

Magic Wand Tool

Overview

Magic wands have been featured in historical documents since 2278 BC. People throughout time have been intrigued with the thought they could wave a magic wand and experience the power to change their lives or minimize their challenges.

The Magic Wand tool allows parents to step out of their daily realities and experience the illusion of immediate power. This enables them to alter the challenges they face as parents of picky toddlers, or even pregnancy challenges. While your clients enjoy the creative and fun experience of “waving a magic wand” and describing what parenting challenges they would change, you can quickly and easily identify topics for a meaningful—maybe even magical—WIC discussion.

Note: You can purchase your own “magic wand” tool at a local store or on the Internet.

Objectives

Use the Magic Wand tool to quickly and easily identify behavioral changes parents want to make. The Magic Wand makes assessment fun and creative, something all parents will welcome, but especially long-time WIC clients, who have answered traditional assessment questions many times.

The Magic Wand tool can also be used to involve older children (ages 3-5) in the session. Involving children in the session helps stressed parents relax and might also provide them with insights into their child’s eating preferences and concerns.

Use the responses of both parents and older children as a starting point for probes and deeper discussions.

Activities

1. After greeting the client warmly, tell the mother that you have a Magic Wand made especially for parents. Offer the wand to her, asking what she would change about the way about the ways her child eats or how active (s)he is.

If the mother seems confused or hesitant, or if you want to show empathy, you can show how the Magic Wand works by using your self as an example: “If I could use this Magic Wand to change the way I ate, I would wave it over me and wish that my craving for chocolate would disappear at 4:00 this afternoon.” Sharing your own desire to change something in your life will allow the parent to be more open with her concerns and challenges.

Although the Magic Wand is designed for parents, it can also be used to involve older children (ages 3-5) in the session as well. Offer the wand to the child and say: “If you could use this magic wand and make your favorite foods appear, what would they be?”

2. Probe to get deeper insights into the feelings parents have about the challenge they presented. Use words like: “What makes you feel that way about the way Susie eats—or doesn’t eat—veggies?”

“The magic wand is a fun tool that lightens the mood and makes clients laugh. It works well in our fast-paced clinic.”

Tara, Chelsea/Revere

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3. Ask the parent for permission to share practical tips on ways to encourage her child to eat more vegetables. If possible, present them as tips from other successful parents. Words like these tie into the “magic” theme: “Other successful parents like you have shared practical ideas that work like magic for them. Would you be interested in hearing them? They may be the magical solution to the challenge you identified.”
4. Conclude the session by asking the parent to identify one or two actions she could try in the coming days using words like these: “We talked about many actions that mothers have tried that worked like magic for them, allowing them to feel proud of how their child eats veggies. Which of the ideas we talked about today might be the magical solution for you? Is there one idea that stands out as the “magic wand” idea that you’re going to try first? Would you be willing to share what worked for you next time we talk? I’m always collecting great ideas of amazing moms like you and I would love to add your ideas to my growing list.”

Note: Your comfort level with the Magic Wand is the greatest predictor of how successful this tool will be in your sessions. If you feel silly or uncomfortable, the client will pick up on this and may resist trying it, or provide an awkward response. If you approach it with a fun, positive feeling, knowing it will be an effective assessment tool, the client will do the same.

Adaptations

The Magic Wand can be used with individuals or in a group. Establish a safe environment for sharing before demonstrating how the Magic Wand works, and use yourself as an example. Once parents understand the simple process and see how you enjoyed using it, ask for a volunteer to “wave the wand” over their child’s eating or activity levels.

The Magic Wand can be used with pregnant and post partum mother groups too. Ask them to “wave the wand” to change an eating or activity challenge.

You can use the tool in multiple ways in groups:

- Ask each group participant to “wave the wand” individually, noting topic ideas for later discussion. Once all the challenges have been identified, ask group participants to suggest practical solutions for each topic.
- Ask group participants to suggest “magical” ideas that might help solve the identified challenge after each “wave of the wand.” Be sure to pace the discussion so that all mothers receive practical ideas from the group.