



- Home
- Doors
- Metaphor Images
- Card Sort & Concern List
- Baby Book
- Other Projects
- Contact Information

Getting to the Heart of the Matter

Downloads

General tips on using Getting to the Heart of the Matter tools (49kb)

Testimonials



Rachel Colchamiro
Director of Nutrition Education Services, MA WIC

"These tools are a small investment with a big payoff: powerful, purposeful conversations and increased job satisfaction."



Gail Domeracki
Springfield, MA
"Real conversations with real people for real behavior change."

Overview

WIC can be a powerful, life-changing place for parents when their greatest needs are met. But getting parents to open up and share their needs and concerns is sometimes a challenge. "Getting to the Heart of the Matter" provides simple, practical and fun tools for cutting through the clutter and identifying important topics to talk about with WIC clients.

Oftentimes, questions asked at WIC come across to parents that there is an expected "right answer". Focus group parents have confessed concealing or massaging the truth about nutrition practices because they feared judgment. And who can blame them? We all want to look good to others, especially when it involves parenting skills.

"Getting to the Heart of the Matter" provides quick ways to identify parental needs and interests. Many of the tools are projective techniques. These techniques are simply questions and activities that don't have an obvious answer. Because there isn't a "correct" answer, parents project their true feelings. This allows them to easily and honestly express their greatest needs and interests without worrying about how you, the WIC nutritionist, will perceive their responses or judge them as parents.

Using unique tools instead of computer-generated questions to uncover parental concerns might sound scary. No worries. Massachusetts WIC nutrition staff have used the tools for over a year with great success. They, too, experienced fear when they first tried them but were amazed at their newfound ability to zero in on key issues quickly. You'll find practical tips from these experts as well as complete directions for using the tools under each of the headings.

change."

It's a great time to work for WIC. New tools and techniques are being embraced for even greater behavior change. We invite you to experience the power of the "Getting to the Heart of the Matter" tools.

Project background

Frustrated with logic-based nutrition education materials that were factually accurate but boring, the Massachusetts WIC program applied for USDA Special Project funds to develop emotion-based materials. These Touching Hearts, Touching Minds materials were a huge hit with both clients and staff. But the traditional logic-based assessment process didn't jive with the warm and friendly emotion-based materials. In 2007, Massachusetts WIC received additional USDA Special project funds to create assessment tools that would naturally lead into powerful core conversations. This project—Getting to the Heart of the Matter—is the result of the need for emotion-based assessment tools that resonate with participants and staff.

Check out Touching Hearts, Touching Minds emotion-based materials at this website:
www.touchingheartstouchingminds.com

Contact information

The Massachusetts WIC program welcomes your feedback! Please contact Lynn DiTaranto at Lynn.Ditaranto@state.ma.us

There is no need for permission to use or duplicate the tools. Everyone is welcome to use them. Simply download individual files to print the tools.

Commonly asked questions

Why is there a need to "trick" parents into sharing their truth? Can't we just ask them nutrition questions and get honest answers?

Good questions. We found the answers to these questions by talking to moms in focus groups. What seems like straightforward, neutral questions about food and eating—the traditional nutrition assessment—to WIC nutrition staff may seem very different to a parent. Moms worry that the nutritionist—an expert on food—may judge them as parents. In addition, they wonder what is being recorded about them when their responses are dutifully added to endless computer screens. And everyone wants to be positively perceived, especially when it comes to something as emotional as parenting, so some parents create response that will allow them to "save

comes in "wondering" or emotional as parents, so some parents create responses that will allow them to "save face" in the WIC clinic. The bottom line is that WIC parents don't always feel comfortable sharing their truth. Getting to the Heart of the Matter tools are an effective and fun way to uncover honest responses.

I feel more comfortable with assessment questions that are clearly defined and very logical. "Getting to the Heart of the Matter" tools seem very different from what I'm used to. Why should I try them?

WIC is a behavior change program. Unfortunately, behavior change isn't always logical or defined. Instead, it's a series of decisions fueled by emotion. The tools have been evaluated and proven to be effective with nutrition professionals who once thought like you. Believe and expect that they will work for you and try them with confidence. We predict great success for you and your participants.

How do you connect client responses to nutrition education?

