

CHAPTER THREE

Selecting Objectives and Organizing Information

Daily activities become so much a part of an individual that resistance to any change in routine can be expected. This is so with food particularly. Suggest to some people that food practices should be changed and they feel that their personal rights to freedom are being violated. Others will agree that some diets should be better, but they fail to evaluate their own food plan and make changes where needed. A feeling that what one eats is one's own responsibility may be among the reasons why efforts to improve food habits of the American people have been discouraging.

This feeling, however, also can be an asset to nutrition education. If you as a teacher believe this, you will make a more personal approach to your audience than is usually made. People will change food habits when they believe that good nutritional status will help them achieve their own important goals. You will not tell people what they should do. Rather you will teach in such a way that individuals decide to improve their food practices because they recognize the advantages of changing.

Of course, not all people desire the same things, but good nutritional status is an important asset when striving to reach a wide variety of goals. It can influence the way one looks and feels and acts and thus affects satisfactions from daily activities and the efficiency with which they are performed.

This approach is emphasized throughout the book. Beginning with

objectives, attention is focused on the individuals to be reached, the goals assumed to be important to them, and the attitudes and abilities necessary to achieve these goals through good nutrition. The same plan of organization is used for presenting information, and methods are suggested that will stimulate growth of students toward the objectives. This procedure is also suitable for self-education.

Whether you wish to reach an audience through published articles, a talk, or lessons for an organized group, the same three steps in preparation will be helpful. You will (1) select your objectives, (2) determine the information needed, and (3) plan methods of presentation to achieve your objectives.

OBJECTIVES FOR NUTRITION EDUCATION

As a result of nutrition education people should be able to:

1. Recognize how nutrition can affect:
 - a. Appearance through its influence upon complexion, fingernails, teeth, eyes, hair, posture, and body size.
 - b. Personality as shown by vigor and energy, self-confidence and poise, cheerfulness and cooperativeness, interest in others, emotional stability, and ambition.
 - c. Efficiency through its influence upon physical fitness, mental activity, and alertness.
 - d. Growth and development through its interplay with hereditary and environmental factors.
2. Attain good nutrition because they:
 - a. Provide the nutrients or chemical substances needed by the body for its functions.
 - b. Select foods which provide these nutrients in the amounts needed by the body.
 - c. Prepare the food so that it will furnish maximum nutrients.
 - d. Budget their money and use economy in buying foods when financial resources make it difficult to cover the cost of a good diet.
 - e. Maintain the body in a condition favorable for utilization of nutrients.
 - f. Distribute foods wisely in meals and snacks.
 - g. Make proper use of supplements when needed.
 - h. Accept some responsibility for enrichment of foods when in the interest of public health.
 - i. Establish good food habits which may be modified as needs and living conditions change.
 - j. Assume responsibility for their own nutrition.
 - k. Extend the variety of foods eaten and enjoyed.

3. Recognize the importance of continuously checking nutritional state by such means as:
 - a. Keeping a record of body measurements and interpreting data in terms of nutrition and physical progress.
 - b. Evaluating the daily intake of food nutrients.
 - c. Noting the characteristics which reflect the nutritional state.
4. Plan and prepare nutritious meals for families because they:
 - a. Know how to select and prepare suitable foods from available sources.
 - b. Know nutritional requirements of various age groups.
 - c. Recognize how such factors as customs, nationality, age, and religion influence food preferences and practices.
 - d. Can evaluate the worth of processed foods such as packaged mixes, frozen foods, ready-prepared meals.
5. Understand the significance of nutrition to the welfare of families, communities, and nations because they:
 - a. Know its effects on the mental and physical health of individuals.
 - b. Know its effects on relationships among people.
 - c. Know its relationships to world problems and conditions.

Objectives as comprehensive as these cannot be achieved by the efforts of one person alone or by one group of individuals in a community. But cooperation among the individuals concerned with nutrition education can be expected to bring best results when they plan programs to reach all family members at approximately the same time. The over-all objectives for all groups may be the same, but the methods will be keyed to the age, responsibilities, and interests of the immediate group.

Nutrition education is likely to be ineffective if an individual is reached during just one period in his lifetime. Information acquired at one period may not be that which is needed for solving problems later on. Furthermore, knowledge of nutrition is constantly increasing. Food technology has changed the availability of some foods, and in some instances nutritive value, also. The readiness of people to learn changes with age and responsibility. Thus there is good reason to plan nutrition education for all groups in a community.

