, Maynooth, Ireland  
<sup>c</sup> University of Mississippi, USA

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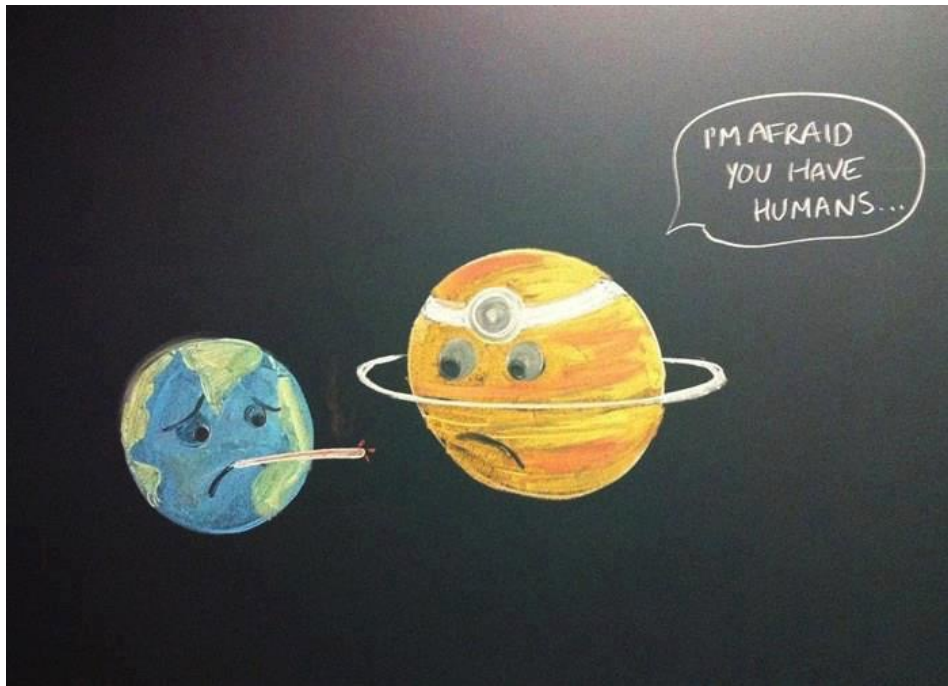
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**ABSTRACT**

The present article describes the nature, scope, and purpose of Contextual Behavioral Science (CBS). Emerging from behavioral psychology but expanding from those roots, CBS is based on contextual assumptions regarding the centrality of situated action, the nature of epistemology versus ontology, and a pragmatic truth criterion linked to the specific goal of predicting-and-influencing psychological events with precision, scope, and depth. These assumptions and goals explain the characteristic features of CBS including its environmentalism, focus on theory and principles, and its reticulated or networked program of theory development, research and practice. Domains of development include increased linkage to multi-dimensional and multi-level evolution science; development of principles that describe the interaction of behavior and symbolic events with genetic, epigenetic, and cultural dimensions; expansion of theoretical and model development to a broader range of areas of human complexity; advances in measurement theory and practice; the development of techniques and components linked to contextual processes and principles; broad testing of these methods; additional research on mediation and moderation; more concern for effectiveness and training; and enhancement of a diverse development community.

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“The methods of science have been enormously successful wherever they have been tried. Let us then apply them to human affairs” (Skinner, 1953, p.5)

“Our culture has produced the science and technology it needs to save itself” (Skinner, 1971, p.181)





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## Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/jebo](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/jebo)

### Evolution as a general theoretical framework for economics and public policy

David Sloan Wilson<sup>a,b,\*</sup>, John M. Gowdy<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Department of Biology, Binghamton University, Binghamton, New York 13902, United States

<sup>b</sup> Department of Anthropology, Binghamton University, Binghamton, New York 13902, United States

<sup>c</sup> Department of Economics, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, New York 12180, United States



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## Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/jebo](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/jebo)

### Integrating the human sciences to evolve effective policies

Anthony Biglan<sup>\*</sup>, Christine Cody

Oregon Research Institute, 1776 Millrace Drive, Eugene, OR 97403-2536, United States



