

Literacy Friendly PowerPoint Presentation NOTES

“Food Literacy + You = Better Health”

A presentation about what food literacy is about

SLIDE ONE

Intended Audience: Partners working with priority populations (youth and young adults, young parents); also, priority populations of youth, young parents, young pregnant females and potentially the general public.

Note: If presenting to adults working with children, focus less on nutrition and more on age-appropriate knowledge and teaching about food.

When we talk about food literacy, we are trying to explain a bunch of different ideas that go beyond chopping, cooking, and preparing food for yourself, family, and friends. While those ideas are also important, food literacy is a bigger concept. And a lot of the ideas that will be shared are inter-linked or they overlap. In this presentation I will share with you the results of a research project that is still going on in Ontario where we are trying to measure food literacy. Before we could get into the measurement of food literacy, though, we need to be able to define it.

SLIDE TWO: Food Literacy is...

When we start thinking about food literacy, it helps if we put the different ideas into different categories. For example, food literacy is:

1. Knowing about food.
2. Having food skills.
3. Feeling confidence when choosing, preparing, and eating food.
4. Making healthy decisions about food most of the time.
5. And food literacy can be improved when our living situation, our food environment, along with our culture and traditions support it.

That last one is a big one and we will get into it more at the end. Things like our overall food system, our food environment (for example, the places where we choose and buy food, including the marketing of food and drinks), your living situation, culture and traditions –we truly don’t have a lot of control, if any control over these things (we call these things ‘external factors’). For example, if you are on a fixed income, sometimes it is difficult to ensure you have all the ingredients on hand at home to make healthy meals all the time. Sometimes you won’t have the necessary kitchen equipment or utensils to make a recipe. Maybe your stove or fridge isn’t working properly and that can affect your ability to make meals. Maybe you don’t live near a decent grocery store and it takes a few bus trips to get food for yourself and your family. This makes it difficult to experience food literacy the way others may experience it. We wanted to show that food literacy is about things you can control as well as external factors, things beyond your control.

Suggested addition: There is no one-size-fits all approach to teaching food literacy or healthy eating. Each individual person and family’s situation bring about what works or doesn’t work for them. Although there are common sets of skills that will likely be helpful, each person needs the

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resources (such as money or proper housing or places where you can make healthier food choices – again things that may be out of our control) to develop the confidence to make it work within their lives.

We’ll talk more about this in a few slides.

SLIDE THREE: Let’s learn more about food literacy

OK – so let’s learn a bit more about what we mean by food literacy and how it can be applied to you and/or your programs.

SLIDE FOUR: Food literacy is knowing about food

When we are thinking about food knowledge, we are talking about your understanding of food and nutrition:

What you know about a wide variety of foods

What ingredients are in food

What nutrients are in food

Your ability to find reliable and correct information about food and nutrition

How food affects your health

How healthier foods fit into your eating pattern (that is what you eat and drink on a regular basis)

Where food comes from (how and where food is produced, processed, sold and thrown away)

Commonly used words to describe the healthier benefits of foods (e.g., high-fibre, low-sodium)

Commonly used words related to preparing and cooking of food (e.g., to sauté or to fold or to boil, bake or fry).

SLIDE FIVE: Food literacy is having food skills

FOOD SKILLS is being able to do basic kitchen skills like chop, mix, stir and measure ingredients, along with how to read and follow recipes and prepare meals. It includes knowing which equipment and tools to use and how to prepare and handle food safely. Also, how to correctly store food and get rid of food waste and its packaging.

It also means using these basic skills to prepare and mange food through every stage of life and to do it in a healthy way during key times of change that may also involve more stress. For

Prepared by the Locally Driven Collaborative Project (LDCP) Healthy Eating Team, April 2019. Visit www.foodliteracy.ca for more information.

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example, going to college or university, having a child, becoming a new parent or finding yourself alone and having to prepare food for yourself.

Some examples of food skills include: Learning how to follow a recipe and learning how to cook without a recipe. As already mentioned, but also important here, to prepare and cook food you have to know commonly used words (like ‘sauté’ or to fold or to mix) and other cooking terms such as to ‘broil’ or to ‘roast’, etc. Also, learning how to add or change things to make a recipe healthier. Planning and organizing skills are also needed to get the ingredients, assemble them and prepare them in a timely manner to get a meal on the table to feed yourself and/or a family.

Suggested addition: A research team of public health dietitians talked to many youth, young parents and young pregnant women in Ontario in 2013, * who said that they were motivated to prepare their own food because of things like cost, taste, personal health, child health, independence, pleasure, and creativity. The most common reason for preparing their own food was “knowing what’s in it”. They preferred practical, hands-on type of learning and just providing recipes and online learning were no substitute for this type of learning. And they wanted these hands-on opportunities to learn both in the schools and in the community. Many young people and adults never used recipes and valued the ability to improvise. Preparing food for others or with their children was a source of pride and satisfaction. Confidence in the kitchen was higher among those who learned basic food skills earlier in life from a parent or other family member or in school.

