



# Illustrate your points to help people learn.

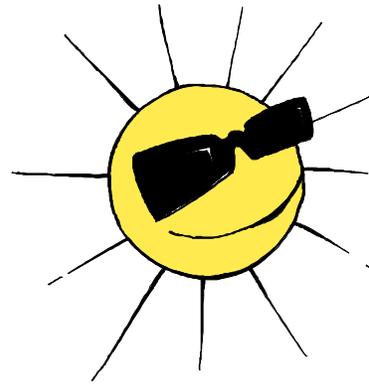
**M**ost participants can hear and it's hard to imagine nutrition education if they didn't! But do you mostly rely on the fact that people can hear you? Or do you try to involve the other senses, too?

**We learn better if more than one sense is involved.**

Hearing and seeing together is a great combination-- and how can you work in smelling, touching, and tasting? It almost takes a food demonstration. Since we need to limit our scope in this module, we will concentrate here on the visual.

**Think about the importance of "seeing" in your own life, as you learn new things.**

- Your friend gives you directions on how to get to her house and you realize how you need to "see" in your mind just where to make each turn. ("Is that by that gas station?")
- You read a new recipe and as you read along you "see" yourself doing the various steps.
- You try to set up your new electronic gizmo and you find that reading the directions is not enough; you actually have to see the plugs and connectors in real life.




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*Concrete information is coded differently in our brains than verbal information. Helping people SEE things is important.*

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Your participants have to "see" things, too, and the concepts you're so used to (like iron-deficiency anemia) may be as foreign to them as that new electronic gizmo was to you!

We code information in our brains at least two ways: as **verbal codes** and as **images**. Concrete information, which is information that can be visualized, is coded in images. Information that can be described but not pictured is called abstract and is coded verbally.

Think about trying to remember somebody's name: you can see their face in an instant (because it's coded as an image) but their name is . . . on the tip of your tongue. The name is stored in verbal code and it takes a little longer to find in that big filing cabinet in your brain.

Surely this is why "a picture is worth a thousand words!" It's all in the encoding.

**Concrete information is easier to recall than abstract information, but information that is stored both ways is recalled even better!**

**And if a person is able to hear something, see it, and**

**DO it--like if you were able to put your electronic gizmo together while you listened to and watched the video instructions--learning is even more enhanced.**

This information about how our brains work is something we can really use to be more effective as we work with adult learners. We have already talked about how people really have to "process" new information or ways of doing things in order to make changes. They have to relate a new concept to other things they know and see if it makes sense based on their past experience. They have to figure out if a change is really possible for them and weigh the benefits against the costs.

At the same time, they are judging whether you know what you're talking about, whether you seem sensitive to their culture and to their situation, as well as noticing how much respect you seem to have for them. Lots is going on in our participants' brains as they sit there with us! Using this knowledge that **visual illustrations help people learn** can help you increase how much **visual** input you give and thus increase your effectiveness.

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A picture is worth a  
thousand words.

Seeing is believing.

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**Maybe you are thinking, "Yes, visual aids, bulletin boards, posters . . . They all help people learn."**

And you're right. They do and you probably could use a lot more good ones to illustrate the points you make the most.

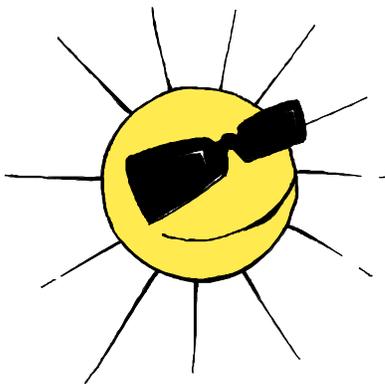
Small things on your desk that you can reach for to illustrate a point are great, like a little baby food jar that contains the 9 teaspoons of sugar that are in a can of cola. Or a little chart you've made that compares the major nutrients in a glass of fruit juice to those in fruit punch. Or a picture of a child whose front teeth are all messed up because he was on the bottle too long.

In the waiting room in the Lewisburg, West Virginia, WIC site, there's a wonderful bulletin board of Polaroid pictures of all their beautiful breastfed babies. Every time a breastfed baby comes in for the first time, their picture is taken. Besides making the mothers of the babies very proud, these pictures illustrate the possibility of successful breastfeeding better than any video or counseling could! We respond very well, we humans, to visual evidence and visual information. "Seeing is believing." Little visual ways to illustrate

your point make it interesting for the participant . . . **and also for you.** As you find new things to keep on your desk to show people just what you mean, you'll also find new ways to keep *your-self* interested in your topics.

Here are other ways you can help people "see," relate to, and process what you are discussing.

