

Community nutrition with newcomers to Canada

Practical tips and lessons learned

The following is based on work with women who don't speak English. Many of these ideas also relate to those who do.

Less effective efforts (isolating)	More effective efforts (connecting)
<p>Speaking louder to be understood. (<i>Everyone does it at first, but why?!</i>)</p> <p>Assuming interpreting is unaffordable. (It is possible to find reliable but untrained people.)</p> <p>Assuming untrained interpreter understands terminologies and concepts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Speak more slowly, using only simple sentences (<i>no clauses or idioms</i>). ○ Build interpreting into mindset and budget. ○ Use interpreters – trained if possible! ○ Even with interpreters, simplify concepts and avoid jargon. (Some concepts do not exist in other languages – e.g. vitamins & minerals) ○ Use visuals (see below).
<p>Not explaining role or what a dietitian/other staff position is, confuses</p>	<p>Explaining your role helps establish boundaries & clarifies that you are not a new friend who will come to birthday parties, etc.</p>
<p>Accepting a YES answer to a question. (<i>Many newcomers want to please. Yes often does not mean Yes.</i>)</p>	<p>A reframing question/statement can be useful- such as “can you tell me what I said?” or other such open-ended question.</p>
<p>Posters /handouts with lots of English text.</p> <p>Posters lacking diversity of faces.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No handouts (or SIMPLE only). She'll take notes if she wants. ○ Posters with faces from other cultures. ○ Have a map in the room. <i>Participant can show you her country & feel acknowledged!</i> ○ “Welcome” signs in variety of languages.
<p>Using a true/false approach (an engaging & useful process in some groups) is confusing</p>	<p>Avoid true/false as <u>false is memorable and confusing</u>. Provide only correct information.</p>
<p>Talking a lot. Explaining.</p>	<p>LOTS of visuals - pictures, props, gestures (have fun)! Keep messages SIMPLE. <i>No detail is necessary unless asked for</i></p>
<p>Making assumptions, being eager to impart your own info. E.g. Providing food/recipes etc. without checking knowledge or <u>fully</u> demonstrating. <i>Some mistakes we've made?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ offered cheese slices and woman started to eat the plastic separator ○ assuming cans can be opened at home; assuming knowledge of what to do with frozen foods (<i>some assume we eat them cold</i>) ○ put up “Halal” sign by a meat dish for Muslim participants & being surprised that they wouldn't eat it. (<i>The sign was English & likely our pronunciation was wrong!</i>) 	<p>Step-by-step approach, ask about ‘home’practices: e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ demonstrating & providing (if possible) helpful utensils (can opener, cutting board, etc.) ○ demonstrating that frozen food is to be <i>cooked</i> and eaten <i>hot</i> ○ Ask how they do things in their country. E.g. “How would you cook with this?”, “Tell me about...” ○ Positive reinforcement of home country practices is essential as many feel they must abandon them! ○ Relevant signage/visuals: e.g. Halal sign in <u>Arabic</u> (<i>Halal refers to meat permissible according to Muslim law</i>)
<p>Assuming that in 15/30/60 minutes you'll do what you do with English-speaking clients/participants</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Know that everything takes at least twice as long. ○ Learn economy of words & have lots of props!
<p>Visiting in a home without accepting the food offered is not understood and in fact, offends.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Eat offered food! It matters. <i>No matter what, try!</i> ○ On own premises, ensure food preferences are honoured. Have HOT SAUCE available, <i>fresh</i> fruit
<p>Perceiving own role as ‘expert’ and client/participant as ‘student’ can reinforce “authority” model & diminish self-reliance</p>	<p>Perceiving own role as <u>peer</u> ‘mother’, ‘woman’ and <u>mentor/coach</u> may be most helpful in maintaining her confidence and self-reliance. Side-by-side...</p>