Cultural Considerations for General Nutrition Education & Promoting a Healthy Relationship with Food

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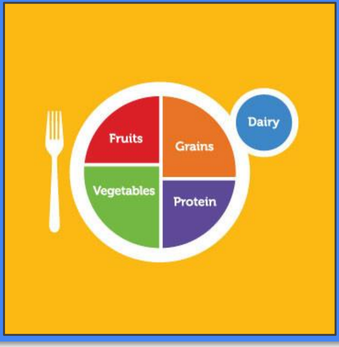
Introduction

- Registered Dietitian with over 10 years of experience
  - WIC
  - Clinical
  - George Mason University
- MPH candidate, practicum placement with the Fairfax Food Council
  - Concentration in Community Health Promotion
- Experience in working in health promotion overseas

Agenda

1. Delivering Basic Nutrition Education with Cultural Considerations
2. Promoting A Healthy Relationship with Food (for clients & ourselves/families!)

The Five Food Groups[1]



- Protein, Grains, Dairy, Vegetables & Fruit
- MyPlate encourages a variety of food groups, but it is not necessary to eat all food groups at every meal
- Brooke's 6th Food Group: Satisfaction!
  - Consider food preferences
  - Consider various textures & colors
  - Consider social aspect of eating & food

What about cultural foods?[2]

- Lack of representation of diverse foods as examples of healthy eating and gaps in culturally sensitive nutrition guidance can have some feeling like their foods don't "fit"
- The individual's food preferences, traditions, and current cultural context should be taken into consideration when providing nutrition education
- Cultural foods may often fit more than one food group category

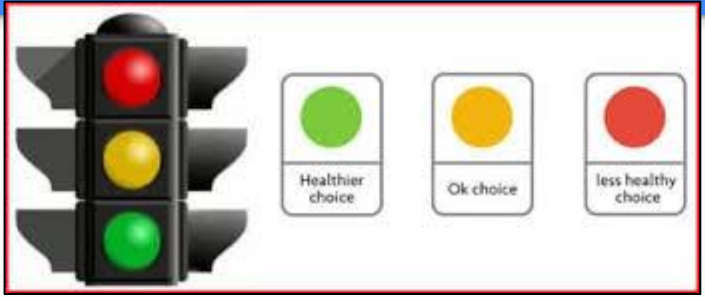
Social Determinants of Health[3]

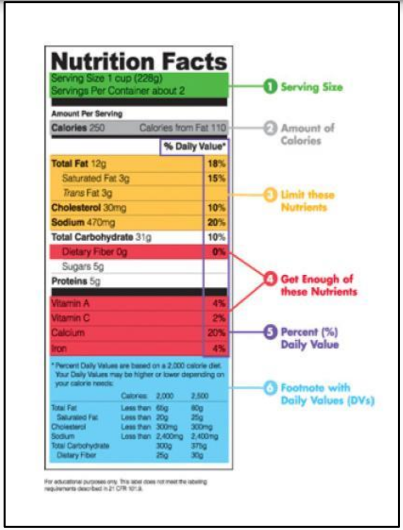
- Overall health status is determined by more than just individual food choices
- Research conducted by The Obesity Society gathered data on >160,000 U.S. adults and concluded that cumulative social disadvantage, denoted by higher SDOH burden, was associated with increased odds of obesity
- As nutrition educators, we have to move away from
  - Food hierarchy
  - Placing blame/judgement on the individual for their health/nutrition status
  - The focus of food being solely for nourishment

Nutrition Education with Cultural Considerations

1. Do your Research
2. Ask, “Does the MyPlate material fit the population I serve?” If no, how can I adapt it?
3. Offer multiple nutrition solutions to avoid harm