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

## Journal of Contextual Behavioral Science

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/jcbs](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/jcbs)



Research – Basic Empirical Research

### A framework for intentional cultural change

Anthony Biglan<sup>a,\*</sup>, Dennis D. Embry<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Oregon Research Institute, 1776 Millrace Drive, Eugene, OR 97403-2536, USA

<sup>b</sup> PAXIS Institute, USA



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#### ABSTRACT

We present a framework for a pragmatic science of cultural evolution. It is now possible for behavioral science to systematically influence the further evolution of cultural practices. As this science develops, it may become possible to prevent many of the problems affecting human wellbeing. By *cultural practices*, we refer to everything that humans do, above and beyond instinctual or unconditioned behaviors: not only art and literature, but also agriculture, manufacturing, recreation, war making, childrearing, science—everything. We can analyze cultural practices usefully in terms of the incidence and prevalence of individual behavior and group and organization actions. An effective science of intentional cultural evolution must guide efforts to influence the incidence and prevalence of individuals' behaviors and the actions of groups and organizations. In this paper, we briefly sketch advances in scientific understanding of the influences on individual behavior. Then we describe principles that could guide efforts to influence groups and organizations. Finally, we discuss legitimate concerns about the use and misuse of a science for intentional cultural change.

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# Evolving the future: Toward a science of intentional change

**David Sloan Wilson**

*Departments of Biology and Anthropology, Binghamton University,  
Binghamton, NY 13903*

[dwilson@binghamton.edu](mailto:dwilson@binghamton.edu)

<http://evolution.binghamton.edu/dswilson/>

**Steven C. Hayes**

*Department of Psychology, University of Nevada, Reno, NV 89557-0062*

[stevenchayes@gmail.com](mailto:stevenchayes@gmail.com)

<http://stevenchayes.com/>

**Anthony Biglan**

*Oregon Research Institute, Eugene, OR 97403*

[tony@ori.org](mailto:tony@ori.org)

<http://promiseneighborhoods.org/about/people.html>

**Dennis D. Embry**

*PAXIS Institute, Tucson, AZ 85751*

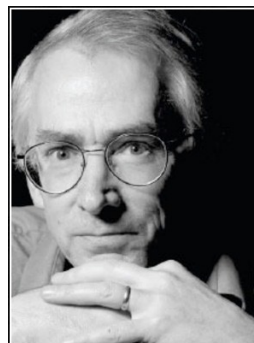
[dde@paxis.org](mailto:dde@paxis.org)

<http://www.paxis.org/content/DennisBio.aspx>



# PROSOCIAL

*the science of working better together*



Selfishness beats altruism within groups. Altruistic groups beat selfish groups. Everything else is commentary.

— David Sloan Wilson —

AZ QUOTES

## Acting in light of the future: How do future-oriented cultural practices evolve and how can we accelerate their evolution?

Anthony Biglan<sup>a,\*</sup>, Yvonne Barnes-Holmes<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Oregon Research Institute, 1776 Millrace Drive, Eugene, OR 97403 USA

<sup>b</sup> National University of Ireland, Maynooth, County Kildare, Ireland

## Psychological flexibility as a malleable public health target: Evidence from a representative sample

Andrew T. Gloster<sup>a,b,\*</sup>, Andrea H. Meyer<sup>a</sup>, Roselind Lieb<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> University of Basel, Department of Psychology, Division of Clinical Psychology and Epidemiology, Basel, Switzerland

<sup>b</sup> University of Basel, Department of Psychology, Division of Clinical Psychology and Intervention Science; Basel, Switzerland

*Behavior and Social Issues*, 20, 44-71 (2011). © William D. Newsome & Mark P. Alavosius. Readers of this article may copy it without the copyright owner's permission, if the author and publisher are acknowledged in the copy and the copy is used for educational, not-for-profit purposes. doi: 10.5210/bsi.v20i0.3234

