

Shopping Smart: Dietetic Interns Utilize Learner-Centered Education for Male Clients Undergoing Residential Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation

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LEARNING OBJECTIVE

The participant will be able to describe two methods for the application of learner-centered principles in nutrition education for clients in drug and alcohol rehabilitation.

ABSTRACT



Men in Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation may experience food-related issues including excessive weight gain to obesity, due to using food as a drug substitute or mood regulator and/or disordered eating patterns. These behaviors are all linked to chronic disease and increase risk for diabetes, obesity and cardiovascular disease. Backgrounds of clients vary as does their nutrition knowledge.

Yet, during the drug recovery and rehabilitation period, clients are frequently at a "teachable moment" that is they are more ready to learn new skills and move away from old habits and beliefs. This period is ideal for learning-centered nutrition education focusing on engaging learners through active participation to hear, see, do, reflect, and project to establish learner independence.

Dietetic interns in one program applied this approach to design a "Supermarket Shopping with Label Reading" interactive presentation for twenty-five male clients in a recovery center. This technique utilizes the "anchor, add, apply and away" approach to present healthier food choices, lower in fat and sugar, on a very limited budget. Post-presentation, clients verbalized an improved understanding of material, expressed the intent to change, and were able to identify personal changes they were willing to make in the next Supermarket shopping trip.

Interns experienced how applying learner-centered principles is both practical and effective. Additional intern reflection highlighted the need to better "know" the audience with respect to audience issues, level of education and challenges post-presentation evaluation presents. Interns, as future dietitians, need to be capable of applying learner-centered education to be effective community educators.



The teacher of a teacher-centered approach asks, "what do I need to do to teach this information?"
The teacher of a learner-centered approach asks, "what do they need to do to learn this topic?"
—Dr. Joye Norris

BACKGROUND

Clients in recovery often report severe weight loss in active addiction and bingeing behaviors in early recovery.

Dysfunctional eating behaviors are common nutritional concerns in this population and include the following:

- Overeating
- Eating disorders
- Use of foods high in fat and high in sugar as substitutes for alcohol and drug use

Food, especially sweets and "junk food", are often used to satisfy cravings, regulate moods, alleviate boredom, and add structure to a day. These dietary practices lead to excessive weight gain and have been associated with a higher risk for chronic diseases.

Recovery is a time for clients to learn new skills and to make behavior change. It is a great opportunity for clients to learn good shopping and budgeting skills and healthy food choices. Nutrition education, especially group classes as a component of the substance abuse treatment program, has been associated with enhanced treatment outcomes.

Utilizing the learner-centered approach in nutrition education is a particularly effective method to help clients learn healthier eating habits and to facilitate a successful recovery.



SHOP SMART: APPLYING LEARNER-CENTERED PRINCIPLES

Learner-Centered Approach:

- Activate prior learning
- Set the stage for learning
- Teach to a variety of learning styles
- Ask open ended questions and wait
- Engage the learner 50% of the time
- Reinforce the learning
- Utilize Anchor, Add, Apply, Away

Presentation Handout



1. ANCHOR Ground topic in learners' lives



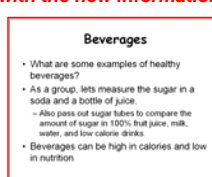
E.g., Current shopping habits.

2. ADD Provide new information



E.g., Label reading tips.

3. APPLY Have learners do something with the new information



E.g., Determine sugar in a beverage.

4. AWAY Allow learners to move the information into the future.



E.g., Set goals for future shopping.

CONCLUSION

Learner-centered nutrition education can present multiple challenges. In spite of the challenges, mastering this type of teaching is important for nutrition educators as it allows the opportunity to incorporate a variety of teaching techniques more appropriate for diverse audiences. Education sessions are often given in a teacher-centered fashion in which the instructor talks about 80% of the time. This type of teaching is effective for some audiences, but is less advantageous for others.

Challenges to learner-centered education included:

- Recreating our presentation styles to ensure the needs of the students were met as they pertain to the learner-centered approach.
- The learner-centered approach required a certain understanding of the clients, which we learned about while researching the facility.

Factors considered in design of the education session:

- Background of the clients
- Nutrition education needs
- Specific anchoring topics to initiate a discussion.



As the clients asked questions we were able to adjust the presentation accordingly to address their needs. Ideally, a more thorough understanding of individual clients along with pre and post-presentation evaluations would help determine the effectiveness of the education.

Interns received positive feedback during the presentation through multiple questions from the audience as well as post-presentation. Additionally, the group discussion demonstrated improvement in knowledge of shopping smart techniques and supported the effectiveness of the learner-centered approach. A "Supermarket Tour" was provided by the next group of interns as a follow-up.

"Your role as a teacher is to find as many ways as possible for your learners to show you how smart they are"
—Dr. Joye Norris



FUTURE RECOMENDATIONS

- Know your Audience
- Conduct pre and post-evaluations to determine effectiveness of applying the learner-centered approach
- Utilize small group discussions to enhance learning
- Include "Supermarket Tour" to allow participants to practice their new skills