

VENA Visions

NOVEMBER 2007

VALUE ENHANCED NUTRITION ASSESSMENT

FACT OR FICTION ?

Can a flamingo only eat with its head upside down? Is it true that Albert Einstein never wore any socks? Or that every time you sneeze your heart stops for a second? Could it be possible that an ostrich's eye is bigger than its brain? Or that the blue whale has a heart the size of a small car and a person could swim through one of its blood vessels? Or that an octopus has three hearts???



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It didn't take any critical thinking skills to *decide* to read this article, but it sure would take some of those skills to answer those questions! Wouldn't it just be easier to accept these claims as true? It can be a lot easier to be certain about something we assume to be true than to delve into the alternative, which could make us uneasy. Whether or not we take these statements to be true or false depends upon our willingness to gather all the information we can, decide what is fact, then identify what we *don't* know is true. We need to integrate all of this information and then go on to set priorities and identify the main concerns.

This is not unlike what we want to be doing with our WIC participants. Isn't a lot easier and comfortable to assume we know what is true for our participants? After all, they *would* be a lot healthier if they were less sedentary and ate more fruits and vegetables. But, is this what the participant believes is achievable and feels confident about changing? What does *she* feel is important to do toward improving her health and the health of her family?

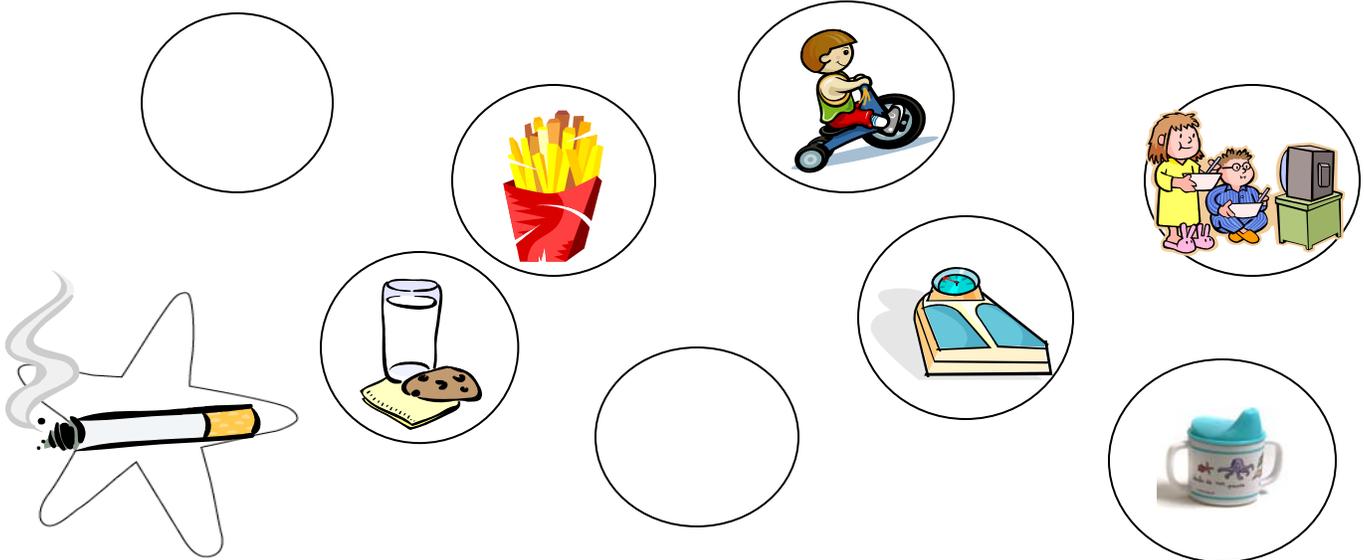
Asking questions, using active listening, integrating the facts, and prioritizing a nutrition intervention plan all involve critical thinking. What is important to the participant? What is the relationship between her behavior and her nutritional risks? How can I help and support her? What do we need to tackle first? Thinking critically and creatively improves with practice. Go for it! And by the way, all of the above questions are true except that sneezing will *not* stop your heart!

A Message From Mary

Once again another Holiday season filled with the many sights, sounds and lasting experiences is upon us. We also begin to look forward to the new year and all of the hopeful promises and challenges that are sure to come. I like to think that VENA and all that it implies is the hope of a wonderful new possibility for the WIC Program. It is a way to re-energize nutrition services, a new way to connect with our participants in a more meaningful manner. And all that we do in WIC is ultimately about our participants and their families. The changes that we are initiating with participant-centered nutrition education and very soon, coupled with the new food package are so far reaching, so powerful that WIC will never be the same. And while that might seem scary at first, to me, a new and improved focus on "quality nutrition services" is most definitely a good thing. Happy Holidays!

