



# Find out the participant's solution.

Your solution may be great. But Mom may not think she can do it or she doesn't think her child will go for it.

However, she probably doesn't think it's worth the hassle she might get if she were to tell you that, so she acts compliant, but she's not. The session may **look** like it went well, but underneath it may have been basically ineffective.

But we **can** be effective if we help the participant figure out her own

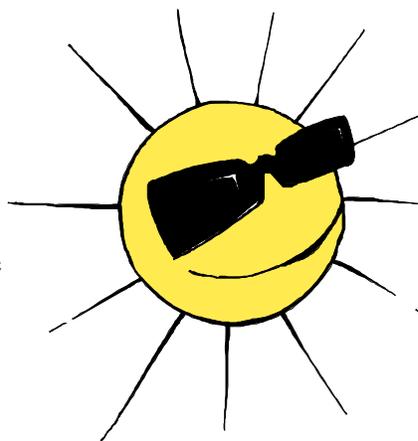
solution! Our role can be that of a guide.

Being a guide calls for skills like being able to put people at ease and getting them to tell you what they really do and what their worries are. Brainstorming a situation to come up with a lot of

different possible solutions is helpful.

Being a guide also requires a tolerance for making one or two small but meaningful

steps instead of big strides over a lot of territory.



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*Try brainstorming.  
Encourage the participant  
to brainstorm with you.*

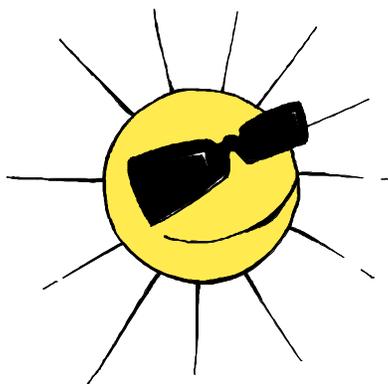
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**Can you accept that the best solution in your mind may not be the best solution in the participant's mind?** If the participant finds your solution too difficult or time-consuming, or unacceptable for some other reason, then she's not going to do it. She might not tell you that. In fact, she almost certainly will not tell you that! But she won't do it. You've wasted your effort.

However, if she decides to do something you consider a half-way step, **embrace it!** Half-way is so much better than "No way!" and at the next opportunity she may be open to going a little farther.

For example, let's consider a pregnant teen who doesn't like milk. She's tried different flavorings. She hates milk. Are you going to waste any time talking about milk? Don't bother! **Accept it.** She'll **notice** this. It says you hear her. So move on, telling her how she can get the same nutrients from other foods.

Then let **her** tell **you** how she can get all the servings she needs. Encourage her to think and figure it out. Prompt her but make it clear it's her own solution. Then praise her for coming up with a good one. This empowers her to make other good decisions down the line.



*Try saying:* "OK, now tell me which of those choices you think might work out best for you."

We always hear the education mantra, "Build on what the person already knows." That's great, you think, but how do I do that in these few minutes I have with each person? One answer might be to **find out what the participant thinks is the thing to do.** Here is another example:

You're talking with a pregnant woman who has gained weight excessively in the first few months of pregnancy. If you ask her what she thinks caused such a rapid weight gain, she will probably try to tell you. She is aware of her eating habits changing. If you then ask her what she thinks she should do to slow down the weight gain, she can probably tell you that, too.

If her answers sound good, you can reinforce them. If it sounds like she's missing some important factor, you can ask her if she's thought about that.

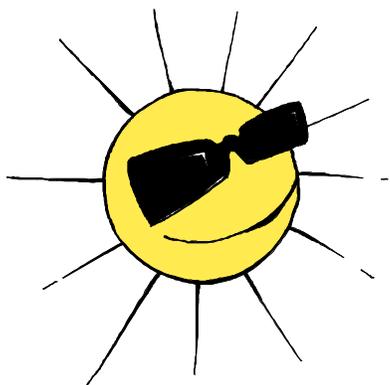
When you ask questions that don't have obvious answers, like "What do you think caused this?" you will need to develop ways to deal with "I don't know." With the right atmosphere and the right

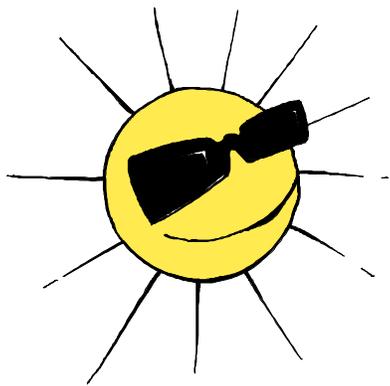
prompting (like "Could it be a new habit you started since you were pregnant?"), your participants may really start communicating with you.

