

Balancing Multiple Topics

JULY 2020

Staff Activity 1: Addressing COVID-19 Fears – How Would you Respond?

Thank you for attending the webinar. Here's an activity to help apply the content. There are two options for conducting this activity. The first is a partner activity conducted via phone. The second is a facilitated activity for an in-person group. Both options are included below.

Option 1: Partner Activity

- With a partner, spend a few minutes discussing the types of fears or anxieties participants may have during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some discussion topics may include:
 - What types of fears or stressors may participants be experiencing during the COVID-19 pandemic?
 - How could these fears impact the family's eating habits or nutrition status?
 - How could these fears impact the participants relationship with WIC?
 - In what ways can WIC staff members help address these fears?
 - What participant-centered counseling skills would be helpful during these conversations?
 - In what ways can WIC staff members help when the fear or challenge is not nutrition-related or there is not a particular "fix" or solution.
- Read the participant statements on the following page. Together, choose two or more of the following participant-centered counseling skills and craft one response statement:
 - Empathize
 - Normalize
 - Reflective listening
 - Open-ended questions to assess for what information/strategies/referrals are needed

Note: Some fears and anxieties you may hear about from participants are related to nutrition for which you may have information and strategies to share, while others may not be related to nutrition. For these examples, think about how you can use PCS skills to help address their fears.

- **Example of responding to a Participant statement:** I don't know. Do I send them to daycare when it opens or not? They love it and I want them to go, but is it safe? What do you think? And how do I talk to my kids about being safe? They are too young to understand.
 - There are a lot of factors to consider (**reflecting**). Although I don't have a definitive answer for you, what I can tell you is that many mothers I talk to are facing the same fears and choices right now. (**normalizing**)

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- You are facing some tough decisions right now. That can't be easy. **(empathizing)**. Would it be helpful if I shared some of the safety steps that WIC is taking? This may help you start the conversation with your daycare provider about the steps they are taking for safety. **(Asking open-ended questions)**
- On the one hand, you want to do everything you can to keep your child safe and on the other, you don't want them to miss out on the interaction and learning activities they get at daycare. **(double-sided reflection)** That is a difficult position for any parent to be in. **(empathizing)**
- You are certainly not alone. Many parents are struggling with this issue, even healthcare workers that are parents. **(normalizing)** Would you be interested in a link to the Minnesota Department of Health's website that has some tips and resources for children and parents during COVID-19? **(asking open-ended questions)**
- That is a big decision for a mother to face **(empathizing)**. You want to get all the information and opinions you can before deciding what's best for your family **(reflecting)**.

Activity: Addressing COVID-19 Fears – How Would you Respond?

Read the following statements. Choose two of the participant-centered counseling skills and craft a response statement:

- **Participant statement:** With everything going on right now, I am afraid I won't have enough for food, even with WIC. There have been times lately where the end of the month is tough.
 - **Skills: (Circle skills used)**
Empathize/Normalize/Reflective listening/Open-ended questions to assess for what information/strategies/referrals are needed
 - **Response:**
- **Participant statement:** I am scared to come into the WIC office. I just don't see how we could stay safe the whole time. I don't want to risk it.
 - **Skills: (Circle skills used)**
Empathize/Normalize/Reflective listening/Open-ended questions to assess for what information/strategies/referrals are needed
 - **Response:**
- **Participant statement:** They are cooped up in the house for most of the day. We get out for a little while most days, but the rest of the time they are mainly just sitting there watching the T.V. or playing games on my phone.
 - **Skills: (Circle skills used)**
Empathize/Normalize/Reflective listening/Open-ended questions to assess for what information/strategies/referrals are needed
 - **Response:**

- **Participant statement:** I worry because my partner goes out to work every day. I know he's careful and changes when he gets home but I worry about my children, especially the new baby.
 - **Skills: (Circle skills used)**
Empathize/Normalize/Reflective listening/Open-ended questions to assess for what information/strategies/referrals are needed
 - **Response:**

Option 2: Facilitated Group Activity

- Write 3-5 discussion questions on a flip chart prior to the activity. Some questions may include:
 - What types of fears or stressors may participants be experiencing during the COVID-19 pandemic?
 - How could these fears impact the family's eating habits or nutrition status?
 - How could these fears impact the participants relationship with WIC?
 - In what ways can WIC staff members help address these fears?
 - What participant-centered counseling skills would be helpful during these conversations?
 - In what ways can WIC staff members help when the fear or challenge is not nutrition-related or there is not a particular "fix" or solution for the issue.
- Split the group into pairs and have each partner group spend some time discussing the questions. Let them know that they can write down some key points that come up because you will be asking them to share some thoughts with the larger group. [Option: If there are 5 questions, you could ask some pairs to start at the top and some pairs to start at the bottom in case there is not enough time for pairs to discuss all questions.]
- After 5-8 minutes, bring the group back together. For each question, ask for volunteers to share some of the things that came out of their discussion.
- Write the following 4 participant-centered skills on a flip chart. Go through each skill and ask for volunteers to share in their own words what the skill is or to provide an example for the group. (for others who may be less familiar with the PCS skills).
 - Empathize
 - Normalize
 - Reflective listening
 - Open-ended questions
- Refer to the statements from the Activity: Addressing COVID-19 Fears – How Would you Respond on previous pages. Ask the group to work in small groups or pairs. Assign each group a statement. Two or more groups may have the same statement. [Alternative: If time permits, have groups do all four statements]. Explain that as a group, they should choose two or more of the participant-centered counseling skills and craft a response statement. If the group wants to brainstorm more than one potential response, that is fine.

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- Bring the group back together. Read each statement and ask for the group(s) that worked on that statement to share their responses and what skills they used. In particular, discuss statement four and options for addressing fears that may not be nutrition related.

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