- **Use interesting, action words, active verbs, and colorful, descriptive language!**
- **Illustrate things with your hands!** This is especially good if you are working with someone from a culture in which people normally do the same thing. (You'll also use up more calories in a day's time if you do this!) If, however, you're working with someone from a culture in which people are customarily quite reserved, this is not especially a good idea; large, expansive gestures could be perceived as threatening.
- **Illustrate with stories about real people and how they solved their problems.** What happened with somebody else's attempts to do what this participant is



considering doing? What happened when you tried to do the same thing with your child? We humans have a long tradition, in all cultures, of learning from stories. We like stories. We like real-life stuff. We also like to know what **works**, so we don't waste our time doing things that don't work. Take advantage of that!

"I was just talking the other day with a mom who had come up with a great solution to that: she washes the high chair tray and then just uses that as her child's plate. She's so happy that she's not cleaning her floor after every meal!"

Doesn't that sound so much more interesting than, "Well, you don't really need to use a bowl for him. You could just wash the high chair tray and let him eat right off of that."

- **Strive to make your demonstrations visually interesting.**

Do you shy away from doing group demonstrations? If you're one of those people who hates getting up in front of a group, try to get over it by having some good experiences doing it. Develop your own style and have some fun with it. Do try not to give a lecture! Look excited about

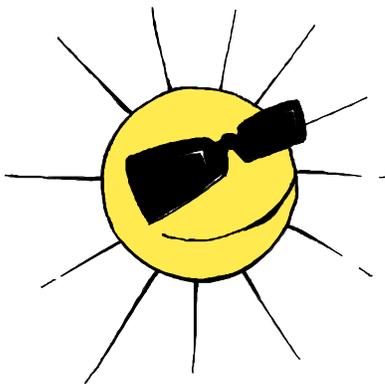
what you're doing, too. Enthusiasm is very attractive. Tailor lesson plans to fit your own style and come up with one great joke to start each session!

- **Encourage people to visualize actually DOING the things they say they'll do.** Help them imagine being at home or at the grocery store and help them visualize just what they are going to do.

- "Where do you usually shop? . . . Okay, there you are at Stop and Shop, in the fruits and vegetables section; look around. Of all those different vegetables we talked about, which ones can you see yourself buying this week?"

- "Okay, now that you've figured out these snacks are making you gain so fast, and now that we've talked about some healthy ones, tell me what you're going to do: It's 3 o'clock and you're *starving* to death and you're going to your kitchen for a snack . . . What are you going to reach for?"

**Look for other ways you can make nutrition education something people can "see."** You'll be more effective if you do.



# Activities to do before Discussion

## Illustrate your points to help people learn.

The focus of these activities is to help you develop more ways to illustrate your points using visual materials.

1. *On a scale of one to ten, how interesting is it for people to meet with you for nutrition education?* Be honest with yourself. Just how interesting do you make nutrition?

Here's how I rate myself:    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

If you score under 7, you can have a lot more feelings of satisfaction at the end of the day if you can do some things to make your subjects more interesting. Good visuals can really help.

2. *Think about the visuals you use in clinic regularly.* Are there any things you use that others you work with might not have or know about?
3. *What new thing can you think of that you could use to illustrate some point you often make in your work?* Think about it hard and then **DO IT!** And bring it to share with the WIC staff. If everybody does this, you'll have some great ideas that you can duplicate. Be creative and come up with some great, easy way to illustrate one of the things you say all the time. **This is a mandatory assignment for this unit! If you don't do it, you'll have to facilitate all the other sessions in this series! Plus clean the coffee room for a month!**
4. *Do you tell participants what has worked for other moms?* Write three "stories" that you use to illustrate your points on the Activity Worksheet.

Thinking about and doing these Activities will prepare you for the discussion. Get ready for Show and Tell! It's not excuse that you have no time. Just watch yourself in clinic and think "Hmm . . . what could I just have shown her to illustrate that point?" Jot ideas down as they come to you. Then pick the best one and do it!

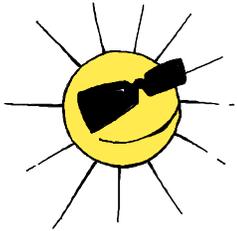
Complete the Activity Worksheet as you practice these activities.



**Activity Worksheet**  
**Bright Ideas - Unit 6**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



**Illustrate Your Points To Help People Learn**

List three ideas of ways you can use visuals to illustrate points you often discuss with WIC clients. Be creative and come up with some great, easy ways to illustrate things you say all the time.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Write three "stories" that you use or want to use to illustrate nutrition issues when working with WIC clients. (Examples: wt. gain during pregnancy, weaning, starting table foods, nausea during pregnancy, breastfeeding, etc.)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

On a scale of one to ten, how interesting is it for people to meet with me for nutrition education since I have completed this unit and tried using stories and illustrations?

Here's how I rate myself:    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

**Congratulations for trying to make WIC nutrition education  
more interesting!!**

Discuss these ideas with your supervisor or in a staff discussion group. These activity pages and a discussion are to be done for completion of the module.