### TOWARD THE PREDICTION AND INFLUENCE OF ENVIRONMENTALLY RELEVANT BEHAVIOR: SEEKING PRACTICAL UTILITY IN RESEARCH

William D. Newsome<sup>1</sup>  
Mark P. Alavosius  
*University of Nevada, Reno*

# TBM

## PRACTICE AND PUBLIC HEALTH POLICIES

### Contextual analysis and the success of translational research

Anthony Biglan, PhD,<sup>1</sup> Michael E. Levin, PhD<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Oregon Research Institute, 1776 Millrace Drive, Eugene, OR 97403, USA

<sup>2</sup>Utah State University, Logan, UT, USA

Correspondence to: A Biglan  
torry@ori.org

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#### Abstract

The success of translational research can ultimately be judged by the degree to which it reduces the incidence and prevalence of psychological, behavioral, and physical disorders and the major factors influencing them. In our view, we currently place insufficient emphasis on assessing our impact on the social determinants of disorders. As a result, we are failing to affect the incidence and prevalence of critical disorders. Moreover, translational research fails to take into account the full range of interventions that could significantly reduce the incidence and prevalence of our most pressing disorders. These include policy changes, media, and broad cultural change movements. In this paper, we discuss the momentous achievements the tobacco prevention movement made over the last half-century, describe how the lessons gleaned from this success can apply to other prevention efforts, and contrast this success with progress made in battling other major public health concerns. We call for an expansion of the translational research agenda to develop and evaluate broader and more comprehensive strategies to affect well-being in entire populations.

#### Implications

**Research:** Researchers will be able to expand their research agenda to develop and evaluate broader, more comprehensive strategies that can affect well-being in the entire populations they encounter.

**Practice:** Practitioners will begin to pay critical attention to assessing our impact on the social determinants of critical disorders, which will have positive effects on the incidence and prevalence of these disorders.

**Policy:** The momentous achievements the tobacco prevention movement made over the last half-century can apply to other prevention efforts, policies, and social movements

our impact on the incidence and prevalence of these targets in entire populations. To explicate this concern, we consider evidence of progress on some major

Research &  
Development



Large scale  
dissemination &  
implementation



**Cultural change**  
Public health  
Climate change  
Prejudice

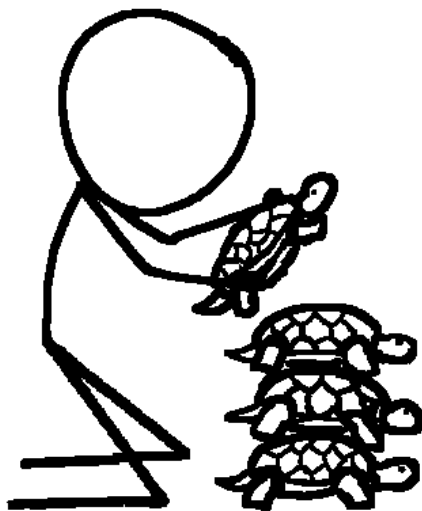
Research &  
Development



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**Cultural change**  
Public health  
Climate change  
Prejudice







## PeaceBuilders: A Theoretically Driven, School-based Model for Early Violence Prevention

Dennis D. Embry, PhD  
Daniel J. Flannery, PhD  
Alexander T. Vazsonyi, PhD

Kenneth E. Powell, MD  
Henry Atha, MPA

*Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review, Vol. 5, No. 4, December 2002*

## The Good Behavior Game: A Best Practice Candidate as a Universal Behavioral Vaccine

Dennis D. Embry<sup>1</sup>

A "behavioral vaccine" provides an inoculation against morbidity or mortality, impacting physical, mental, or behavior disorders. An historical example of a behavioral vaccine is antiseptic hand washing to reduce childbed fever. In current society, issues with high levels of morbidity, such as substance abuse, delinquency, youth violence, and other behavioral disorders (multi-problems), cry out for a low-cost, widespread strategy as simple as antiseptic hand washing. Congruent research findings from longitudinal studies, twin studies, and other investigations suggest that a possibility might exist for a behavioral vaccine for multiproblem behavior. A simple behavioral strategy called the Good Behavior Game (GBG), which reinforces inhibition in a group context of elementary school, has substantial previous research to consider its use as a behavioral vaccine. The GBG is not a curriculum but rather a simple behavioral procedure from applied behavior analysis. Approximately 20 independent replications of the

