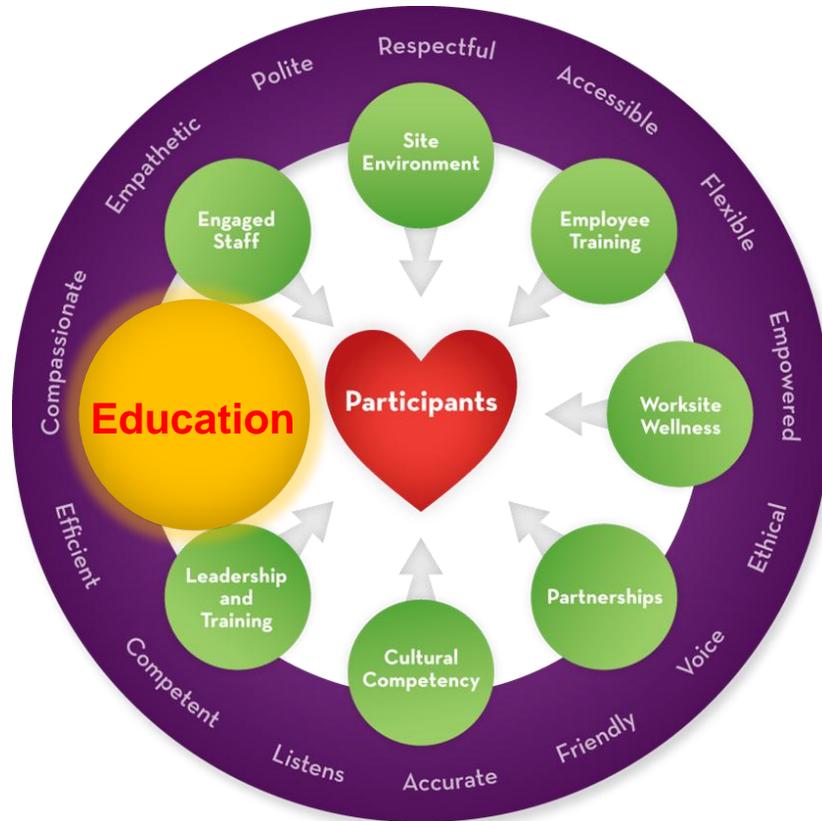


Open-Ended Questions

Participant Centered Education

Facilitator's Guide



This module is one in a series focusing on Participant-Centered Education (PCE). PCE is a key component of California WIC's effort to offer *Platinum WIC – Participant Centered Services (PCS)*. The California WIC PCS approach puts the WIC family at the center of everything we do and focuses on the strengths of participants, employees and community.

PCE places the participant at the center of the education process. PCE focuses on the participant's capabilities, strengths, and their nutrition, health, and referral needs, not just problems, risks, or unhealthy behaviors. PCE includes working collaboratively, eliciting and supporting motivation to change, and respecting participants as the ones who decide if and when they will learn and/or make a change.

OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS

Open-ended questions are critical PCE techniques that let participants talk about their feelings, experiences, and ideas. This, in turn, helps participants learn and prepare to change. Open-ended questions can be used during any step of an individual or group education session. They are particularly helpful in starting the conversation: Use open-ended questions during individual education to ask about strengths and successes, and while choosing a topic to discuss. During a conversation, open ended questions can also be used to ask about experiences, interests, motivations and ideas.

Open-ended questions are closely related to the PCE principles of engagement, respect, safety, and voice. Open-ended questions are used in assessing motivation and are part of the PCE techniques of choosing a topic together and explore/offer/explore. Also, successful use of open-ended questions is often tied to the effective use of silence and pausing techniques. Training on these additional topics will reinforce the learning from this module.

