

Newsletter #6



This is the final newsletter in our series. In the previous issues we covered many of the videoconference topics, expanding on the information presented. In this issue, we will **connect** the pieces so that you can **connect** with your WIC clients to enhance your impact on their nutrition behaviors.

Putting the Pieces Together

Each conference presenter provided us with many wonderful ideas to reach WIC clients as we traveled on the *Road to Excellence in Nutrition Education*.

- 🌸 Buddy Lyle spoke about methods to reach adult listeners. He pinpointed the adult need to be actively involved in the education experience. He challenged educators to find new ways to engage their WIC clients in making positive changes to their nutrition behavior.
- 🌸 Deanne Torres and her group described a specific way to increase client involvement – facilitated discussion. Their presentation gave us a snapshot of how this method creates an environment for the adult learner to become active in their own education.
- 🌸 Rayanne AbuSabbah stressed helping clients build their self-esteem – an important component when WIC clients are planning to change behaviors.
- 🌸 Pam McCarthy suggested using emotional messages to impact behaviors. Rather than keeping message simple, emotional messaging are "simple" statements reaching the depths of the human experience. Touching clients' basic wants, needs and values inspires them to consider making changes and motivates them to reach personal goals.
- 🌸 Tim Gard helped us see the value of humor in our daily tasks. Underlying his presentation was the need to create an environment for staff and clients that allows for the warmth and **connection** of human beings. Humor engages our

souls, hearts and minds in ways "standard education" techniques avoid.

- 🌸 Robin Atwood explored how evaluation can increase success in nutrition education encounters. Whereas emotional messages resonate to motivate clients, evaluation serves to motivate staff to reach their personal goals of successfully impacting client behavior changes.
- 🌸 Madeleine Sigman-Grant presented a global view of what impact clients' readiness and ability to change. Integrating individual and environmental factors, this global picture exposes the complexity of our lives. Understanding this complexity allows us to recognize what clients can actually achieve and how staff can assist them. It helps us re-evaluate what we can realistically expect WIC clients to accomplish, and even what WIC as an organization and staff as educators can achieve.

Connecting With Your WIC Clients

The messages within *each* presentation focused on a component necessary for WIC education. Weaving the pieces together is the thread of "**connection**." Traditional education methods distance us from our students – the WIC clients.

Compare these "simple" statements. As you read them, be alert to your emotional reaction.

- ◆ Explain the benefits. **Dare to connect.**
- ◆ Teach the basics. **Reach for the heart.**
- ◆ Educate the mind. **Touch their souls.**

What did you feel? Was your initial response rejection or acceptance?

Connection can be threatening – if we **connect**, we risk involvement.

Distancing protects us from the realities and difficulties of life. It might take too much time to touch the heart – threatening clinic routine. It might make clients feel uncomfortable if we try to touch their souls – compromising the transfer of information. And finally, by **connecting** we might create

dependency – exposing ourselves to uncomfortable relationships.

But, distancing can prevent us from self-fulfillment. Without **connecting** with those we wish to "teach", we rarely can "reach" true success as educators. To teach is to touch a life forever.