Culturally Inclusive Nutrition Education Ideas





Promoting a Healthy Relationship with Food

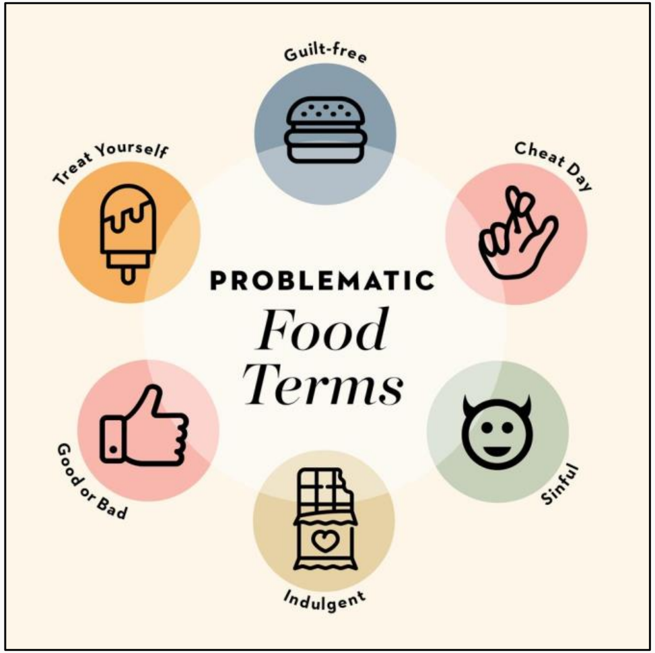
The Connection: Food & Mental Health[4]

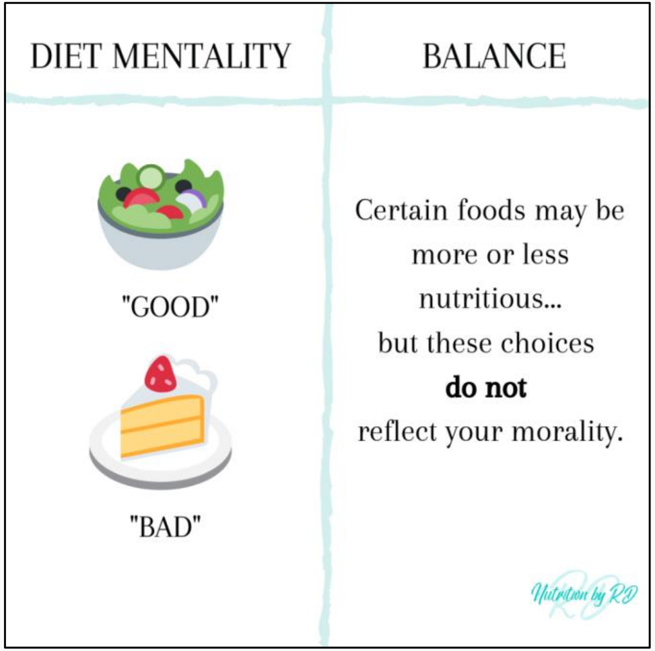
- There is a bidirectional relationship between food and mental health.
- Most traditional diets promote whole foods, which are associated with better mental health outcomes
- The invention of ultra-processed foods is relatively new and research illustrates that increased amounts of these foods in the diet have a negative impact on mental health

Food Access & Mental Health[4]

- Malnutrition (over/undernutrition) often occurs in tandem with socioeconomic factors, including poverty and food insecurity
- The constant worry about having enough to eat and the inability to access nutritious foods can lead to anxiety, depression, and other mental health challenges
- While it is always recommended to honor your hunger and fullness cues, this is difficult when you are not certain when your next meal will be.

Food Language [5,6]





Societal Pressures & Body Image

Promoting a Healthy Relationship with Food for our clients as Nutrition Educators[7]

- Improving Food Access & the Quality of Foods Provided
- Watching our language around food & others' bodies
- Hunger & Fullness Cues*; Emotional Eating
- Encourage regulating social media feeds/reduced screen time
- Encourage regular meals & snacks
- Understand Restriction; All Foods Fit
- Encouraging Self-Compassion & Activities that Build Self-Esteem
- Refer to a professional

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