

5 Tips for Reaching and Teaching Adults:

Consider adults experts on themselves

The nutrition communicator may be the expert on the subject matter being taught, but the adult audience member is the expert on themselves. Get to know the adult participant and discover their past experiences, current situation in life, and future goals and dreams. Use this knowledge to meet the audience's needs, help solve problems, and achieve common goals.

Encourage questioning and provide answers

Adults are skeptical learners and seek validation for new information. Encourage adult audience participants to ask questions and provide them with credible sources and evidence-based answers. Verify facts, provide relevant context, and explain complexities in understandable terms.

Assist adults in finding answers to their questions. Become partners in learning.

Tailor messages to values, priorities, and needs

Adults determine what is important to them. If learning doesn't meet current needs or help achieve personal goals, adults are unlikely to devote precious time, resources, or attention. Remember the acronym WIIFM and answer the question "what's in it for me?" Tailor messages to address the audience's concerns, beliefs and values, priorities, and needs.

Help adults solve problems

Adults seek information that is immediately useful for solving problems they are experiencing. Find out what problems they want addressed and then offer solutions that are realistic, practical, and evidence-based. Empower adults with the knowledge, resources, skills, and self-efficacy they need to tackle their problems.

Honor the adult learner's autonomy

Adults are self-directed learners and must be given responsibility for both learning and for taking action on what they learn. When communicators honor an adult learner's autonomy they respect their choices for what solutions to try, methods to use, and outcomes to strive for. Respect for the adult learner's decisions is key to reaching and teaching this audience.