
QUICK & EASY HEALTH EDUCATION TOOLS

Part of offering enriching outreach centered health education is having a variety of flexible, useful, and fun activities that are available in a “snap.” These activities, or tools, can be drawn upon at a moment’s notice and require minimal preparation time. Generally, each one will require 5-10 minutes of delivery time. These activities are amenable to various health education topics and are categorized below according to four uses: icebreakers, dividing groups into teams/pairs, evaluation exercises, and incentives. Additionally, in the Health Education Recipes section, we have included suggested Quick and Easy Health Education Tools that complement the recipes. Try one out for yourself and see how these tools can work for you!

Icebreakers

Icebreakers are beneficial activities that can be incorporated into any health education session. These activities encourage a comfortable educational setting, and help participants become acclimated to a learning environment. Icebreakers also facilitate proper introductions, especially those new to the educational setting. Additionally, icebreakers stimulate fun and engaging interactions that create a positive atmosphere for participatory learning. Icebreakers are typically used at the beginning of a health education session to motivate participants; however, they can also be used midway through a session to energize people.

The following easy-to-implement icebreakers are proven to be useful tools in health educational settings with farmworkers. Some of the activities require more time than others; we strongly advise you to assess your time parameters and choose the icebreaker best suited for the specific needs of your audience and health educational setting.

Grab Bag

Place several health topic related objects in a bag. Have a participant choose one object then discuss its relevance to the health topic. Try to have several grab bags on topics already prepared ahead of time. Sample grab bag health topics include: STIs/STDs, blood pressure, pesticides, sun/heat exposure, and nutrition. A pesticide grab bag could include such contents as the following: pesticide warning sign/label, long-sleeved shirt, long pants, hat, socks, gloves, an EPA blue card pesticide poster, symptoms pictures/flip chart, videos (suggestions: *Siguiendo el Sol*, *The Playing Field*, and *North Carolina Pesticide Safety Education Video*.)

Cabbage Game

Write health-related questions and some fun “get to know you” questions on individual sheets of paper. Make a ball out of the questions, crumpling one sheet over the others so it is easy to take off one sheet while the paper cabbage stays intact. Instruct participants to throw the ball around the group. As a person catches it they peel off a layer, read the question, answer it, and then throw it to the next person.

The Toilet Paper Game

Pass around a roll of toilet paper and tell participants to take as much as they want, but don't tell them why! After everyone has taken some toilet paper, have them tear each piece at the perforations. For each square of paper, have participants share one fact about themselves.

Balloon Juggle and Sort

Give each participant a balloon. Challenge participants to keep all balloons in the air. This gets the group moving and cooperating. Once they've got the hang of it, make it harder by adding in more balloons or placing restrictions (e.g., without hands or only using one finger). Next, ask participants to continue juggling balloons, but sort them via colors (this works best with large groups).

I Am Unique

Ask each person to share one thing that makes them unique. This can be incorporated into a classroom exercise for learning names; while participants share their names, ask them to include their unique characteristic, experience, liking, or hobby.

Human Taco

Write one taco ingredient on a set of notecards; each notecard will have a different ingredient on it. Stick a notecard on the back of each participant's shirt. Have each player mingle, asking yes/no questions to find out the taco ingredient on their back. Next, explain the correct order of ingredients in a human taco (tortilla, chicken, beans, cilantro, onion, salsa, and lemon juice). Then, begin the game with a start command, such as "let's eat!" Have participants work with others in the group to line-up according to correct ingredient order. Please note: this icebreaker may be used for small and large groups. If working with small groups, only 1-2 human tacos can be formed; however, if working with large groups, several "human tacos" can be formed.

Dividing Groups into Teams/Pairs

During a group health education session, you may want to change the dynamic and have participants work in smaller groups or pairs. Participants working in smaller groups or pairs are more likely to become involved and actively participate in your health education session. Small groups encourage participants to know each other better, breaking the ice, and creating a more comfortable learning atmosphere. There are a variety of other reasons for considering smaller groups or pairs, including the following:

- 1) Small groups allow participants to learn from each other.
- 2) Small groups create opportunities for more people to practice skills.
- 3) Learning becomes more dynamic and active in small groups.

