

Module 4: Effective Health Education and Community Oral Health Messages

Time: 60 minutes



Learning Objective:

Describe ways to improve the effectiveness of oral health education.

Additional Materials Needed:

- Flipchart and markers
- PowerPoint presentation
- PowerPoint handout

Brainstorming Session and Discussion:

Can you think of an important health behavior that you have changed in your life? Can you think of what it was that finally motivated you to make the change?

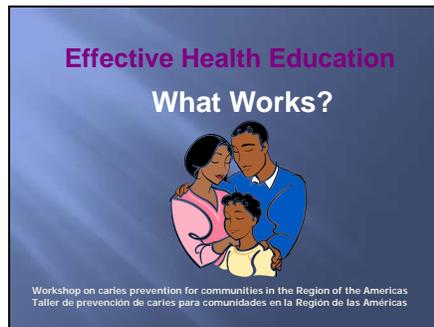
Lead a discussion about health behavior changes.

OK, let's take a look at the presentation on Oral Health Education. Keep in mind that it often takes more than just knowledge to change health behaviors. For example, we all know that we should get more exercise, but we don't always do it. Why? Maybe we don't have enough time, or maybe we would just rather do something else. See, it's not just a matter of knowledge, sometimes it is a matter of motivation, or priorities.

So, how do we get people to improve their oral health habits?

Begin PowerPoint presentation.

Slide 1



What Works?

There is a science behind health education. We're going to talk now about what works to get people to change their health behaviors.

Slide 2



Too Much Information

As eager as we are to give families a multitude of good advice, keep in mind that health education research and learning theory support providing 1-2 key messages at each visit. Think "baby steps." Ask yourself, "If this family only made one or two changes to improve their child's oral health, what would I want them to be?" The answers to this question guide you to your choices of what to focus on at any given visit. Then, you can make notes about what to cover at the next appointment.

So, this is an example where less is more!



Small Steps: Only 1-2 key messages

Positive reinforcement

It is also very important to remain positive. If you are harsh or negative with people, they will in essence “shut down” and probably won’t hear anything else that you say. People learn most effectively when they are in a positive environment. A positive environment is built when we treat our patients with respect and kindness. Sometimes creating a positive environment is as simple as greeting your clients by saying “I’m so glad you’re here today.”

Individualized Messages

Make sure that you are picking messages that are relevant to the person. You’ll know if you get off track because you’ll find yourself saying the same things to everyone.

Try to figure out what each person cares about, and talk about that. For instance, someone might not care about dental decay, but they might care about having a beautiful smile. Focus on that.

Slide 4

Health Beliefs

- Vary by family
- Vary by community and culture
- Vary by personal experiences



Health Beliefs

Many health beliefs are cultural or family-based and may or may not be true. Many of us were told that if you sit too close to the TV, you ruin your eyes. We now know that this is not a fact. Many women believe that they will lose a tooth with each pregnancy, or that some children just have soft teeth. These are myths, but don't underestimate them, because they often have strong roots in being passed down from a highly-trusted elder, generation after generation. Our job is to carefully present the facts as we now know them while trying to be culturally sensitive and respectful.

Slide 5

CAN YOU THINK OF ANY HEALTH BELIEFS THAT YOUR FAMILY BELIEVES EVEN THOUGH THEY ARE NOT TRUE?



Read Slide and let a few people give some examples.

Slide 6

Cross-Cultural Education

- Feeding and child raising beliefs vary greatly in different cultures
- Remain non-judgmental

A cartoon illustration of a woman with dark skin and hair, wearing a pink top, holding a baby. Above them are several red hearts, suggesting love and care.

Cross-cultural education

Sometimes a whole community believes in certain health myths, or they have ways of raising children that might not be healthy, like giving them sweets as a reward.

Remain non-judgmental

The most important thing we can do is to remain non-judgmental, and try to understand why people have poor oral health habits. We have to understand this before we can help people change the bad habits.

Slide 7

Can you think of any unhealthy habits that affect oral health that may be common in your community?

A large, stylized question mark icon in the center of the slide, colored in shades of orange and red.

Read Slide and let a few people give some examples.

Slide 8



Open-ended questions

Instead of telling people what to do, it is often best to ask them what they think will work. Here are a few open-ended questions.

Examples of open-ended questions

When would be the best time for you to brush your baby's teeth each day?

Can you think of a way to cut down on drinking soda pop in your family?

How do you plan to wean your child from the bottle?

Fact

It's a fact that when people are involved in their own health education, they are more likely to change their behaviors. Whatever it is that you are focusing on, ask your clients, "What do you think would work?"

Slide 9



Community Oral Health Messages

As we work together to improve oral health in our communities, we might want to choose a couple of oral health messages to promote throughout our communities. We could all work together to promote our messages and we could even use newspapers or radio to broadcast our oral health messages in our communities.

Slide 10

Community Oral Health Messages

- ❑ Baby teeth are important.
- ❑ Healthy Smiles, Healthy Families!
- ❑ Get an oral health screening for your baby by one year of age.
- ❑ Everyone should brush daily with fluoride toothpaste, beginning when a baby's first tooth erupts.

Can you think of more messages????

Examples

(read slide and let people offer other possible community oral health messages)

Slide 11

Community Oral Health Messages

- ❑ Scientifically Accurate
- ❑ Consistent
- ❑ Repeated Often



Community Oral Health Messages need to be

- Scientifically Accurate
- Consistent: One of the worst things we can do is to have different people giving the community conflicting oral health information. Pretty soon people don't know who, or what, to believe.
- Repeated Often

Slide 12

Health Education is a Process



Health Education is a Process

Research in tobacco cessation has taught us that it usually takes many triggers, over time, to change health behavior. Try not to get discouraged, but consider each counseling visit as getting one step closer to change.

Slide 13



The 2 Most Important Tools you have are

•Creativity: try to make your health education interesting and even funny, if possible. Don't be afraid to try different ways to get families interested in oral health.

•Genuine concern:

“People don't care what you know until they know that you care.”

If you really care about the people you work with, it will show, and they will be more likely to listen to you as you build a positive relationship with them.

Slide 14



Turn off projector.

Think about some Community Oral Health Messages that might work in your community to promote oral health. We will be working in groups later in the workshop to develop and choose some favorite messages.

This is the end of the first day of training. How do you think it is going?

Have you learned anything new?

Let a few people share their thoughts from the day.

Thank everyone for coming today and tell them you're looking forward to seeing them tomorrow.