Readiness to learn will be influenced by the ages, responsibilities, and experiences of members of a group. Thus, experiences need not be repeated when the same individual is taught nutrition at different periods of his life. The factors that influence readiness to learn are discussed in detail in Chapter Six.

When you have selected the objectives that are appropriate for the group you plan to teach, you will wish to assemble the facts that must be understood if the objectives are to be achieved. The facts pre-

sented in the following chapter are organized to facilitate such planning.

ORGANIZING INFORMATION

All persons having responsibility for nutrition education cannot be well-grounded in the science of nutrition, and many people who are highly trained in nutrition have given little thought to the way in which their information can best be taught. The nutritionist working with the educator forms an important team in education: the person trained in nutrition to discover and to present the facts, the educator to see that facts are presented to students in the form in which they can be understood and used. In Chapter Four an effort has been made to organize the practical knowledge in nutrition according to the objectives shown by research in education to be effective in motivating learning. The information is presented in the form of generalizations and statements of supporting facts.

Generalizations are not to be confused with generalities. Generalities interfere with genuine education and are often used by propagandists to encourage the acceptance of ideas without thinking. They result from generalizing from limited experience, from being blinded to some facts by prejudice, or by accepting half-truths as irrevocable facts.

In contrast, generalizations are specifics of broad application supported by facts. They show relationships among the ideas that belong together and are designed to encourage thinking on the part of the student. When accompanied by supporting or closely related facts they can help you in teaching the student to use his information to solve problems. Furthermore, they can help in the assimilation of new information and the development of ability on the part of the student to make valid generalizations for himself. At this stage the learning becomes activated to the point that it may influence behavior.

The ideas that an individual remembers from his experiences are likely to influence his behavior. If the ideas are false or based on incomplete data his response is likely to be undesirable. This is certainly true of food practices. For instance, the idea that milk is fattening is used as a generalization about milk to justify its almost complete omission from the diets of many adolescent girls and women. Their education is lacking unless they (a) know many facts about food and its effects upon body weight; (b) consider body weight in relation to their total health; (c) know how the nutrients in milk influence physical characteristics other than weight; and (d) organize information about the ways food can affect health.

Of the statements in Chapter Four, those designated by arabic numerals and capital letters are primarily generalizations. The sub-

headings with numbers in parentheses furnish supporting evidence or closely related facts. While the information may be useful to people who are not highly trained in nutrition, a sound education in nutrition will enable the educator to make the best use of the material presented. It is to be hoped that as nutrition finds its rightful place in health education, teachers generally will have good training in it.

The difficulty of making general statements in nutrition with a minimum of technical terms is recognized. In this compilation we have assumed that students will learn to call the common nutrients by name. They are briefly defined or described in Appendix C. Because of the widespread use of these terms it is important that people become familiar with them.

A further difficulty is presented by the fact that the field is new and much of the information is yet in a formative state. Practical application can scarcely await the elimination of all the uncertainties. Students should, however, be taught the importance of open-mindedness in nutrition and warned of the need of revising their information in the light of future discoveries.

We have attempted to select and formulate statements which conform to one or more of these tests:

1. Proof through reliable experimental evidence, derived under carefully controlled experiments and subsequently reaffirmed by other investigators.
2. Practical working hypotheses advanced by experienced research workers in nutrition.
3. Logical conclusions from knowledge in nutrition and related fields.
4. Scientific observations of populations and of species survival.

Information from animal experiments is accepted with qualifications when applied to human beings. But in an effort to bring together the useful and important information, this source cannot be disregarded.

Where results of experiments have not completely established the validity of a finding but at the same time have given a strong, positive indication, the generalizations or facts have been qualified by a term such as "there is some evidence." Such qualifications should not undermine the confidence of the educator in using the statements, but rather serve as a reminder of the need of open-mindedness and the maintenance of the research point of view.

This compilation of generalizations and facts is believed to be unique in several respects.

1. Facts have been brought together from widely scattered reports of nutrition research found in textbooks, bulletins, journal articles, and theses.

2. Facts have been stated with a minimum of technical terms so that they may be readily adapted when they are used by teachers, writers, dietitians, or others who are concerned with education below the professional level.
3. Facts have been organized to show how nutrition can influence the attainment of important goals, and thus the learning of them will be easy to motivate.
4. Facts have been organized under three broad generalizations that show (a) the influence of nutrition upon personal development; (b) how to attain good nutrition; and (c) how to evaluate the nutritional state of an individual.

Each generalization is followed by statements of fact which support it. Because a given fact may be necessary for understanding several generalizations, you will find some of them repeated several times. Thus each generalization and its supporting facts form a complete unit.