Instead of simply counting off, consider some of these creative suggestions for dividing a group into smaller groups or pairs. Remember to divide your group first and then provide instructions on the activity you will be doing; this avoids confusion and allows participants to focus on one activity at a time.

Birthday Months

Divide a large group by their birthday months. For example, create four teams by having the January – March birthdays in one group, April – June another group, July – September, and October – December accordingly.

Secret Codes

Place one sticker-dot on participants' name-tags or on a packaged treat. Divide participants in teams based on the color of the dots. For example, everyone with a yellow dot will form one group, red dots another group, etc. You can also do this with colored markers. Alternatively, you can distribute different-color markers for participants to write their names on their name tags. Or, handouts for an activity can be copied on different colors of paper.

Puzzle Pieces

Find a few photos or drawings of farmworker-specific issues that relate to your health education topic. Cut them into puzzle pieces; the number of pieces will depend on the number of individuals you want in each group. Then shuffle all the pieces together and distribute one to each participant. Instruct them to find the participants that have the other pieces of their puzzle and put the puzzle together. Participants will work with this team.

Puzzles do not always have to "fit" together physically. You could write the names of people who "fit" together on index cards. For example, divide participants into pairs using these sample combinations: revolutionary figures like Emiliano Zapata and Pancho Villa, farmworker movement leaders like Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez, and performing artists like Vincente Fernandez and Los Tigres del Norte. You could select television characters, political figures, movie characters, or even "characters" from your organization.

Famous Phrases

Consider some typical sayings that members of your farmworker community regularly say or would recognize. Write each one on a large strip of paper and then cut it in half. Shuffle all the pieces. Distribute one piece to each participant and explain that they are to find the partner that will make the phrase or saying complete. This is a fun tool for dividing groups into pairs. Have each pair share their saying with the big group. Spanish speakers, for example, could consider such examples as: "Si se puede!" or "Que viva la raza!"

Deck of Cards

In order to divide your group into teams of two, three or four, use a deck of cards (or a partial deck of cards). For example, suppose you wanted three teams with four participants in each one, select four cards from three different suits, like four kings, four queens, and four jacks. Shuffle the cards and distribute one to each participant. Ask them to find their corresponding teammates that have the same card.

Count Off . . . Backward

Count off backward instead of forward! To break into five groups count off backward from five, "five, four, three, two, one, five." Then, have all the fives meet-up, the fours, the threes, and so on.

Go to Your Corners

If you are providing a health education session indoors, identify reasons for people to go to separate places in the room. For example, you could have them go to four corners depending on whether they are a first born, last born, middle, or only child in their family. You can also connect the corners to content. For example, if you're providing a session on hypertension, you could have participants select the prevention strategy that they like best: exercise, maintaining a healthy weight, quitting smoking, or having a low-salt diet.

Low-Cost Incentives

Low-cost incentives are an excellent tool for encouraging farmworkers to engage in health education activities. Most farmworkers will be more inclined to increase their knowledge and understanding about how to improve and maintain their health if they are compensated for investing time and effort. For more impact, try offering farmworker incentives that support or reinforce a key message being taught. For example, if an outreach worker implements a mental health activity demonstrating how farmworkers should deal with stress and feelings of isolation, they can provide phone cards as incentives for participating. Farmworkers will then be able to contact their loved ones and fortify supportive family relations as a coping strategy. Outreach workers and health educators can ensure that farmworkers have at least one tool available that will allow them to adapt or modify their behaviors more easily.

Gift Certificate Redeemable at a Grocery Store

Gift certificates can be purchased from local grocery stores frequented by farmworkers in your area. This incentive can be given to farmworkers at the conclusion of a nutrition or diabetes prevention/treatment health education session, and will enable farmworkers to seek out healthy, low-fat foods.

