

Washington WIC Connects – ENERGIZER



Statements of Appreciation – Affirmations

Consider this Energizer as a Nutrition Education In-service.

Count time spent on this as Nutrition Education in the time study.

Time: 20 – 30 minutes

Objective: Practice affirmations

Instructions:

1. **Share** the following:
 - A. **Introduction** – Share a summary of affirmations (see below).
 - B. **Content** – Read or ask a volunteer to read the content section. Share the **characteristics of an affirmation** and **provide an opportunity** for staff to share in pairs about an affirmation they have received.
2. **Lead the group in the Activity** - Practice writing affirmations for the sentences provided.
3. **Lead** the group in a facilitated discussion using the **Facilitated Discussion Guide – Affirmations**.
4. **Debrief** and **close** by bringing the whole group together. Ask a question about today's Energizer, such as: What, if anything, will you change or do differently based on what we discussed today? Thank the group for participating!

Read or share this information:

1.

A. Introduction

Affirmations are one of the WIC Connects active listening skills. You might recognize it as the “A” in OARS (Open-ended questions, Affirmations, Reflections, and Summaries). Affirmations are statements about strengths or progress toward change that we notice in our clients. Nothing builds rapport and establishes a relationship faster than providing affirmations. Affirmations can help clients believe change is possible even when they've tried and failed before.

B. Content

Read or ask a volunteer to read the following. Share the **characteristics of affirmations** and **examples of affirming statements** (both are included on the staff handout.)

Let's hear a statement from Building *Motivational Interviewing Skills a practitioner workbook* by David B. Rosengren: “Affirmations are statements of appreciation for the client and his or her strengths.”

Affirmations usually take the form of genuine words of understanding and appreciation. A genuine affirmation supports a person's belief in their own success and builds rapport, and yet,

affirmations tend to be the least observed OARS skill. Affirmations are more than reflective listening; they are statements that allow the client to see their own strengths and resources.

The next activity is to remind us what a genuine affirmation feels like. Each of us may have received an affirmation that was meaningful from someone we trusted and respected.

Note for the leader: it may help to ask people to think about something they have done, either at work or at home, where someone made a positive comment or affirmation.

Let's take 3 minutes to think about this time and share it with a partner. We will come back and **hear** a sample of what you discussed.

After 3 minutes, call time and **hear** samples.

De-brief this activity by asking: "What made that affirmation personally meaningful for you?" **Hear** answers and thank people for sharing.

Let's take a little closer look at affirmations. We have already heard that affirmations:

- Build rapport
- Allow clients to see their strengths and resources
- Increase client's confidence in their abilities to change

So, how can WIC staff share genuine and personally meaningful affirmations so that clients can see their strengths and have a "can-do" attitude? Let's take a look at the following ways.

Share genuine and personally meaningful affirmations by:	Example
1. Looking for and finding opportunities to sincerely affirm	"You worked hard to get here on time today."
2. Making supportive, reinforcing statements that focus on behaviors	"It's great that you are eating more vegetables. You must be proud to have made that choice."
3. Focusing on successes and efforts and stating them positively	"Even though it was hard for you to cut down on your smoking, you found what worked for you and cut down to 2 a day."
4. Avoid making judgments about the accuracy or appropriateness of what the participant is saying	"Good job, you found what is working for your family."

Examples of affirming statements

The following are samples of affirming statements. It may help to think about affirmations you may have received, either personally or for your clinic, from clients. A client may say: “The people working in my WIC clinic are great.” This is a general affirmation. More specific affirmations give more detailed information. For example: “The people in my WIC clinic are great because they greet me when I walk in.” or “They make me feel welcomed because they have a place for my kids to play.” or “I like coming to WIC because the people who work there show me how my child is growing and make me feel proud that I am doing a good job.”

Let’s take a look at some affirmations – both general and specific. **Listen** as I **read** these sentences and **put a star** next to affirmations that you think you might hear yourself say.

General

- Look how much she’s grown!
- Keep it up, you’re doing great.
- Good job!

