Gut Intuition: A Curriculum Designed to Help Adolescents Develop a Healthy Relationship with Food Through Intuitive Eating

Holly Anderson, UW Nutritional Sciences Program, MS Nutrition Student, & Dietetic Intern; LEAH Nutrition Fellow
Mentors: Alicia Dixon Docter, MS, RD, CD, Andrea Landis, PhD, RN, FNP-BC, Jasmin Zavala, MD, Rebecca Finkel, MA, MS, RDN, CD

Background

- Society promotes an unrealistic, thin body ideal.
- Consequently, teens:
  - Feel pressure to conform.
  - Experiment with unhealthy means of weight control.
  - Develop disordered eating behaviors and body image concerns.
- Dieting leads to:
  - Unhealthy weight control behaviors.
  - Weight gain over time.
- A rising interest in separating the concepts of weight and health encourages:
  - Shifting focus away from weight.
  - Supporting a positive attitude toward body, food, and movement.

Project Objective

1-Hour Intuitive Eating Curriculum

Intuitive Eating

- Non-diet approach to nutrition
- Characterized by:
  - Eating for physical rather than emotional reasons.
  - Awareness of hunger/fullness cues.
  - Respect for and acceptance of one’s body.
- Removes “good”/”bad” labels from food
- Encourages flexible relationship with food

Structure & Content

An Intuitive Eating workshop series was conducted in the Teen Health Center at Garfield High School as part of this project.

Objective: to better understand adolescent perspectives on diet culture and negative influences related to food and body image.

- 4 x 30-minute lunch sessions
- Motivational Interviewing approach
- Use of educational resources such as Diet/Binge cycle, Hunger-Fullness Scale, & 8-Hungers
- Incentives: gift card and weekly snacks
- Take-home resource booklet provided
- Pre- and post-evaluations collected

Educational Resources Used

"To have a healthy relationship with food means not putting a ‘good’ or ‘bad’ label on any food because all foods can fit into a healthy diet."

The Hunger-Fullness Scale

The Diet-Binge Cycle

- Become preoccupied w/food cravings
- Feel guilty, self-blaming
- Diet/restrict
- Feel failure, shame, black & white thinking
- Binge/overeat
- Feel guilty, self-blaming
- Break diet
- Become preoccupied w/food cravings
- Feel guilty, self-blaming
- Diet/restrict
- Feel failure, shame, black & white thinking
- Binge/overeat
- Feel guilty, self-blaming
- Break diet

Consideration for future, similar endeavors:

1. Market workshop as separate sessions, rather than as a series of sessions.
2. Set small, realistic learning objectives for each session and tie discussions back to those.
3. Advertise incentives to increase participation.
4. Come with a prepared plan for a variety of scenarios, i.e. 1 student vs. 10 students.

Lessons Learned

"I (like a lot of people) have experienced the diet/binge cycle and was hoping that I could learn a thing or two to avoid it."