Condom

Condoms can be given to farmworkers participating in sexual health education activities and labeled "practice safe sex" in the preferred language of farmworkers in your area. Condoms are affordable and easy to obtain. Your outreach program might consider contacting a condom company and request a donation.

Work Gloves

Farmworkers wear work gloves to protect their hands while engaging in daily fieldwork, particularly during the cultivation and harvest season. Work gloves are a useful occupational health incentive to encourage farmworkers to protect their hands from pesticides, thorns, plant debris, and insect bites.

Reusable Water Bottles

Water bottles are practical occupational health incentives for health education participants. Farmworkers need to stay hydrated to prevent dehydration and heat stroke, especially during excessively hot weather. Most canteens are reusable and can be utilized by farmworkers season after season. Water bottles can also be purchased in bulk via wholesale retail outlets.

Soccer Balls, Basketballs, or Softballs

To encourage physical activity as a health practice for reducing stress and maintaining healthy weight, outreach staff can provide soccer balls, basketballs, or softballs. Sport-related incentives are fun for an entire farmworker family, and can be purchased for minimal cost at retail chains.

Evaluation Tools

You should always take the time to evaluate your health education sessions. The purpose of evaluation tools is to assess what participants learned before and after a health education activity. Doing a pre-test and post-test is a one good way to evaluate an activity. A pre-test assesses the pre-existing knowledge of audience members about the topic at hand. Performance on a post-test that shows knowledge gained helps you measure success. The first three tools listed below follow a pre-/post-test approach. The remaining two tools are useful for reiterating key lessons from the session while allowing you to assess participants' understanding of these concepts.

Stand-Up/Sit-Down

For this evaluation tool, proceed with the following steps:

- Develop a series of yes/no statements regarding your health education topic. Make sure that they can be easily read aloud. A sample statement could be: "I know three ways to prevent sun exposure" or "I know that I should eat 5-9 servings per day of fruits and vegetables."
- Read the statements one-by-one to the participants. If they can answer "yes" to the statement, ask that they stand; if not, they should remain seated.
- Observe or document the number of participants that said stand up/remain seated for each statement.
- Upon completing the activity, repeat the aforementioned steps.
- On your own, compare the numbers of participants that stood up for each statement. Use this information to evaluate knowledge gained on the health topic as a result of the session.

Spin the Bottle

This evaluation tool can be delivered before and after a health education session to see what the group learned.

- Develop a series of yes/no questions or other closed-ended questions regarding your health education topic. Make sure that they can be easily read aloud.
- Instruct participants to sit in a circle and place a bottle in the middle of the circle.
- Spin the bottle and ask a question to the person to whom the bottle is pointing.
- Upon completing the activity, present the same series of questions.

- On your own, compare how well participants were able to respond to the questions. Use this information to evaluate the knowledge gained on the health topic as a result of your session.

Picture Game

At the beginning of the health education session, give each participant a picture related to a health topic and have them describe the picture. Upon completing the session, distribute the pictures again and have them comment on a new aspect of the picture that was addressed during the session. Encourage participants to mention something that was not already discussed when the pictures were initially described the first time. Reinforce the health education activity by bringing up aspects not discussed.

Family Feud

Think of four different topic-specific questions. Write each question on a large piece of paper. Write the answers on large index cards. Divide the participants into two groups. Have each group select a leader and get in a line behind the leader. Give the leader of each group a bell. A question is read and the team that rings the bell first has the first chance to guess the answers to that question. If they miss one answer, play passes to the other team.

Egg Hunt

Write questions about a health topic on little strips of paper. Questions can be multiple choice, true/false, etc. Put a question and prize in each egg and hide them around the activity site. Divide participants into two teams and have each team hunt for eggs. After a few minutes, gather the entire group and have participants review the questions together. Award one point for each egg found and then a point for each question answered correctly.