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MAY 24 International research has shown the Good Behavior Game to be an efficient method for reducing off-task behaviors in the classroom, as well as increasing prosocial skills, while

## COMMUNITY-BASED PREVENTION USING SIMPLE, LOW-COST, EVIDENCE-BASED KERNELS AND BEHAVIOR VACCINES

Dennis D. Embry  
*PAXIS Institute*

Clin Child Fam Psychol Rev (2008) 11:75–113  
DOI 10.1007/s10567-008-0036-x

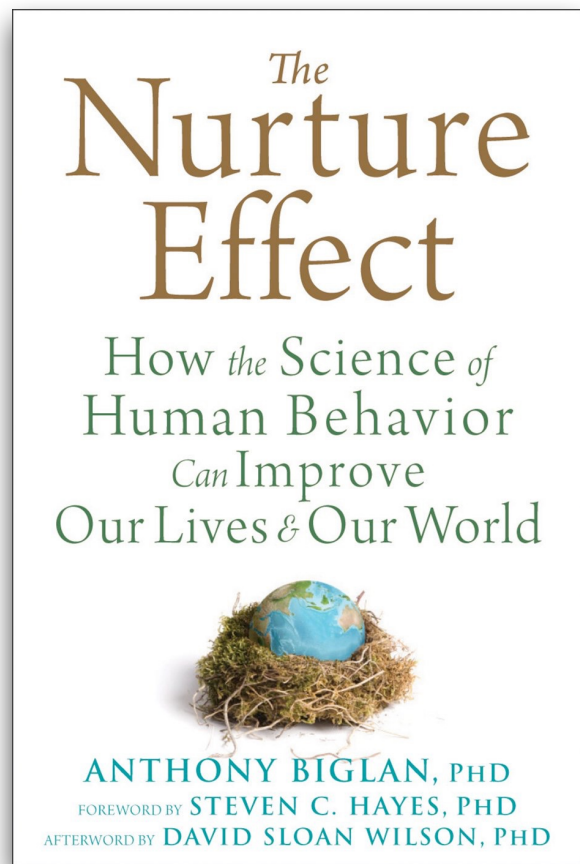
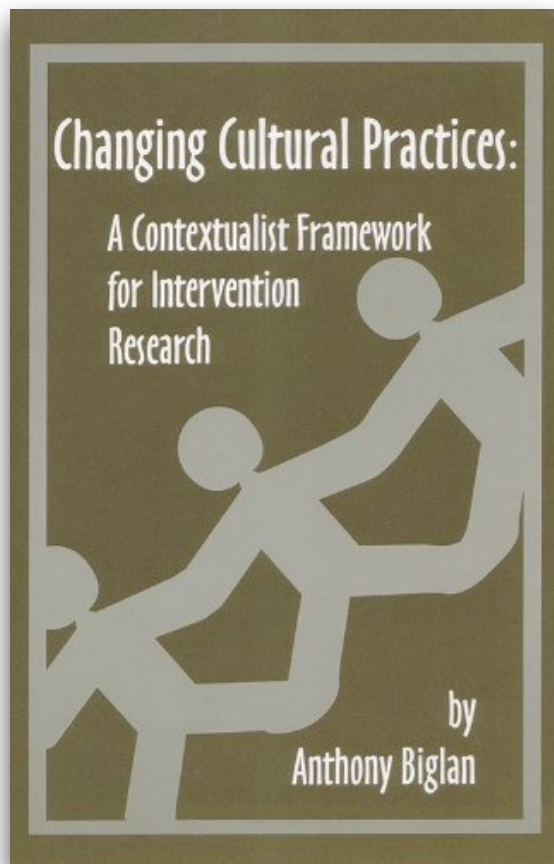
### Evidence-based Kernels: Fundamental Units of Behavioral Influence

Dennis D. Embry · Anthony Biglan

1.003.

