**Tips for Writing Learning Objectives**

While writing objectives may not be the most exciting part of designing a lesson, it is perhaps the most important. Objectives help nutrition educators clearly define the purpose of each activity and what participants will gain from them. It is exciting to plan fun activities, but the purpose of these activities needs to be thought through. Nutrition education lessons generally focus on a behavioral goal (such as choosing healthy snacks or breastfeeding), and each activity of a lesson should relate to it and help participants succeed.

**General tips**
Well-written objectives should 1) be stated in plain language, 2) include an action verb to describe what the participant needs to do and 3) be measurable in terms of time, space, amount or frequency. Objectives are usually written something like this: “At the end of the class, participants will be able to…”

Below are a few examples that would be appropriate for a class geared toward increasing consumption of whole grains:

At the end of the class, participants will be able to:
- List two benefits of whole grain foods (Knowledge)
- Differentiate between good sources of whole grains and mainly refined grains using product labels (Skills)
- Name a whole grain food that they will try in the next week (Behavioral intention)

**Three Types of Objectives**
As discussed in Module 2, nutrition education generally involves enhancing motivation for healthy behaviors, providing skills and knowledge, creating support, or a combination of these. Overall, learning objectives should address “what will the participant need to know, feel, or be able to do differently in order to achieve the behavioral goal?”

There are three main types of learning objectives. Thinking in terms of head, heart and hand may help to understand them.
- **Head (Cognitive)** – relate to participants being able to think differently or understand new information
- **Heart (Affective)** – relate to a change in participants’ feelings, attitudes & values
- **Hand (Psychomotor)** – relate to participants being able to do something differently

Nutrition education programs often tend to present knowledge-based, cognitive objectives, but moving beyond knowledge in nutrition education requires exploring how to design activities that address affective and psychomotor objectives as well. Doing this helps steer education efforts toward addressing the motivation and skills participants...
need to make healthy behavior choices. Each type of objective is further explained below.

Cognitive Objectives (Head)
These can range from simple recall of facts to more complex application and evaluation of new ideas. The chart below, moving left to right, progresses from simple to complex. If this seems confusing, do not worry, simply pay attention to the verbs that correspond to the various learning level. This helps write clear objectives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels of Learning</th>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Comprehension</th>
<th>Application</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
<th>Synthesis</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Description of what learner will do</td>
<td>Recall information</td>
<td>Show understanding and report information in ways that vary from how it was learned</td>
<td>Apply information to a new context</td>
<td>Take learned information apart</td>
<td>Put together parts into a unified whole</td>
<td>Use the correct criteria to judge worth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useful Verbs</td>
<td>Define List Name Recall</td>
<td>Describe Discuss Identify Locate Translate</td>
<td>Apply Exhibit Practice</td>
<td>Analyze Categorize Compare Distinguish</td>
<td>Design Organize Plan</td>
<td>Choose Estimate Measure Rate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examples:
- At the end of the session, participants will be able to list good sources of iron
- At the end of the session, participants will be able to distinguish between 100% fruit juice and juice drinks by reading food labels

Affective Objectives (Heart)
These relate to participants’ feelings and attitudes. For effective nutrition education, participants must not only understand nutrition information, but they must also value the nutrition education message and believe it is important. Learning activities relating to these objectives can help increase participants’ value for a behavior (such as drinking low-fat milk or serving vegetables to their children) so they become willing to take action. Objectives in this domain involve helping participants increase awareness, adopt attitudes and create values that guide them toward healthier behaviors.

Examples:
- By the end of the session, participants will share experiences about feeding vegetables to their children and gain support from peers.
By the end of the session, participants will demonstrate the importance of overcoming barriers to breastfeeding (by discussing barriers and ways to overcome them in class).

**Psychomotor Objectives (Hand)**
These relate to psychomotor skills, or the ability of participants to be able to do something differently after the activity or lesson. This type of learning objective could involve participants first observing an action (e.g. participants observe an instructor prepare a healthy snack), then imitating and practicing it (participants actually prepare a healthy snack) and finally being able to adapt or modify it (participants are able create other healthy snacks that their family will enjoy).

Examples:

- By the end of the session, participants will be able to demonstrate the ability to prepare a healthy snack.
- By the end of the session, participants will be able to demonstrate two breastfeeding positions.

Some objectives can cross lines and touch heads (cognitive), hearts (affective) and/or hands (psychomotor). Try not to get caught up in technicalities. What really matters is understanding that both feeling and thinking influence behavior. Keep in mind that for nutrition education to be effective, it is necessary to design activities that address not only heads, but also hearts and hands.