Other open-ended questions are these: "What have you tried already?" "What are some things that might help?" "Are there any other things you haven't thought of yet?" Allowing some time for people to think is important, too.

In conclusion, finding out the participant's solution to a problem or a situation tells you a lot about them. It tells you what they know, what their biggest concerns are, what their barrier might be, how they think and how much effort they've already put into solving a problem.

The benefit for you is that you may not have to guess so much at what the person already knows.





Also, by sharing in the brainstorming, you have interaction which is much less draining than hearing yourself talk all day! And the feedback that you get will probably be positive, because you've helped people buy into their own solutions and helped them figure out how to make them work. It's a win-win situation!

"Keep in mind that it is much easier for most people to add a new habit than to eliminate a bad habit."

WIC Aide Training Program

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**Y**our thoughts about how quickly a participant should make a decision may be different (even culturally) from the way the participant operates. Avoid making participants feel rushed. If people don't respond right away or make decisions, don't immediately assume they are rejecting your help. It takes time for people to "process" information and ideas and decide what will work and what won't.

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# ACTIVITIES to do before Discussion

## Find out the participant's solution

The focus of these activities is to help you become aware of how much you currently tap into the participant's solutions and ideas. Can you take more advantage of her knowledge of what she can do to solve the problem or change a situation? Can you help her verbalize things she already knows and help her put those things together into an action plan?

1. **Reward yourself in some little, immediate way each time you help a person discover that she may have a workable solution!** Do you keep track of what participants you see? Do you keep some kind of list? If not, make yourself a list and, for one week, put a check by the names of the participants with whom you have made an attempt to find out what their solutions/ideas are. How much of the time do you do this?
2. **Write notes of what the problems/situations are and examples of the solutions/ideas people come up with, with your help.** Please write your favorite 5 examples on the Activity Worksheet and share your success.
3. **Brainstorming is a way to generate a lot of possible options that your participant might consider doing.** You come up with some of the ideas and you encourage the participant to come up with ideas of her own. Are you good at brainstorming? How would you rate yourself on brainstorming right now? Is this a technique that you would like to develop more? Do you see benefits to getting in the habit of brainstorming? What are they?
4. **Establish a good rapport and an atmosphere of friendly cooperation with a participant in order to find out their solution.** How do you, personally, establish a warm, open, trusting atmosphere? Can you put into words what you actually DO, physically and verbally? Watch yourself. Think about what you do.
5. **Is your clinic so fast-paced that you don't really feel that you can afford to give people time to think?** Perhaps you should consider trying facilitative learning groups where there is time for participants to think and to generate solutions and ideas to share with others. If there is training available on facilitative learning, you might want to look into it.
6. **Perhaps you should pause just a little bit longer for responses from participants.** Notice how fast you are to answer your own questions. Wait just a few more seconds for a response than you're really used to or comfortable with. What are the results? Does the participant feel the awkwardness, too, and rush to fill the gap herself?
7. **How do you deal with "I don't know?"** Try translating that into, "I'm not sure. I'm not sure how I'm supposed to respond . . ." or "I don't know, I haven't had a chance to think about that . . ." Don't take it literally that they *really* don't know, because they probably do have some ideas, they just don't know if they should say them or not. Think about ideas of how you can deal with "I don't know" most effectively.

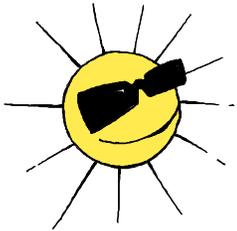


Thinking about and doing these activities will prepare you for the discussion. Don't view them as an additional burden! Look at them as ways you can sharpen your skills, enhance your awareness, and increase the personal satisfaction you get from doing this work. Look for feedback from participants to see if new ways of doing things are resulting in better sessions. Complete the Activity Worksheet as you practice these activities.

**Activity Worksheet**  
**Bright Ideas - Unit 7**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



**Find out the participant's solution**

**Write five examples of the solutions/ideas WIC clients came up with, with your help. List the situation and the solution.**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

**Explain the benefits of brainstorming: (ask your supervisor to discuss brainstorming if you are not comfortable using this technique.)**

**What happened when you gave clients a little bit longer for responses to your questions? How comfortable are you with waiting a few more seconds?**

**How do you deal the most effectively with a client saying "I don't know?"**

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.