



A look at
FACTS
versus
Feelings

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Dealing with facts is often easier than dealing with emotions, especially when it comes to making decisions. Facts are simple, straightforward and uncomplicated. We can show on graphs how increasing exercise can decrease blood pressure, or that 98 percent of doctors recommend drinking low-fat milk. And yet, when making day-to-day decisions, people often rely on emotions. For example, we might be tempted by the smell of fresh-baked cookies or the need for something convenient and quick to reduce stress.

Client-centered nutrition education aims to take clients beyond the facts to address some of the emotions that guide the choices they make. This approach is especially appropriate in breastfeeding classes. Breastfeeding moms can benefit from the social support and the chance to explore the emotions associated with breastfeeding. Emotion-based nutrition education is a technique that can be used to support and promote breastfeeding among WIC clients.

Using Emotion Based Messages to Create Lessons

Developing an emotion-based message can be a great starting point or inspiration for creating a new lesson. If you are interested in creating an emotion-based discussion lesson, it may be useful to visit www.touchingheartstouchingminds.com for more ideas. At this website, Pam McCarthy & Associates share a four-step process to help instructors initiate and guide discussions that are emotion-based. The four steps consist of: open, dig, connect and act. Below is an explanation of those steps and a few examples of open-ended questions about breastfeeding that follow this format.

Open – In this step participants should start to feel comfortable about sharing their emotions and feelings and talking with each other.

Examples:

- ▶ *Most people think of breastfeeding as a personal decision, one the mother makes with her family. How have others reacted to your decision to breastfeed your baby?*
- ▶ *What have you heard from other mothers, especially about breastfeeding for a full year?*

Dig – Uses a set of questions to gain more insight into the participants' true feelings around a certain issue. The goal here is to help them arrive at the real problem and help them solve it, and not just transfer knowledge.

Examples:

- ▶ *What will you consider as you decide how long to breastfeed your baby?*
- ▶ *What kind of support—or lack of support—have you received from others?*
- ▶ *What are the challenges you face in breastfeeding your baby?*
- ▶ *What do you like about it?*

Connect – Uses another set of questions to help participants connect with the group-identified health-related behaviors. The group, through conversation with people who share similar successes, challenges and experiences, provides improvements and solutions to the identified issues.

Examples:

- ▶ *How will breastfeeding impact your baby's future?*
- ▶ *Breastfeeding mothers are sometimes surprised that they receive physical and emotional benefits, along with their babies. What emotion-based benefits do breastfeeding mothers receive?*
- ▶ *What physical benefits do breastfeeding mothers receive?*

Act – Thoughts and desires are brought into action. Participants should be allowed to identify specific action steps they can take to help achieve their healthy behavior goals. Participants should try to provide answers to questions like, “What can be done today to make children healthier?”

Examples:

- ▶ *Does anyone want to share their breastfeeding hopes and plans with the group?*
- ▶ *What can you do to make sure your breastfeeding plans and hopes happen as expected?*

If you haven't already checked out www.touchingheartstouchingminds.com it's worth a look. More general information on developing client-centered lessons can also be found in the Client-Centered Nutrition Education Toolkit, which was provided to local agency staff at the April 2010 Nutrition and Breastfeeding Conference.

Overall, when designing client-centered nutrition, it's important to go beyond the facts and remember to address emotions too. Doing so can help WIC staff be more effective in motivating and supporting breastfeeding moms.

Reference:

Pam McCarthy and Associates, Inc.
<http://www.touchingheartstouchingminds.com/index.php>. (Accessed 5/18/2010.)