"Getting to the Heart of the Matter" tools are effective at identifying emotions as well as needs. Nutrition staff who are fully present and actively listening will be able to identify important emotional "pulse points". These "pulse points" can be woven into the conversation, and the nutritionist can individualize nutrition counseling based on what makes a mom "tick". Check out the videos on each tool page for examples of how this is accomplished.

How will I be able to gather all necessary nutrition assessment data and details using these tools?

"Getting to the Heart of the Matter" tools help nutritionists connect first to the needs of the participant. After this initial connection is made, the nutritionist can dig for more information and fill in the blanks as the conversation continues. By using these tools to open up conversation, many participants will speak more freely about their eating habits, and the nutritionist will naturally be able to gather more data. The tools will also encourage participants to offer up more honest answers. Once a participant feels comfortable discussing these topics, required data may be easy to gather during the appointment.

Do "Getting to the Heart of the Matter" tools take more time than traditional assessment tools?

Good news: "Getting to the Heart of the Matter" tools save you time because they are quick and easy. Many can be done in less than a minute! These tools truly "get to the heart" of what might be on a parent's mind.

Which "Getting to the Heart of the Matter" tools are easiest to use?

Although nutrition staff each had their favorite tools, they all embraced the approach and found them easy and

be done in less than a minute! These tools truly "get to the heart" of what might be on a parent's mind.

Which "Getting to the Heart of the Matter" tools are easiest to use?

Although nutrition staff each had their favorite tools, they all embraced the approach and found them easy and fun to use. Some nutritionists preferred to start with less abstract tools like the Card Sort, "What's on YOUR List" and the hedonic scale before trying more abstract tools like the metaphor images, hopes and dream doors or the magic wand. As with all change, it takes time to refine your approach. Give yourself permission to experiment with all the tools, knowing they have been well received by both WIC staff and clients.

What do WIC educators think of the "Getting to the Heart of the Matter" tools?

Here are quotes from MA WIC staff who used the "Getting to the Heart of the Matter" tools for over a year.

- "Follow-up appointments can be so routine. Having new tools to use at each visit transforms monotonous to extraordinary."
- "The tools opened doors to conversations we had never experienced before."
- "Be brave and have confidence. You may feel awkward at first, but keep trying. Eventually, you will hit an appointment where everything clicks. That's when you realize the power of the tools."
- "The tools are emotion-based icebreakers that melt barriers and lead to powerful conversations. The tools have recharged appointments!"
- "The tools changed the way we relate to clients. They lead to deeper conversations. I developed new counseling skills using the tools."
- "I love the range of tools. There's one that fits each educator's personality and style."
- "The tools make my job easier. I don't have to drill moms with endless questions that result in stale, phony conversations. I would be very sad to return to boring after realizing how interesting WIC conversations can be with these tools."



The Metaphor Images Project

Downloads

- All Metaphor materials (55.7MB)
- Instructions for use of Metaphor images with individuals and groups

Testimonials

Tara Van Osdol
Chelsea, MA
"You want to grow? These tools will help you grow and create a better WIC experience for your clients."

Penny Morello
Malden, MA
"The metaphor images lead to lots of participation. I use them a lot."

Preview the Metaphor Images



images lead to lots of participation. I use them a lot, especially with follow-up appointments."



Instructions on how to use the Metaphor Images tool.

Getting clients to share deeply personal feelings with a WIC educator they just met in only a few minutes sounds impossible, right? Metaphor images make it easy to uncover emotions and thoughts quickly, succinctly and powerfully. Here's short guide to using metaphor images in the WIC clinic.

- Place the metaphor images where the client can see all of them.
- Ask clients to select an image that says something about how they feel about a nutrition topic. (How their child is eating, weight gain during pregnancy, etc.)
- Ask: "What does that image say about how you feel about (topic)?"
- Use feelings as a springboard to an amazing conversation, wrapping suggested behavior change ideas in with emotions.

Why metaphor images are effective at revealing emotions:

- Ask a straightforward question and you might not get a straightforward answer. People have trouble saying their truth, especially if they are concerned about feeling judged.
- Asking clients to make connections between metaphor images and their experiences taps into the creative side of their brain where feelings and images live.
- Metaphor images help respondents access emotions and verbalize the rich information that they would be unlikely to share if asked a straightforward question.