Trainer's Notes

Purpose:

To improve WIC staff understanding of open-ended questions and to practice coming up with open-ended questions

Objectives: By the end of the session, staff will have:

- Reviewed the basic characteristics of open-ended questions
- Practiced changing closed questions into open-ended questions

Materials:

- "Open Ended Questions" Trainee Workbooks

Room Set Up:

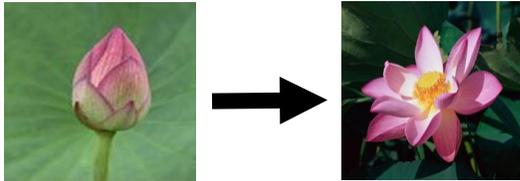
- Staff seated at tables or in small groups

Additional notes about open ended questions:

Suggestions in this module about formulating open-ended questions may not work the same in all cultures or languages. The way to make open-ended questions in Spanish is very similar to English: Avoid using "to be" or "have", and instead start questions with "what" or "how". However, in many Asian languages, such as Chinese, the steps listed here may not work. Educators using these languages may have more success simply encouraging participants to talk about their experiences, opinions, values, or ideas by saying "tell me..." or "I'd like to know more about..." If you have staff who counsel participants in languages other than English or Spanish, you may want to get their insight on the best way to encourage participants to talk.

Activity 1:

Write down 3 or 4 questions you commonly ask participants in counseling or classes:



1. What are your Questions? Activity 1

Instruction: Explain that this in-service will concentrate on a key component of participant-centered education: open-ended questions.

Say: *First, think of some of the questions you ask WIC participants during individual education or in classes. Write down 3 or 4 of the common ones you ask.*

Instruction: Allow staff two or three minutes to write down their ideas. Ask them to put them aside for now, and state that you will use them later.

2. What are Open Ended Questions? Activity 2

Ask: By show of hands, ask:
How many of you have heard of open-ended questions?

Ask: *What are some things you remember about open-ended questions?* (Take one or two comments)

Say: *Open-ended questions are very helpful to get people to open up and talk about their feelings and ideas. This is critical for people to learn and to think about changing.*



Open-ended questions encourage people to open up and talk about their:



Experiences	What have you already heard about breastfeeding?
Opinions or Values	How do you feel about how your child is growing?
Ideas	What do you think might be a way to get your child off the bottle?

Open-ended questions
DO NOT have YES/NO answers

They Usually Start with

How...
What...
Tell me...

BUT NOT

Is, Are, Was...
Do, does...
Have, has...



3. What are Open-Ended Questions? continued...

Instruction: Invite trainees to **read** along as you **review** the handout.

Say: *In general, open ended questions cannot be answered with a simple "yes" or "no".*

Open-ended questions encourage people to talk about their experiences, opinions, values and ideas.

In English, open-ended questions usually start with "what" or "how". Starting a sentence with "Tell me" works like open-ended questions (although these are not technically "questions").

Open-ended questions often invite people to "tell a story".

Also, open-ended questions avoid "fishing" for a right answer. This is especially important in groups. Good open questions that ask about someone's ideas and feelings do not have to have "right answers".

Ask: *What questions do you have about open-ended questions?*

Activity 3

Change the following into open-ended questions:

1. Do you plan to breastfeed?
2. Do you know how to use the WIC coupons?
3. Have you heard of anemia?
4. Are you concerned about your son's teeth?
5. Does your daughter like carrots?
6. Do you think your family would drink 1% milk?
7. Do you think you can talk to your mother about giving Nino the bottle?
8. Can you ask your husband not to smoke in the house?
9. Does your son get any exercise?

Activity 4

What open-ended questions do you plan to use with participants?

4. Changing closed questions into open-ended questions: Activity 3

INSTRUCTIONS

Invite staff to **work together** in groups to **change the questions** on the handout from closed questions into open-ended questions.

After 5 – 10 minutes, have them **share** the questions they came up with.

NOTE: Let them know ahead of time that you will ask several people to share their answers; and as a group, you can discuss which ones seem like they would work best.

Activity 4:

Say Now let's look at the questions you wrote down at the start of the session. Work with a partner to decide how open-ended these questions are. If needed, discuss ways you could make them more open.

INSTRUCTIONS

Let the trainees know that sometimes a closed question is more appropriate. Many of the questions in ISIS are closed and do not have to be made into open-ended questions. However, during classes and individual education, open questions are more helpful for learning and bringing about behavior change.

After 5 minutes or so, have them **share** the questions they developed with the large group.

Say Write down a few open-ended questions you can see yourself using with participants.