

Perspectives on Nutrition Education Content and Delivery

All nutrition educators have a point of view, about appropriate content and delivery for nutrition education. This influences what we present, how we present, and may even influence how we act toward our audiences. Thinking about our perspectives on content and delivery, which are often unconscious or just assumed, helps us be more effective educators and also helps us when we work in teams. If two members of a team have different perspectives on content and delivery, being aware of them before presenting together will help us be a better team. There are three areas to consider: views on controversial food and nutrition issues, views on using materials from different sources, views on our needs and approaches as an educator. Thinking about these takes some thoughtful reflection, and how you address these may be different for different audiences

Views on controversial food and nutrition issues

Below are some examples of controversial issues that you may consider. There are many other issues, so think about food and nutrition issues that are important for you.

- **Weight.** Will you encourage health at every size or will you encourage weight control or weight loss, to achieve a normal body mass index (BMI) along with healthy eating?
- **Breastfeeding.** Will you favor breastfeeding or bottle feeding, or will you promote both as equally acceptable nutritional alternatives?
- **Supplements.** Will you generally recommend vitamin and other nutritional supplements or will you only recommend supplements when there is a clear need?
- **All foods fit (or not).** Will you take the stance that there are no “good foods” or “bad foods,” that is, that all foods are equally good and can fit into a healthful diet? Or will you take the stance some foods are more nutritious than others and use a “sometimes foods” and “anytime foods” approach; green-, red-, and yellow-light foods; or some other approach? [The U.S. Dietary Guidelines \(2020–25\)](#) recommends choosing nutrient dense foods from food groups in place of less healthy choices. Will you use such a system as you make your recommendations?
- **Whole foods versus highly processed but fortified foods.** What will be your stance on encouraging people to eat whole, or minimally processed foods, (e.g., minimally processed whole grain cereals) compared to more processed and perhaps fortified foods (e.g., highly processed cereal fortified with vitamins)? What about calcium-fortified foods? This is very important to clarify if you are working with others to plan and deliver nutrition education. An example illustrates this point: a team of two nutrition educators who were planning a session for teenagers were doing well until they came to the point of designing the specific activities. One wanted to bring vegetables with various dips to represent eating whole foods for snacks, while the other wanted to bring packaged snacks such as cereal bars and show the students how to read labels to choose the healthier options.
- **Food system sustainability issues.** Many national and international reports have guidelines for dietary guidance for eating to maintain food system sustainability, such as the [EAT-Lancet Commission](#) that provides dietary guidance on food, planet and health. Will you consider how food is grown, processed, and transported in your recommendations regarding foods to eat? When you encourage a group to increase their fruit and vegetable intake, will you suggest any particular source such as

organic or local, or will all sources be recommended, such as fresh, frozen, canned, local, or flown in from another country?

- **High- versus low-income audiences.** Knowing that food is expensive will you change your recommendations based on audience income level (such as farmers markets for high income and frozen or canned vegetables for low-income)? Will you have the view that everyone has a right to the most health-promoting food, so will you work with low-income audiences to advocate for culturally appropriate whole, health-promoting foods in their communities?

Views on using materials from different sources

Nutrition education interventions are often not well funded and therefore cannot afford to develop and print their own high-quality educational materials or visual media or develop high-tech websites. Instead, they use educational materials and visual and other resources from a variety of sources. These are often high quality and visually appealing, whether in print format or online. These sources may be from nonprofit voluntary organizations, such as heart associations or cancer societies, or from the food industry or other businesses. You and your team will want to carefully discuss the pros and cons of using resources from other sources that carry their logos or promote their brands and decide your policy regarding the use of such resources. You might want to consider the following guidelines for good practice that were established by the International Organization of Consumers Unions (1990):

- **Accuracy.** Information must be consistent with established factors **and/or the best of research-based** evidence. It should be appropriately referenced so that it can be easily **verified**.
- **Objectivity.** All major or relevant points of view are fairly presented. If the issue is controversial, arguments in favor must be balanced by arguments against. The sponsor bias should be clearly stated, and reference to opposing views should be made.
- **Completeness.** The materials contain all relevant information and do not deceive or mislead by omission—and not just by commission.
- **Nondiscriminatory.** The text and illustrations are free of any reference or characteristic that could be considered derogatory or that stereotype a particular group.
- **Noncommercial.** Sponsored material that is specifically designated as being for educational use should be clearly presented as such. Promotional materials should not be presented as “educational.” There should be no implied or explicit sales message or exhortation to buy a product or service. Corporate identification should be used to identify the sponsor of the material and provide contacts for further information, but text and illustrations should be free of the sponsor’s brand names, trademarks, and so forth.

Views on our needs and approaches as an educator.

You may also want to think about the following about yourself:

- **Your skill level and experience in teaching,** conducting workshops, designing health fairs, developing materials, and so forth; professional experience, such as in Cooperative Extension Service; and level of understanding of nutrition and food and food systems issues (one or several courses in nutrition, nutrition degree, graduate work?).

- **Preferred style of providing sessions for groups**, such as lectures, discussion, hands-on activities, group work, field projects, food demonstrations, or cooking with groups. (Learning and teaching styles are described more fully in Chapter 16.)
- **Personal priorities and motivations for being a nutrition educator**. Why do you want to educate people about nutrition? What made you want to enter the field?

If you will be designing and/or delivering the nutrition education as a team, you may want to discuss these issues openly so that you can integrate team members' individual preferences and skills into the educational plan and create activities that use your complementary skills.