

Talk, Heart, Hands: A Culturally Sensitive Approach to Nutrition Education for Latinos With Young Children

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INTRODUCTION

Whereas the cultural competency literature supports conceptualizing more than language change in the development of education for cultural groups, few programs or interventions for Latino adults have described a culturally sensitive approach to program development. Research suggests that certain Latino people prefer group-based and face-to-face interaction when discussing health promotion.¹ However, few studies have evaluated a teaching/learning educational approach to the program. In fact, the avoidance of stereotyping and maladaptation of existing non-Latino programs has been emphasized; rather than using a top-down approach in which program developers decide what and how adaptations are made, consideration should also be made for input from the desired audience.²

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the perceived relevance and appro-

priateness of a newly created, 5-session nutrition education program, *¡SALUD! Comiendo en Familia*, tailored to improve the eating behavior of Latino adults with young children. The program used an educational approach that included facilitated group discussions (*Talk*), emotion-based messaging (*Heart*), and skill-building activities and goal setting (*Hands*).

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

The program objectives and content were based on previously developed nutrition programs³⁻⁵ and framed in Social Cognitive Theory.⁶ Specifically, the program addressed self-efficacy, expectancies, and proximal goals through short lectures, activities, and discussion. Information about healthy eating was provided in brief lectures to improve knowledge and outcome expectancies. Facilitated discussions served to connect emotion-based messages (eg, Meals

are a great time to play Follow the Leader, and you are the leader)⁷ and motivational stories with session concepts, address barriers of practicing learned skills, and find peer support and internal cues for motivation. Activities were designed to build and/or reinforce skills to enhance self-efficacy. Guidance on proximal goal setting was afforded for participants to incorporate learned skills into their daily eating routines to further improve self-efficacy and foster behavior sustainability.

To address surface dimensions of cultural appropriateness,^{2,8} sessions were created in Spanish with careful consideration of traditional foods and eating customs across a range of Latino cultures. The educational approach was explicitly devised to address deep structure dimensions of cultural appropriateness (ie, group discussions, emotion-based messaging).^{7,9} The program was content-validated by 6 experts in nutrition education for Latino audiences (Table 1).

EVALUATION

A native speaker delivered the program in Spanish at a clinic for *Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children* (WIC). Each session was offered twice a week over a 5-week period, so participants could choose a day at their convenience. A total of 11 people attended the program; 8 took all 5 sessions and 1 attended 3. Participants were mostly women (n = 10) and self-identified as Mexican (n = 9) or Costa Rican (n = 2). Mini focus groups¹⁰ were conducted a week after the last session to gather participants' opinions and impressions of the program and educational approach. The researchers obtained informed consent.

A focus group guide was developed as described by Krueger and Casey.¹⁰

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The fourth author of this article (Chapman-Novakofski) served on the JNEB staff as Editor-in-Chief. Review of this article was handled, exclusively, by a Guest Editor to minimize conflict of interest.

Conflict of Interest Disclosure: The authors' conflict of interest disclosures can be found online with this article on www.jneb.org.

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J Nutr Educ Behav. 2016; ■:1-5

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jneb.2016.03.008>

Table 1. Program Content, Objectives, and *Talk, Heart, Hands* Components

Session	Target Behavior	Objectives	<i>Talk, Heart, Hands</i> Components
First session: Welcome!	Improve eating practices learned from family when child	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recognize relationship between eating and health 2. Identify basics of healthy eating: what, when, how much, how 3. Acknowledge impact of family on modeling eating behavior 4. Introduce goal-setting and action plan strategies 	<p><i>Talk</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recalling: childhood meals (in terms of what, when, how much, how) ● Proverb: Habits, cobwebs, and cables <p><i>Heart</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● EBM, Follow the Leader (role modeling) <p><i>Hands</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Magic word^b (goal setting)
Second session: Superfood	Incorporate superfoods in diet	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reinforce goal-setting and action plan strategies 2. Identify main food groups: grains, vegetables, fruit, dairy, and protein 3. Recognize food to encourage: superfoods^a 4. Identify potential new superfoods^a to incorporate in diet 	<p><i>Talk</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How did it go? Checking on goals ● Story: Florence the swimmer (on failure and success) ● Recalling: today's breakfast <p><i>Heart</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● EBM tasteful gifts (superfoods) <p><i>Hands</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Connecting foods in their groups ● Identifying the superfood ● Planning tomorrow's breakfast ● Magic word^b (goal setting)
Third session: My plate	Create nutritious meal plates	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Distinguish difference between portion and serving size 2. Identify portion sizes of common foods 3. Know how to distribute different food groups using plate method 4. Be able to create nutritious plate for each meal 	<p><i>Talk</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How did it go? Checking on goals ● Story: the letter (on a son thanking his mom for gifts she gave to him as a child) <p><i>Heart</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reflecting: My family plate and health today and tomorrow <p><i>Hands</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Relating portion sizes with household items ● Creating meals on my plate ● Magic word^b (goal setting)
Fourth session: Reading food labels	Make healthier choices using food labels	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify nutrients within foods 2. Learn how to use food labels to make healthier food choices 	<p><i>Talk</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How did it go? Checking on goals ● Story: 3 stone-breaking men, 3 moms cooking (on having a wellness vision) <p><i>Heart</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Moral: Not all that shines is gold <p><i>Hands</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Food label inspector ● Finding the healthiest choice ● Magic word^b (goal setting)
Fifth session: Let's eat!	Establish meal schedule and healthy meal environment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recognize healthy ways of preparing meals 2. Recognize importance of maintaining regular meal schedule 3. Identify healthy snacks 4. Identify cues for healthy meal environment 	<p><i>Talk</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How did it go? Checking on goals ● Story: The worst mother in the world (on long-term benefits) ● The fly on the wall (importance of family meals) <p><i>Heart</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● EBM, set the table (family meals) <p><i>Hands</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recipe experiment (healthier version) ● Preparing my plate for breakfast ● Magic word^b (goal setting)

EBM indicates emotion-based messages.⁷

^aNutrient-dense foods containing essential vitamins and minerals and also dietary fiber and other naturally occurring substances that may have positive health effects¹⁷; ^bA magic word is chosen by participants to encourage themselves to keep working toward their goal in the face of obstacles. This concept belongs to both the *Hands* and *Heart* components.

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