**Behavioral Vaccines and Evidence Based Kernels: Non-Pharmaceutical Approaches for the Prevention of Mental, Emotional and Behavioral Disorders <sup>1</sup>**

Dennis D. Embry, Ph.D.<sup>2</sup> For the Psychiatric Clinics of North America  
PAXIS Institute



# OUR FUTURES

Our Roles in Social Change:  
Witnessing my journey to help create a science  
worthy of a better future for our children



Dennis D. Embry, Ph.D.  
President, PAXIS Institute  
Tucson, Arizona

ACBS Annual World  
CONFERENCE 15  
20-25 June, 2017

# People Give Peace a Chance

teachers

Psychologist Dennis Embry helps to transform schoolyard bullies into angels



His program "doesn't just teach" troublemakers good behavior, says Embry (outside a Salinas, Calif., school), "it makes it happen."

The onetime terror of the Henry Kammann Elementary School in Salinas, Calif., smiles angelically as he recounts his formerly wicked ways. "I used to call people stupid," says Chris, a burly fourth grader. "I used to get into fights. I didn't like coming to school because I didn't have any friends and I didn't like going to the principal's office." The 10-year-old eyes the '60s-style peace symbols that festoon his classroom. "Now, I have friends and I walk away from fights," Chris declares. Teacher Cheryl Mattison agrees: "It's amazing—kids actually like to play with him now."

Credit: Peace Builders, a program

created seven years ago by Tucson child psychologist Dennis Embry that is helping to transform bullies—those terrible hood who-olent acts classroom-ing kids at tary school deal with tively pra their trou One key ensuring n-warded. K to commet as simple- notebook.

Embry, adult "peace coaches give out citations for cooperative behavior." Says teacher Mattison: "Point-



EXHIBITING some of his works of art at a recent student recital is Dennis Embry, son of Mr. and Mrs. Herb Embry, Great Bend, and a student of James Flury at Roosevelt Junior High School.

## Reflections

REFLECTIOUS

Personal

PERSONAL

Institutional

INSTITUTIONAL

Cultural

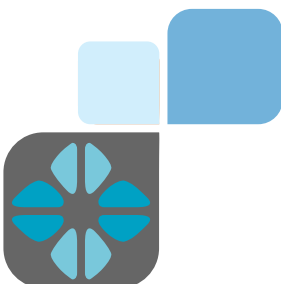
CULTURAL

In 7th grade, I told my mentor, "I want to be a scientist, an artist, and a political leader." I am.



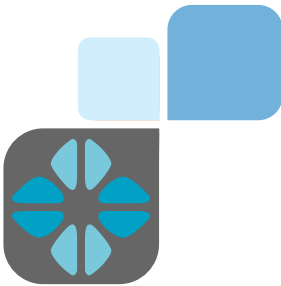
## My journey for big change

- An unconventional undergrad honors paper (*bridging two completely different academic fields*).
- A dry hole as master thesis (that opened a a new opportunity and left me an unusual skill all ACBS folks can develop for leveraging big change).
- A skill that developed that changed my life (and can change yours...that causes people to envy my Endnote Files). You can and ought to learn the same skill for the purpose of worthy science.
- Learning not to let the lack of money stop me.
- Learning to think about the problem at four levels.
- Announce what you want to do, have an elevator speech; be careful for what you pray for.



# Secret Steps for Success

- Solve the basic change problem in single-subject designs with the least complex solution.
- Always embed **early wins** for each level of the change agents.
- Never do RCT's without a robust history of single-subject studies.
- Build in design redundancies at multiple levels (think as if you are building an airplane).
- Do not ignore other scientific fields that solutions that work different than yours.
- Figure out how to scratch everybody's back at ever level of the problem, and remember your solution will likely take bread out of somebody else's mouth.
- Map the ecology of antecedents, relational frames, behaviors, and consequences at multiple levels.
- Develop a business model of buyers and payers.