*Desjardins, E et al. Making Something Out of Nothing. Food literacy among youth, young pregnant women and young parents who are at risk for poor health. A Locally Driven Collaborative Project, 2013. Available from:

https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/ServicesAndTools/Documents/LDCP/LDCP.Food.Skills_Report_WEB_FINAL.pdf

SLIDE SIX: Food literacy is feeling confident about food

Food literacy is about self-efficacy (believing in your ability to accomplish things) and feeling confident about food. There are several pieces to this, for example:

- It’s also about having some important key skills such as the ability to tell apart what information about nutrition and healthy eating is correct and what information is not and how to find the right information from the right source (e.g., a regulated health professional such as a Registered Dietitian) -again this is also part of knowing about food we talked about earlier. Another important key skill is to be able to read and use a food label (also a recommendation of the new CFG) and the ability to read a recipe.

[Note for Presenter-FYI –this is the Nutrition Literacy Attribute]

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- It's believing you can choose, buy and prepare food that is healthier; whether you are at a grocery store, at a restaurant, or at school. This also includes having a good understanding of different types of food and which ones are important for health (this is also part of knowing our food that we have already talked about) - and having the confidence and desire to choose healthier foods when there are many food choices and price points no matter where you go.

[Note for Presenter-FYI –this is the Food & Nutrition Self-Efficacy Attribute]

- It's also believing you can cook tasty meals using food you have on hand by opening your fridge to see which ingredients are available, with the belief in your ability to use different cooking tools and methods, to make a delicious meal for yourself and/or your family.

[Note for Presenter-FYI –this is the Cooking Self-Efficacy Attribute]

In the new CFG, one of the recommendations is to 'Cook more often', to

- Plan what you eat; and
- Involve others in planning and preparing meals

Having the skills and confidence to get healthy meals on the table can enhance many parts of our lives including our health and nutrition. Involving others in planning and preparing meals It allows families to share and talk about traditions and culture. It's a source of pride and joy to share these skills and talks (from parent to child, grandparent to child, peer to peer; in the research that was conducted in 2013, this was the main source of learning for youth and young adults).

- Finally, part of believing in your ability to accomplish things and feeling confident about food is your relationship with food or your 'food attitude'. For example: Do you feel good about the food you eat? Do you enjoy food with others? Do you like to prepare healthy food? These questions focus on the relationship with food. A good relationship with food is critical to your health, both physical and mental. Don't neglect the "invisible" mental side of the relationship. *[Note for Presenter-FYI –this is the Food Attitude Attribute]*

As the new CFG states, healthy eating is more than the foods you eat. The new CFG recommends things that are related to our relationship to food, for example:

Be mindful of your eating habits

- Take time to eat
- Notice when you are hungry and when you are full

Enjoy your food

Food is much more than the nutrients and calories that it provides. The pleasure and satisfaction food provide is important too. Culture and food traditions can be a part of healthy eating

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Eat meals with others

Sharing food with friends and family, is also an important means of connection and relationships with others. It too is an expression of culture and tradition. Research shows numerous health benefits of having regular family meals, beyond the nutrition they provide.

SLIDE SEVEN: Food literacy is making healthier food decisions most of the time

Believe it or not, not everyone agrees on what is healthy eating? A good definition says that “Healthy eating includes having a healthy relationship with food, mind, and body – free of obsession, compulsion, and rigid rules while being attuned to the needs of the body.” (Source: Cook-Cottone, Tribole, & Tylka. Healthy Eating in Schools: Evidence-Based Interventions to Help Kids Thrive, 2013.)

In the new CFG – ‘Healthy eating is more than the foods you eat as we already mentioned. It is also about where, when, why and how you eat’. In the new Food Guide, it’s about your overall pattern of eating, which means what you eat and drink on a REGULAR basis. It doesn’t mean: Eating ONLY “healthy” foods ALL the time. Also, healthy eating doesn’t mean to NEVER over or under eat.

Healthy eating is a habit. Making healthy food choices or decisions can help you develop a healthy eating pattern. A healthy eating pattern helps you improve your overall health. In a healthy eating pattern, all the foods and drinks work together, that’s why it’s important to make it a habit to eat a variety of healthy foods each day, this includes, eating plenty of vegetables and fruits, whole grain foods and protein foods, especially plant-based proteins (e.g., beans, legumes, etc.). Eating a variety of these foods will:

- help you feel good
- maintain your health
- meet your nutritional needs

The question then becomes can we apply our food knowledge, information, skills to make healthy food choices most of the time? Some other questions to ask include: Do you feel like your eating habits support your health (your mind and your body)? What is healthy for you and your family? How can you plan meals and snacks that balance your priorities and resources with health and nutrition? What works for one person or family may not work for another.

