



Oregon WIC Listens – Continuing Education: *Saying something nice – Affirmations*

Time: 20 – 30 minutes

Objective:

1. Staff will be able to practice forming simple affirmations.

Instructions:

1. Briefly review the information included in the **Content** section of this CE with staff.
2. Conduct a facilitated discussion with staff using the **Sample Questions** from the **Facilitated Discussion Guide** section in this CE.
3. Provide time for staff to practice forming affirmations and to share their affirmations with other staff members.
4. Debrief with staff about their experiences in forming affirmations.

Introduction:

Affirmations are one of the 4 active listening skills that we have been using as a part of participant centered counseling. In WIC we do a great job of saying nice things to participants. Nothing builds rapport and establishes a relationship with a participant faster!

Content:

Affirmation is the most important active listening skill. It puts the person at ease and lets her know she is safe in telling you personal information. Affirmation builds confidence and self-respect, and lets her know she is OK. After someone is affirmed they are more able to hear the education you want to share. Your belief in the participant's ability to change can influence outcome.

Why affirm?

- ❖ Builds rapport
- ❖ Encourages greater participation
- ❖ Increases participant's confidence in their abilities, for example, to change

Characteristics of affirmations:

- ❖ Find opportunities to sincerely compliment
- ❖ Make supportive, reinforcing statements
- ❖ Focus on successes and efforts
- ❖ Stay positive!
- ❖ Avoids making judgments about the accuracy or appropriateness of what the participant is saying.
- ❖ Use affirmations before educating

Examples of affirming statements:

General

- ❖ She's perfect!
- ❖ Thank you for talking with me today.
- ❖ Keep it up: you're doing great.
- ❖ He is really cute!

More specific

- ❖ It sounds like you want to be a good mother.
- ❖ I appreciate how hard you've worked to _____.
- ❖ You really have some good ideas for how you might do this.
- ❖ Wow, you're really observant. That's great that you're noticing the cues she's giving.
- ❖ You should be really proud of yourself; you're giving him a really great start by breastfeeding.
- ❖ How good that you're noticing about his poop.
- ❖ Her cheeks are very fat from all your good breast milk.
- ❖ It sounds like she knows that you're there when she needs you.
- ❖ It's your breast milk that's been helping him grow.
- ❖ That's so good that you're paying attention to that.
- ❖ Great for you, that's a real challenge.
- ❖ Sounds like you're doing a great job and that you're the driving force in keeping your family healthy.
- ❖ You're making healthy choices, which is great.
- ❖ Congratulations on getting him off the bottle, it sounds like that was pretty frustrating.
- ❖ Congratulations on getting all that taken care of, it must have been a lot of work.
- ❖ That's great that you're brushing their teeth already, I can tell that must be important to you.

Examples of clerical affirmations:

- ❖ I appreciate your patience today.
- ❖ Thank you for coming and bringing all your paperwork!

Examples of affirmations as a response:

Participant: "I've been working on quitting smoking, but it's really hard. I've finally cut down from three a day to just one."

Certifier: "Wow! You cut down from 3 to 1! I can tell that was difficult for you so congratulations on getting so far!"

Participant: "I am breastfeeding my baby, but she cries a lot so I wonder if she needs to start formula."

Certifier: "You should be really proud of yourself; you're giving her a really great start by breastfeeding."

Facilitated Discussion Guide/Sample Questions:

1. Tell me about your experiences using/forming affirmations.
2. What have you found difficult about forming or using affirmations?
3. What have you found easy about forming or using affirmations?
4. What affirmations have you found to be ineffective?
5. What are some of the affirmations that you have found to be effective?
6. After looking at the examples of affirmations, tell me which ones seem realistic or genuine to you? Why?
7. What do you think would make an affirmation seem judgmental?
8. What would happen if I start to educate, rather than affirm a participant when they make one of the statements in the practice activity?

Case Studies or Activities:

For each of the following statements you might hear in a certification visit, write an affirming statement you might say to this participant.

(Remember – No advice or education, please! Use affirmations before educating!)

1. I took my child for a well child check last week and I was glad when the doctor told me he is not overweight.
2. I am breastfeeding my baby but she cries a lot so I wonder if she needs to start drinking formula.
3. This is my first pregnancy so I am trying to eat better than I normally do.
4. Vegetables are not my favorite food but I fix them for my family anyway because I know they are healthy.
5. I quit smoking and my relatives do not smoke in my home any more.
6. The whole family goes for a walk on Saturday afternoon when the weather is nice.

7. I cooked dried beans for the first time and the chili recipe was really good.
8. I didn't really know what I was doing, but the soup tasted good anyway.
9. It was really hard trying to find a ride to my appointment today.
10. She only takes the bottle at bedtime now.
11. He hates it when I brush his teeth.