

RENEW counseling: Skilled staff; Nutrition-focused

Try the activity on your own or with others from your agency.

### RENEW Review Activity:

#### The Righting Reflex

*“Unsolicited advice is the junk mail of life.”* Bern Williams

It is a common response to want to “make things right” when we see a problem. As WIC counselors it is normal to see what the participant needs to change to solve their problems. That is called the “righting reflex.” When we understand ambivalence, we understand that participant centered counseling does not persuade, cajole, prod, or try to convince the participant to fix something. Change must come from the participant’s own motivation.

1. Watch a video about the righting reflex. Here are several good options:
  - a. [The Righting Reflex](#) – Change Companies
  - b. [Righting Reflex](#) – William Miller, PhD.
  - c. [What is the Righting Reflex](#) – Mike Noetel, Sports Psychologist
2. Think of a time when you were telling someone (e.g. your mom, or your partner) about something frustrating or hard that happened at work, and they told you what you should do. What was your reaction? How did you respond to their advice?
3. Sometimes during counseling, we think a participant is being “resistant” to the suggestions we offer. It might look like a participant offering lots of “excuses” about why your idea won’t work. Think about a time that happened when you were providing counseling. Consider if your righting reflex (convincing, repeating, arguing, emphasizing) came out in that situation. How can you recognize your righting reflex? What is the difference between providing nutrition-focused counseling and the righting reflex?
4. Read Molly Kellogg’s ideas on how to tame our righting reflex in [Counseling Tip](#). Which strategies might work for you?
  - a. Acknowledge that you have this reflex. (It’s natural! It can be helpful)
  - b. Emphasize that it is always their choice.
  - c. Ask permission before offering advice or suggestions.
  - d. Use a summary or reflection so the participant hears their words and change talk, instead of yours.
  - e. Express confidence in the participant’s ability to succeed. (You’ve got this!)
  - f. What else?