Because, ‘healthy eating is more than the foods you eat’, we can make food decisions based on a lot more than what’s healthiest, including what foods are available (at the store, restaurant, recreation center, school, etc.) and what our current life situation may be. Rather than judging

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ourselves for these experiences, we can learn to accept that it's normal. Avoid the thinking of putting foods in categories such as good/bad or healthy/unhealthy; this will help to avoid judgment. We strongly discourage using these food categories with kids. If you are looking to make efforts to eat healthier, an important first step is to treat yourself with compassion and acceptance. It's hard to want to take care of a body you're trying to punish. Don't beat yourself up. Treat yourself with kindness. It's harder to make and sustain behaviour change that's motivated by negative thoughts and feelings.

Take small steps. The goal with making healthier food choices should be progress not perfection. Stressing about nutrition and health is no more helpful than ignoring nutrition and health. Having a good relationship with food means that you can choose foods giving some thought to nutrition, but without worries about health leading to added stress and anxiety about what foods you eat or serve your family. “Enjoying your food is part of healthy eating.” We feel better when we're able to enjoy the taste of food, the people we're eating with, and have positive experiences with eating. (Canada's Food Guide, 2019).

Suggested Addition: When it comes to children, by providing regular meals and snacks, age-appropriate textures, offering both familiar and new foods, and trusting them to eat without applying pressure, we can help children learn to eat a variety of foods. Children have the desire to learn about food from adults they trust. They don't need to be able to remember nutrition facts. They learn best through role modelling and hands-on doing – touching, feeling, seeing, smelling, tasting (when they are ready).

SLIDE EIGHT: Food literacy may be improved by having a supportive...

While you may not be able to change external factors but having a more supportive environments may lead to improved food literacy over time. Here are some examples of environments that may impact food literacy:

As previously mentioned, your ‘**LIVING SITUATION**’ –which includes your resources: income, housing, education and access to food have a huge influence on your food decisions. This could include eating with others as well as traditions around food like cooking, growing, and hunting. However, it isn't always possible to have control over your living situation. You may know what healthy means and how to eat healthy but if you can't afford to buy the ingredients to make a healthy meal

OR, your stove doesn't work

OR, you don't have the correct equipment to make that healthy meal

OR, you may have income, education, BUT you don't have TIME to make the healthy meal...

...your living situation may impact your food literacy.

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The **FOOD SYSTEM** is everything from “farm to fork” and all the steps in between –it is how we grow, process, transport, consume, sell, and dispose of food. Let’s think about some of these steps and why they matter.

- Think about the packaging of food and how it may impact our food decisions;
- Think about the advertising of food and beverages and how that industry tries to impact our decision to purchase certain foods;
- Think about farmers that grow and sell food closer to your home;
- Think about how emergency situations can impact our decisions about food.

The **FOOD ENVIRONMENT** is part of the overall food system but the focus here is on food offered or sold where we live, work, and play. Some things to think about with respect to food literacy include the following examples:

- You’re at a recreational centre and you know how to make a healthy food choice – or not, but there are only fries, pizza, hotdogs, popcorn, soda and candy.
- You’re at a grocery store and you know how to read labels to assist you in making healthy choices
- You’re watching TV and you see a food advertisement about a soft drink and suddenly, you want a soft drink!

The food environment is all around us – where we work, learn, play. It is very difficult to keep the food environment at bay especially when you are trying to try to eat a bit better. But having an awareness of how the food environment can impact our food literacy is a good start.

CULTURE AND TRADITIONS AND FOOD LITERACY

Not everyone has family traditions or may relate directly to their cultural background. Other people do. The social support to learn and share food skills is part of this as well – did you have someone teach you how to make certain foods or dishes? Do you share your knowledge with others? Is this something we can consider more in our community programming?

Your cultural background also includes where and how you eat – do you “dashboard dine” in your car? Do you eat in front of the television? Do you eat out of the home more often than at home?

Most of the community programming we term “food literacy” (e.g., a cooking program for kids) will address each of these components. But food literacy itself is not going to change food insecurity or the food system. Food insecurity, for example, still needs an income response to make the biggest difference (e.g., increase minimum wage). We may not be able to chance external factors but having a more supportive food environment, food system, etc. may lead to improved food literacy over time.

For more information see the PROOF infographic and how it links directly to food literacy:

<https://proof.utoronto.ca/resources/fact-sheets/#foodskills>

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SLIDE NINE: Let's Review-Food literacy is....

SLIDE TEN: Acknowledgement