The Healthy Toddlers’ (HT) Curriculum

JNEB Journal Club Webinar Series
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1. Identify and describe the impact of obesity for at-risk young children and the need for focusing early nutrition education curricula, such as “Healthy Toddlers” (HT), on promoting healthy eating habits at an early age.

2. Identify the need to promote healthy eating using a theory-driven curriculum.

3. Describe the need to address cognitive and environmental influences on young children’s eating behaviors and identify strategies to address these influences from the HT lessons.
Learning Objectives for the **HT** Webinar

4. Describe the need to use a learner-centered approach in lesson plans and outline the four strategies based on Norris’ *From Telling to Teaching* and how these are used in lesson plans.

5. Identify strengths of the **HT** curriculum and application of the **HT** curriculum.
Number of overweight children in America has doubled to an estimated 10 million in the past 20 years\(^{(1)}\).

Obesity rates are higher for economically disadvantaged and minority children\(^{(1)}\), placing them at increased risk for later health problems, such as hypertension, cardiovascular disease, and type 2 diabetes \(^{(2)}\).
Optimal nutrition depends on the development of a positive relationship between parent and toddler.

The *Healthy Toddlers (HT)* curriculum actively promotes the development of healthy eating behaviors in young children *before* the onset of poor dietary habits and obesity occurs.
Content for *HT* was developed from the *Nutrition Education Aimed at Toddlers (NEAT)* program\(^6\).

Focus groups with low-income caregivers of toddlers expressed interest in:
- “Preparation of healthy, simple meals and snacks”;
- “Child-size portions”;
- “Strategies on how to feed picky eaters”; and
- “Overcoming barriers to providing healthy meals”.

\(^7\)
Healthy Toddlers Study

- Randomized control trial.
- Multi-state project in Colorado, Michigan, and Wisconsin.
- *HT* curriculum consists of 8 in-home lessons focusing on fruit, vegetable, and sweetened beverage consumption and parental behaviors.
- Taught by paraprofessional instructors.
Healthy Toddlers

- Designed to promote the development of healthy eating habits at an early age through effective nutrition and parenting education.
- *HT* was field tested with 641 families over three years.
Healthy Toddlers Curriculum

Key concepts in the theory-based lessons:

- Child development related to Satter’s division of responsibility\(^{(8)}\);
- Offering a variety of fruits and vegetables;
- Limiting sweetened beverages;
- Turning off the TV during meals;
- Routine meals and snacks;
- Role modeling;
- Preventing mealtime problems;
- Picky eaters; and
- Quick and easy meals.
Use of theory

- Nutrition education that uses appropriate theory is more likely to be effective in changing behavior (9)

- Draw on psychosocial and health behavior theory to address the complexity of human behavior
Social Cognitive Theory

- Addresses both cognitive and environmental influences on behavior\(^{(10)}\)
Examples of SCT constructs

- **Environment**
  - Physical – home
  - Social – build on existing family environment

- Reciprocal determination – encourage positive interaction between parent & child
Examples of SCT constructs (cont.)

- Behavioral capability – help parents develop skills in feeding relationship with child

  Expectations – help parents understand how child development relates to eating
Examples of SCT constructs (cont.)

- Expectancies – reinforce positive outcomes and feeding situations; reduce barriers to behavior change

- Observational learning – educators model behavior and encourage parents to be role models
Examples of SCT constructs (cont.)

- Reinforcements
  - Unstructured – positive reinforcement for accomplishment
  - Structured – magnet, book, etc.

- Self-control – parents set personal goals

- Self-efficacy – encourage and support parents in setting multiple realistic, achievable goals

*link to Child Development wheel
http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/fh/mcshn/wheel.htm
Adult Learning – A Learner-Centered Approach

- Adult learning principles
  - Learning environment should be comfortable
  - Information should be relevant
  - Adults need to “do something” with the information
  - Appeal to different learning modalities
  - Reinforce the learning
Learning Environment

- Be prepared
- Company is coming!
- Play music
- Greet people – including latecomers
- Participation is voluntary
Respect prior learning
Relate the new information to what participants already know
“Do something” with the information

- Hands-on activities
- Dialogue
A dialogue approach

- Words between us
- Raises all voices
- Relate topic to life
Learning modalities

- Visual learners
- Auditory learners
- Kinesthetic learners
Reinforce the learning

- Review
- Repeat
- Key points repeated on visuals, handouts, activities and lectures
The 4 A’s

- Anchor
- Add
- Apply
- Away

To order *From Telling to Teaching*, contact Joye Norris at docjn@aol.com
Ground’s the topic into the learners’ lives (personal meaning)

Respects learners’ prior knowledge
  ◦ (make information relevant)

Serves as a warm-up
  ◦ Dialogue

Go to their world first
ADD

- New information
  - Make the information relevant
- Looks the most like “school”
- Mini lectures
- Demonstration
- Video
APPLY

- Learners DO something with the new information
- Teaching kit/bin containing props for the applies
- Dialogue activities
  - Raise all voices!
- Food preparation activities
  - Use all 5 senses
Learners move the new information into their future
Goal setting
Example from *Healthy Toddlers*:

“I will serve my child one more vegetable at least _____ days this week.”
**Strengths of the *HT* Curriculum**

- *HT* useful for mothers, particularly the hands-on activities and preparing and tasting the recipes (n = 56; 91%)

- *HT* lessons very helpful for mothers (n = 62; 100%) and that they tried to make changes such as offering more vegetables (n = 54; 87%).
All participants and instructors agreed that 8 weeks was an appropriate length of time for the lessons and 60 – 90 minutes for each lesson was an appropriate amount of time.
Instructors found the hands-on activities and handouts helpful in engaging low-income mothers from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Instructors liked how the lessons built on previous lessons and believed there was a good balance between content and recipes.
Summary

- Healthy Toddlers, a theory-driven, accessible curriculum, can be delivered by health professionals, paraprofessionals, or others who work with families in their homes or with small groups.

- Access Healthy Toddlers Curriculum:
  - http://collaborate.extension.org/wiki/Healthy_Toddlers_Curriculum
References


http://aspe.hhs.gov/health/reports/child_obesity/.


References


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Questions

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