

Texture Tool

Overview

We know that visuals, music and colors evoke feelings. Although we may not be aware of it, textures can also trigger emotions. Think about it. We often use tactile terms to describe events, saying it was a “bumpy ride” or “things went smoothly.” Sometimes we describe people as “rough around the edges” or having “soft eyes” or “silky hair.” Texture is a significant part of the sensory input we receive everyday, and that makes it perfect for use in the WIC clinic.

The Texture Tool helps parents express feelings related to WIC topics.

Parents are offered a bag or box filled with fabric samples representing a wide variety of textures, and asked to select a fabric sample (texture) that represents how they feel about a topic or behavior. Because there is no right or logical response to the question, parents do this and project their feelings quickly and easily. This leads to honest and open sharing.

You can create your own Texture Tool. Simply purchase fabrics that represent a wide variety of textures like smooth, bumpy, velvety, hard, soft, fluffy and grainy. Consider adding other materials, too, like tile, smooth plastic, rubber, or sandpaper. Texture samples should be at least five inch square or larger, and can be kept in a bag or box.

Objectives

Use the Texture Tool to identify parental feelings related to any WIC topic. Recognize and accept all feelings equally, without judgment or comment. If positive feelings are shared, recognize parental actions that allowed clients to feel positively about the topic. If parents share negative feelings, probe to understand the situation and ask what they are willing to change to feel better about the behavior or topic.

Activities

1. After greeting the mom warmly, present the Texture Tool to her. Ask her to select a fabric sample (texture) that says something about a WIC topic or behavior. Examples: “Pick a texture that—when you touch it—reminds you of mealtime at your home” or “pick a texture that says something about how you feel about your weight gain at this time in your pregnancy.” Encourage her to pick out a texture, and then probe using words like these: “What is it about that texture that says how you are feeling about mealtime at your home?” or “Help me understand. How does the way that fabric feels relate to your weight gain?”
2. Continue probing to get deeper insights, using words like these: “Tell me more” or “Help me understand.” Allow silent pauses so the client can reflect and share.
3. Accept all responses without correction, dismissal or judgment. Don’t say things like “you shouldn’t feel that way” or “you’ll get over that” or “it’s really not that big a deal.”
4. Ask the parent to identify specific behaviors or concerns that relate to their expressed feelings.
5. Discuss possible behavior changes. Framing suggested behavior change tips and ideas as parent-generated will allow you to be more influential.

“The Texture Tool is a fun and creative way to stimulate conversation. Clients enjoy unique approaches like this.”

Meghan, MA WIC State

Breastfeeding Coordinator

Texture Tool

Adaptions

The Texture Tool can be used with individuals or in a group. Establish a safe environment for sharing before asking mothers to share their responses. Affirm all responses equally without judgment, and thank the mothers for sharing their heart-felt responses. Once all group members have shared, encourage parents to contribute practical tips that will resolve shared challenges.

The Texture Tool can also be used with children. Ask older children to select a texture from the bag or box and encourage them to share their fabric samples along with their moms.