

## *Module 12, Lesson 3 Handout:*

### **How To Write A Group Lesson Plan**

Group lessons can be a powerful and effective way to communicate health information and inspire change. Research shows that the act of learning in a group and being able to discuss and share experiences with peers can ultimately lead to greater success with behavior change. Whether you're currently running group lessons or workshops or want to in the future, the most important step is having a plan. Here we'll review the necessary steps for planning a killer lesson that will captivate your audience and inspire healthful behavior change.

**Assess.** After you've decided on your audience, conduct a needs assessment to better understand your audience. Who is going to come and what they want to learn about is the most important thing you can understand to set your workshop up for success. Here are some common ways to collect intel on the community you're focusing on.

**Review data.** Does your population have a group leader who keeps information on the types of issues and events that gather the most interest? Is there anything published that may be helpful, such as food allergy notices to parents if you're looking at a school, or weight loss classes at a senior center, or a need for quick dinners for parents taking evening classes, for example. Look at newspapers, community boards and minutes from meetings to see if there are themes that may be relevant for a wellness workshop.

**Hold informal or formal interviews.** Get a small group together when they're already meeting, either at the beginning or at the end and ask what topics may be of interest. Sometimes faculty, staff, leadership groups or members of a congregation will be able to share some ideas with you.

**Write or email.** Reach out to a focus group through a written assessment or email asking questions to get a representative sample of the community.

**Observe.** If you think you want to tackle a topic like plate waste, or shopping on a budget, sometimes it's best to go to the source and watch people as they eat in a dining hall or shop at the market, and keep notes on your findings.

At a minimum, your needs assessment should:

- Uncover where and when your population is available so you can set up the best time to hold your workshop

- Reveal what topics people would like to learn about
- Provide information about attitudes, beliefs, and values related to nutrition for this population
- Offer some information about participant lifestyles

A thorough needs assessment will help you nail down a topic that's going to engage your audience and add value to their lives.

## Plan

You have your topic. Now it's time to plan! Start by developing an educational approach (how are you going to teach your lesson?) and a goal. Your goal is a broadly stated outcome attendees are expected to meet, for example, "Participants will learn how to plan and make healthy breakfasts that are portable." Your goal is the "big picture" of what you want your participants to get out of this lesson.

Your next step is to craft objectives. Unlike your goal, which is general, objectives are specific, clearly stated outcomes about what people will be able to do after the lesson. Objectives are essentially the exact things you want people to learn or be able to do after the lesson. Use really strong verbs to support your statements. These verbs can be quantitative: identify, recite, construct, classify, compare, for example. Or they can be qualitative verbs, like understand, know, appreciate, value, or believe. A good rule of thumb is about 3 to 5 objectives for a lesson. For example, objectives may be:

Participants will be able to

- Define what constitutes a healthful breakfast;
- Prepare 3 - 5 healthy breakfasts that are grab and go; and
- Plan a shopping list to set themselves up for success.

Once the objectives are written, the lesson plan basically writes itself. Start by looking at the first objective and think of how you can teach this, customizing it to the audience. Consider props, samples, hands-on activities or discussion starters that might work for your group. Customize everything to your population, based on what you learn from the needs assessment. Then do the same for your other objectives. While you're going through this, write down all of your teaching aides and materials so you know exactly what you'll need to bring to the class.

After you've gone through each objective, end the group by summarizing what your participants have done and learned to reinforce the messaging or skills. You may also want to give your participants an assignment so they can apply what they've learned in a tangible way. For example, you can have everyone make a shopping list right then and there so they are prepared for action once they leave the group.

Finally, consider an evaluation where the participants can anonymously share feedback on what they liked and what could be improved upon. Use this feedback as constructive and consider it an opportunity to improve on your work for next time.