

Issues -

What is the best way to share information with parents who do not have time to engage in formal programs?

- Provide opportunities for learning bites vs formal teaching
- Capture interest in the form of posters and key messages
- Create health conversation opportunities when possible
- Provide take home messages

How do you promote change in areas of long term health?

- Do not focus on the long term – focus on the moment you have with parents and let the future unfold as a series of small changes strung together, connected with moments of success – think of strings of lights – wires are the work – the light coming on is the success. Find the right wiring (way of delivering a message) to light one light, then another and so on :-)
- Let go of your sense of outcome – it does not matter what success looks like to you – what does success look like for parent or child. Find out, and keep that front and centre for families.
- Focus on change as small, doable actions.
- Teaching with a focus on seeing (noticing) success is a significant part of the change process
- Create opportunities to experiment vs creating change. Change is nothing more than a successful experiment. It is as important to support parents to discover what is not helpful for their journey towards health as to develop successes. No change is never a waste of time.

How might you engage both children and parents in the change process?

- Get buy in from parents in order to support them as agents of change.
- Think more of change as an experiment and look for places of 'stick' when it happens. Congratulate them often – on finding what does and does not work.
- Hold no change in high regard. It is as important to understand what does not work as what does work – at the community, agency and individual level
- All outcomes are successes!
- The goal with HT is to create opportunities for relationship building in the area of cooking and eating, fun physical activity or learning moments – any of these promote change – learning how to recognize the best way to do this for your exact participant is the facilitator role – know the material so you can take any opportunity to share knowledge. Learning comes in many forms.

Barriers -

- Not every person in a family was interested in change or health
- Cultural norms – cultural groups would be agreeable and conformed because their cultural practices would not allow them to express discontent with a perceived authority figure – they would participate because they felt it was the 'right' thing to do vs their choice
- Parents generally (often) were willing to try new things or take risks if it would appear to benefit their children – this was especially true for immigrant families.
- Success takes time – you may need to have some less productive/successful times while you develop your facility with the material and the best ways to share it with your families. Be patient
- Not everyone has cooking facilities – any environment can be adapted to cook
- Not everyone has a lot of space for physical movement – any space can be adapted to learn and practice fun physical activity.
 - Adaptations at HT groups provide an opportunity to work with families on the skills needed for adaptation in general – this supports their learning and helps them take HT ideas and adapt them to fit their home environment.

What can we learn from the Healthy Together initiative in engaging parents in healthy behaviours for the whole family?

- Cooking and eating together was the 'hook' for parents and children. This activity proved the one guaranteed time of enjoyment for everyone. They always wanted to learn to cook and eat together.
- Skilled facilitators had better success with engagement, ability to adapt as needed with ease and were more satisfied with the program. This skill was sometimes strong from the beginning or developed with practice. Facilitators reported their satisfaction with the program increased as they practiced and increased their facilitation skill.
- Engaging whole families can promote change in terms of healthier living but also more connected living – families become familiar to program staff both at a program/agency level but also at a community level – families and staff felt more connected to each other and their community.
- Stay open to change in any form that it appears - Change comes in many forms – each person experiences success in unique ways that ultimately promote health but not in a linear or predictable way – sometimes the changes noticed occurred in the way a family grocery shopped, meal planned, organized their pantry – other times it was in the types of food they ate or their willingness to try foods. Some success was in the form of more physical activity or in providing more opportunity for kids to get physical activity. It always depended on the individual and the facilitator had to stay open to noticing success and promoting change when it appeared in any form.