A special thanks to Mary Cowans, Associate Director, Division of Nutrition, NYSDOH

Look for the “starfish” for your VENA focus



The participant meets with the nutritionist. The nutritionist says:

“Good morning. How are you today? Tell me how you would like to spend this time together? I usually talk to people about healthy lifestyles, and in a situation like yours (show circle chart to participant) about smoking, eating lower fat foods, snacking, and physical activity. How do you feel? Do any of these sound like something you would like to work on changing? Or, we could fill in any of these blank circles with your more pressing concerns. Is there something else you would like to talk about today?”

Inside the **starfish** above is the topic that your participant shows interest in discussing. It is important that the nutritionist’s tone of voice and body language conveys an air of **curiosity** about what the participant wants to talk about. Remember that the circle chart only serves as a time-saving tool, and is really there to help you engage in a conversation with your participant. Since time is one of your biggest challenges during your appointments, a tool like this can really be helpful. We can use it to inform the participant of our concerns, but *she*

gets to choose what it is *she* feels is important to work on now. Even if she fills in one of the circles with her own item, don’t assume she *wants* to talk about it! Part of her decision to pick an issue to talk about probably rests partially on her willingness to address it, and, partially on her belief in her ability to make a change in that behavior. In any case, this is where the participant is able to go emotionally, forging her into deeper learning, and who knows? Maybe even into action!

Look at the pictures above.

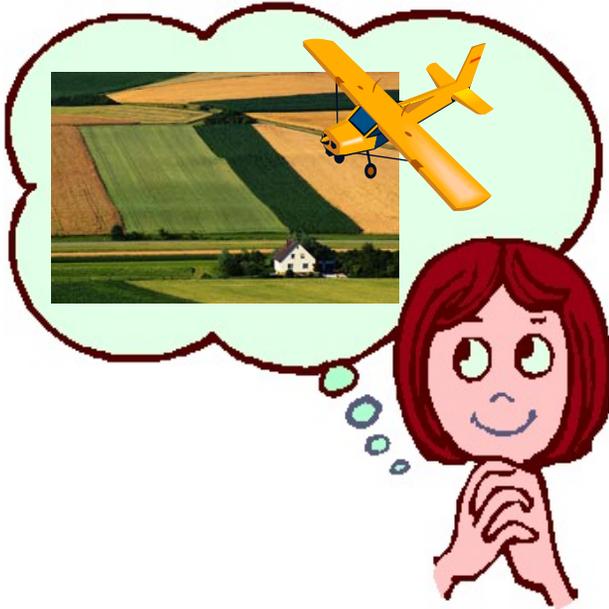
What information do we know regarding behavior change? We know that the participant has indicated that she would like to work on smoking cessation. What *don’t* we know? Hmm...has she attempted quitting before? What was it like for her? What did she learn? Do her peers smoke? Does she know anyone who continued to smoke while pregnant, and the baby was “just fine”? What does she know about smoking and pregnancy? *This* is where we need to go. This is the VENA difference—go for the **starfish!**

You are the person who has to decide. Whether you'll do it or toss it aside; You are the person who makes up your mind. Whether you'll lead or will linger behind. Whether you'll try for the goal that's afar. Or just be contented to stay where you are.

Edgar A. Guest

Fractured Farmland

While flying over farmland, a pilot notices the rectangular shape of the fields below. She sketches the lines that divide the fields. When she returns to the airport, she wonders how many different rectangles can be formed by the lines drawn?



HINT: Don't forget that a square is also a rectangle.

6	3
5	2
4	1

Solution: Fractured Farmland
 Eighteen: one whole composite block (1,2,3,4,5,6); six separate blocks (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6); three horizontal pairs (1 & 4) (2 & 5) (3 & 6); four vertical pairs (1 & 2) (2 & 3) (4 & 5) (5 & 6); two vertical triplets (1,2,3) (4,5,6); two large blocks (1,4,2 & 5) (2,5,3 & 6)

VENA Training Schedule

⇒ **Build 48 Training**

Statewide Conference Call: December 13, 2007 9:00 - 10:00 am
 518-408-1500 local or 1-866-266-3697 toll free
 Conferee Code 5530494#

⇒ **Advanced Counseling Skills Trainings are coming in 2008!**

Starting in February, we will be offering training throughout the state in motivational interviewing and advanced critical thinking. Review LA Memo #123, dated November 9, 2007.

Changing for Good: Family-Centered Counseling Skills and
Are You Working Harder Than Your Client?: Advanced Critical Thinking