

USING EFFECTIVE TEACHING TECHNIQUES

It is always best to actively involve clients in the educational process when sharing information. Various **teaching techniques** can facilitate client involvement.

People learn in different ways. Some people like to see main points written down in order to remember them. Others learn better by listening. They may like to hear information repeated a few times in different ways. Others rely on all their senses. They may need to touch and feel something before they can fully learn it.

Use a variety of teaching techniques. Here are some techniques that improve educational sessions:

Teaching Techniques

1. Ask questions.
2. Use a variety of teaching methods.
3. Encourage clients to participate and practice skills.
4. Use different teaching materials.
5. Speak in ways that clients understand.

1. Ask questions.

Questions have many uses. They can help you:

- Obtain important information from clients.
- Find out what services clients want or what problems clients are having.
- Find out how a client is feeling.
- Explore feelings and concerns.
- Check for client understanding and skills.

There are two types of questions:

Open-ended questions

Questions that encourage clients to give as much information as they would like.

Examples: What brings you to the clinic?
How do you feel about having a pelvic exam today?
What are some ways you could protect yourself from getting an STD?"

When clients answer open-ended questions, they can say whatever is on their minds. These types of questions will encourage communication.

Closed questions:

Closed questions can be answered with just a few words. They are often used in order to clarify information or get specific answers. The answer to closed questions is usually “Yes” or “No.”

Examples: “Is this the first time you’ve had a pelvic exam?”
“Are you using a method of birth control?”
“When did you start your last menstrual period?”

Both open-ended and closed-ended questions have their place.

Don’t ask questions in a way that leads the client to “think” you want a particular answer. Sometimes clinic staff phrase questions in a way that clients answer with what they “think” the educator wants to hear, instead of the truth.

Example: If you ask, “You only have sex with your husband, don’t you?” the client will probably answer, “Yes”. If you change your question to, “How many partners have you had sex with in the last month?” you will be more likely to get a truthful response.

2. Use a variety of teaching methods.

- Demonstration
- Question and Answer
- Role Play
- Short Lecture

Use a variety of teaching materials.

- Audiovisual
- Interactive computer/Internet
- Story/games

Demonstration

The educator shows a client how to do something. For example, fill an applicator with spermicidal foam while the client watches.

Question and Answer

The educator asks the client questions to find out what the client knows about a certain topic. The client asks the educator questions.

Role Play

Clients practice what they might do or say in a given situation. For example, the educator asks the client to practice what she would like to say to her boyfriend about condom use. The educator then plays the role of her boyfriend.

Short Lecture

The educator gives information for a short period of time. For example, the educator describes the menstrual cycle to the client. If the lecture becomes too long, clients can lose interest.

3. Encourage clients to participate and practice skills.

One teaching method is not better than another. The important thing is that the method actively involves clients in the learning process. Clients need more than just information to use their chosen birth control method well. They also need to learn new skills.

Since it can be hard to learn new skills, it is important to practice them. Educators can help clients practice skills by showing or demonstrating the skill to them first. You can use models of a penis or woman's pelvis when showing how to use certain methods. You can also make up a role-play that you can act out with the client to practice communication skills. It's best to create a situation that is close to what the client might experience at home.

After you have shown a new skill to a client, give the person a chance to try it. They may want to practice more than once. As they practice, give feedback and support.

*What I hear, I forget;
What I see, I remember;
What I do, I understand.
Confucius*

4. Use different teaching materials

Another way to involve clients is to use different teaching materials. Pictures, brochures, samples of birth control methods, models of the human body or videotapes can help people learn new things. You can use these to explain new ideas or reinforce learning. There are many different kinds of teaching materials. Here are some of the most common teaching materials and ways to use them in family planning clinics.

Print Materials

Print materials include brochures, pamphlets, information sheets and wallet cards.

When you use print materials:

- ✓ Reinforce key messages.
- ✓ Circle important points.
- ✓ Cross out anything unnecessary.
- ✓ Write the client's name on the pamphlet.
- ✓ Give the material to the client to take home.
- ✓ Check for low literacy level using Smog Readability Formula (see handout).

Visuals

Visuals include flip charts, posters, diagrams of the human body and drawings.

When you use visuals

- ✓ Reinforce key messages.
- ✓ Show clients what things look like.

Samples

Samples are actual objects that clients can see and touch.

When you use samples:

- ✓ Explain what they are.
- ✓ Encourage clients to touch and hold them.

Models

Models are copies of objects that clients can see and use to practice skills.

When you use models:

- ✓ Explain what the model is supposed to represent.
- ✓ Show clients how to do something.
- ✓ Give clients a chance to practice on the model, with your help.

Other Audiovisuals (AVs)

Audiovisuals include videos, films and slide shows.

When you use audiovisuals:

- ✓ Always preview the AV before using it.
- ✓ Introduce the AV by telling clients what to watch for.
- ✓ Hold a discussion after it is shown.

5. Speak in ways that clients understand.

To communicate effectively, it is important to speak in ways that clients understand.

Ways to do this are:

Listen to the words the client uses and then use those words if you can.

Use examples your client can relate to. Examples help link new ideas with words and concepts the client already knows.

□ Use Common Language the Client Knows

Educators need to speak the language used by the client or use a trained interpreter who speaks the language. Don't use technical terms. If you need to use unfamiliar terms, explain their meaning clearly.

□ Relate New Information to What the Client Already Knows

Present new information in a way that builds on what the client has just learned. For example, you should talk about the reproductive organs and their function before explaining how the menstrual cycle works.

□ Use Examples

Examples help to clarify concepts. When explaining how to insert the diaphragm to clients who know about cooking Mexican food, you might say, "Put spermicidal jelly on the rim of the diaphragm and inside the dome. Then fold the diaphragm in half, like you would fold a tortilla to make a taco."

Remember the way you educate clients is just as important as the content you teach.

Effective teaching techniques are:

- 1. Ask questions.**
- 2. Use a variety of teaching methods.**
- 3. Encourage clients to participate and practice skills.**
- 4. Use different teaching materials.**
- 5. Speak in ways that clients understand.**

These techniques involve clients in the learning process and help them to remember and use the information they have learned.

Reference: Fundamentals of Family Planning: a Self-Study Manual, California Family Health Council