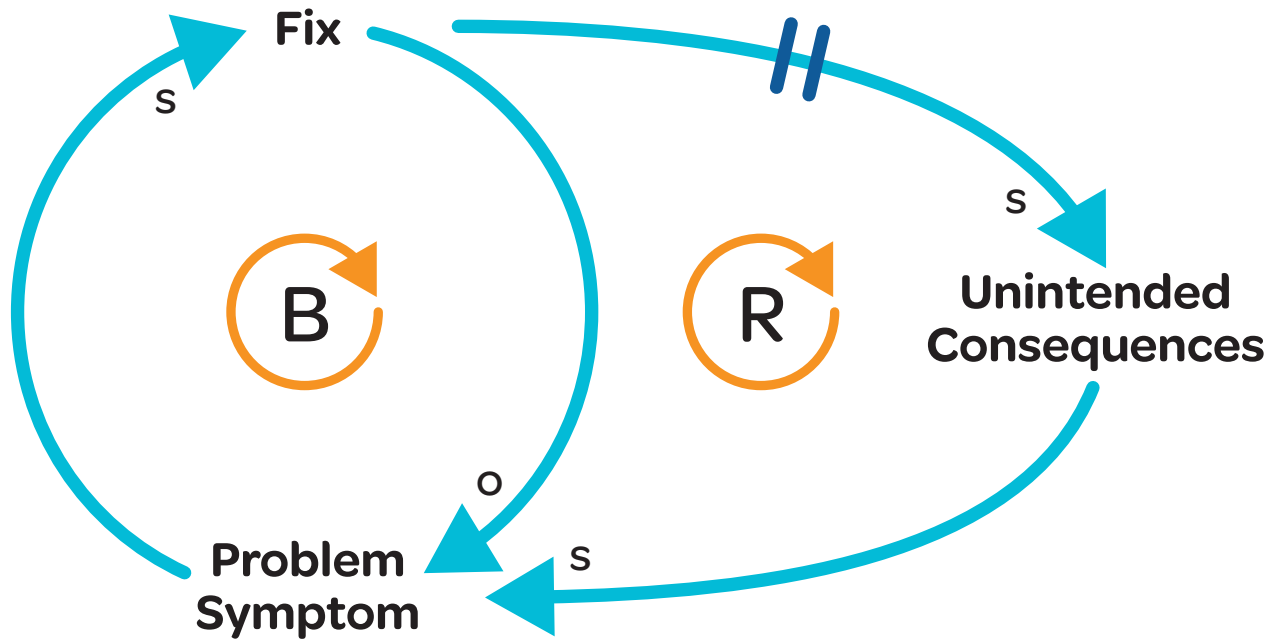


Fixes that Backfire

When you think you've solved a problem in the short run, yet the solution actually makes the problem worse in the long run



Description

In a fixes that backfire scenario, a problem symptom requires a fix, oftentimes generating a “quick fix.” The fix then alleviates the problem, resulting in a balancing dynamic that addresses the problem in the short-term. However, unintended consequences emerge as a result of the fix that come back and actually cause the original problem symptom to reoccur and become worse.

Examples

- Licking as a solution for chapped lips
- Procrastination as a solution to low performance

Ways out

Breaking this cycle usually requires an acknowledgment that the fix was shortsighted. Efforts to generate a solution that minimizes the effects of the unintended consequences are needed.

As a tool for prevention

The fixes that backfire archetype is a valuable tool to use before a fix is implemented. Ask people to consider the possible unintended consequences of a proposed fix. Both short-and long-term consequences and unintended consequences should figure into the discussion. An informed decision that considers all of the trade-offs of applying a fix will minimize the potential for backfire.

Questions to ask

- Has the need to respond quickly to a problem been greater than the importance of investigating potential unintended consequences?
- Did the response help to reduce the problem in the beginning, but over time, did consequences actually contribute to the original problem?