More specific

- You really have some good ideas for how you might do this.
- You really know your baby. It shows that you’re tuned into your baby’s _____ (hunger cues, stages of development, needs, etc...).
- You should be really proud of yourself; you’re giving him a really great start by _____ (breastfeeding, mixing formula correctly, coming to your WIC appointments, etc...).
- Your baby knows that you’re there when she needs you.
- You are the driving force in keeping your family healthy.
- You’re making healthy choices, even when less healthy choices are all around you.
- Your baby is gaining weight so well from all your good breast milk.
- Good job getting all that taken care of. It must have been a lot of work.
- You have been really patient today while I _____ (entered all your information, helped the person on the phone, learned this new way, etc...).
- Thank you for coming today and bringing all your paperwork!
- Good for you, that’s a real challenge.
- Wow, you worked hard to get here on time.

We know affirmations are great ways to help clients see their strengths and increase their confidence in their ability to change. It may seem easy when someone says: “I found 6 new vegetables my family likes.” But what about times when it might be harder to determine what to affirm? To help us think about this, I am going to **read** a statement from a participant. We will **hear** how you would affirm this participant.

Leader: *an example is provided, if it is helpful for you.*

Participant: “I’ve been working on quitting smoking, but it’s really hard. I’ve finally cut down from three a day to just one.”

(Leader example: *“Wow! Even though it was hard for you to cut down, you found what worked!”*)

Participant: “I am breastfeeding my baby, but I am so tired.”

(Leader example: *“Good for you, even though you’re so tired you’re still your breastfeeding.”*)

Thanks for sharing. We will continue with this next activity.

2.

Activity

For the following statements you might hear from a participant, write an affirming statement. You may work individually or together.

Here are a few tips before beginning:

- *Focus on specific behaviors instead of attitudes, decisions, and goals.*
- *Avoid using the word “I” because it can be heard as a judgment.*
- *Compliments are different from affirmations because compliments typically have a judgment or an evaluation. “I think you look good.” Many times, though not always compliments begin with an “I” statement. “I think you are doing a good job of eating more vegetables.”*

(Remember – No advice or education. Use affirmations before educating!)

1. I am gaining so much weight with this pregnancy.
2. I brought all my paperwork that you asked for on the phone.
3. This is my first pregnancy so I am trying to eat better than I normally do.
4. Vegetables are not my favorite food but I fix them for my family anyway because I know they are healthy.
5. I quit smoking and my relatives do not smoke in my home any more.

6. The whole family goes for a walk on Saturday afternoon when the weather is nice.
7. I cooked dried beans for the first time and the chili recipe was really good.
8. It was really hard trying to find a ride to my appointment today.

3.

Facilitated Discussion Guide – Using Affirmations

Use these questions or use your own questions to guide your discussion:

1. What are your comments about the activity that we just completed?
2. What could affirmations do for clients?
3. How do you see yourself using affirmations as a way to improve communication with your clients?

4.

Debrief and close

Today we focused on one of the OARS skills – affirmations. Please take 2 minutes to write down the answer to this question:

“What, if anything, will you change or do differently based on what we discussed today?”

I would like to affirm all of you for your _____ (*excellent, great, thoughtful, etc...*) participation today. Thank-you.

The ***WIC Connects Desk Reference*** is a tool for staff to remind them to practice their WIC Connects skills. These were provided to all staff at the WIC Connects training.

If you need more of these desk references please call: 1-800-841-1410 ext. 3627 and ask Kathy Hormel to have them mailed to you.

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Staff Handout

Content

“Affirmations are statements of appreciation for the client and his or her strengths.”

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Activity

What does a genuine affirmation feel like? Each of us may have received an affirmation that was meaningful from someone we trusted and respected. Take 3 minutes to think about this time and share it with a partner.

Affirmations:

- Build rapport
- Allow clients to see their strengths and resources
- Increase client’s confidence in their abilities to change

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Debrief and close

“What, if anything, will you change or do differently based on what we discussed today?”

Focus on Affirmations by using the **WIC Connects Desk Reference** tool turned to the Affirmations page.

Ask your Connector about getting a **WIC Connects Desk Reference** tool if you don't have one.



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For persons with disabilities this publication is available on request in other formats. To submit a request, please call 1-841-1410 (TDD/TTY 1-800-833-6388).

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