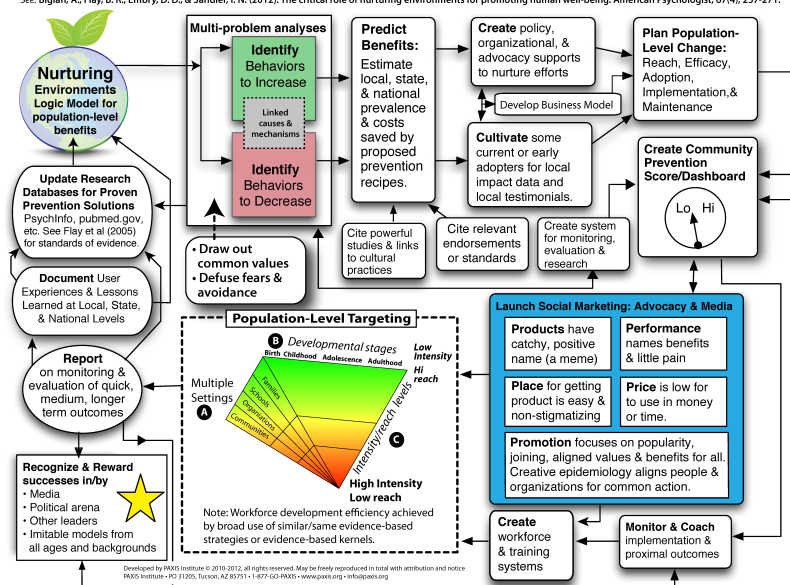
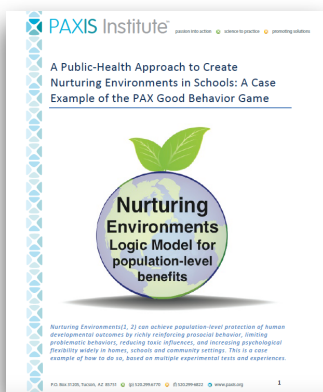


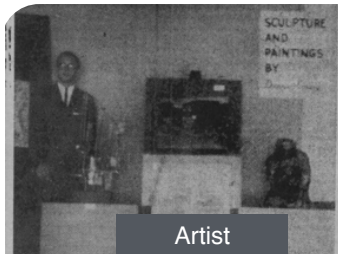
For more info: <http://bit.ly/ACBS-Kernels-For-Prosocial>



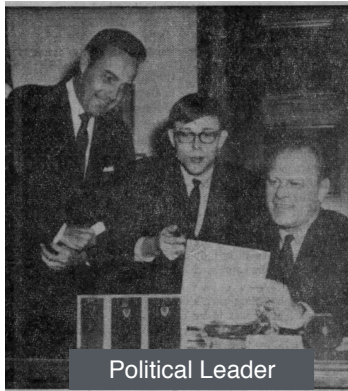
**PAX Good Behavior Game, a CBS/Evolution-based prevention science strategy, is happening at “population level” across multiple countries, states, and provinces with replicated results across cultures. It’s success opens people’s minds to other possibilities.**

See: Biglan, A., Flay, B. R., Embry, D. D., & Sandler, I. N. (2012). The critical role of nurturing environments for promoting human well-being. *American Psychologist*, 67(4), 257-271.





Artist



Political Leader

**STUDYING HIGHLIGHTS** — Dennis Embry is shown above with Congressman Bob Dole, left, and the Republican leader of the House, Gerry Ford, right, going over highlights of the House of Representative schedule. The picture was taken Jan. 10, the first day of the Second Session of the 89th Congress, just a few hours after Embry commenced his duties as page. He is the son of Mrs. H. C. Embry, 2544 Fores



Prevention Science Leader

## My journey is one repeated by many...

“I learned this, at least, by my experiment: that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours.”

– Henry David Thoreau



- Mentoring - introductions
- Networking
  - Knowing your stuff fairly well (or faking it well)
- Knowledge about infrastructures and possible stakeholders
- Understanding the perspective of stakeholders
- Jump