



# **Nutrition Education Project “Healthy Snacking Among CSUC Students”**

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## **Step 1: Analyze Needs and Behaviors**

To assess the needs of our target audience, we constructed a survey in order to gather their behaviors and beliefs regarding snacking. In the survey, we not only wanted to know what they snacked on, but what they thought about it and if they were willing to change. We asked them questions like “how healthy would you rate the foods you normally snack on?” and provided them with a scale ranging from very poor to very healthy. Most people answered this question by stating that their snack habits were either poor or somewhat healthy.

We asked them other questions such as “how familiar are you with the healthy food choices on campus?” and provided them again with the same scale to select answers from. Most of the freshmen were only a little or somewhat familiar with the healthy snack options available on campus. Fortunately, when we asked them about how interested they were in learning about choosing healthy but tasty snacks, all of them were extremely interested in learning about where they could find these healthy snack options.

Everyone said that they were very committed to making a change and they expressed a genuine interest in doing so. In asking other questions such as “why do you normally choose the snacks that you do?” and “what’s the main reason why you’ll choose an unhealthy snack over a healthy one?” it was clear that price was the primary factor in determining what snack the freshmen would choose. This specification was also followed by convenience and taste. We also asked the freshmen what foods they usually snack on in order to get an idea of their normal snacking habits and what they’re

usually doing when they're eating a snack. We found that most people snack either when they're hungry or when they're bored and they're usually doing something such as watching TV, doing homework or sitting in class when they are snacking. At the end of the survey, we asked the participants to rate our survey on a scale of 1-10 (10 being the best) and the average was an 8.

The participants really liked the survey and said that it perked their interest in healthy eating habits. When we asked them what they're interested in learning in terms of snacking, the overwhelming answer was where they could find cheap, convenient, tasty, healthy, easy snacks on campus.

From the results of our assessment, we've decided to focus our main program messages to a few key points. Our focus is on helping these freshmen recognize the healthy, cheap, convenient snacks on campus, give them ideas about how to prepare snacks at home, and teach them to be aware of what and why they're eating with tips on how to snack smart.

## **Step 2: Identify Relevant Mediators**

There were certain mediators that we tried to identify through our survey. Interestingly, we found that most freshmen are not influenced by their peers, roommates, boyfriends, girlfriends, or celebrities when it comes to snack choices. They all said that they had quite a bit of control over the snacks they purchased and consumed, and felt no pressure from anyone around them to choose certain snacks. Since most of the freshmen surveyed lived in off-campus apartments, we can conclude that they all have access to a kitchen. However, most of the freshmen bought their

snack food either from the market or the BMU. That is why the main focus of our presentation is going to be on healthy snack ideas that they can purchase on campus. However, since their main barrier is price, we want to emphasize that preparing healthy snacks at home can be tasty, convenient, and affordable.

One limitation that we did run into when we were distributing the surveys was a lack of interest in taking the survey. We also weren't sure how accurate the information was that they provided on the questionnaire because freshmen sometimes think that they're "too cool" to be taking these surveys so they'll make up funny answers that are irrelevant to the questions asked. We also wondered if they weren't divulging some information, like whether or not they're influenced by other people when they choose their snacks, because it was too personal. We were able to obtain seven surveys which allowed us to get a pretty good idea of what these freshmen were looking for in terms of snacking.

### **Step 3: Theory, Philosophy, and Components**

| <b>Construct</b>      | <b>Intervention Strategies</b>  |
|-----------------------|---|
| Consciousness Raising | Our surveys told us that freshmen are extremely interested in finding healthier, cheaper, more convenient snack options. For this construct we'd ask the audience what kind of snacks they normally eat to get them thinking right away about their snacking habits. To raise their consciousness about snacking, we'd show them how snack calories add up and can make a difference in terms of weight gain over a period of time. |

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| Counterconditioning        | Show them alternatives to mindless eating like sitting on a yoga ball in front of the TV or eating out of 100 calorie snacks instead of a whole bag of chips. Show them how to pre-portion their snacks so they control how much they're eating. Show them tasty ways to prepare certain things for snacks (like peanut butter on celery, ranch and carrots, bell peppers and ranch, string cheese and wheat thins, apples and peanut butter, nuts etc).                                     |
| Dramatic Relief            | Show them examples of how snacks can make them gain weight over the year (how it adds up) and how substituting for healthy alternatives will decrease weight gain. Also have visual examples i.e. sugar boards, fat tubes.   |
| Environmental Reevaluation | Inform them that their eating habits might influence others to eat that way whether good or bad (roommates, classmates, and friends). Also, you might feel the urge to eat what others are eating. Ask them if they have ever eaten a snack that they didn't really want but they ate it anyway because they saw someone else eating it. Ask them if the media has ever influenced them to choose a snack or if cravings have driven them to snack even when they're not necessarily hungry. |
| Helping Relationships      | Make sure you have supportive friends, boyfriends/girlfriends, roommates because if you live with them and they cook or buy snacks you're going to be influenced by their food choices.  |
| Social-Liberation          | Put healthy snacks in the front of the fridge/cabinet so you see those first. Make healthy snacks more visible in snack shops on campus. Avoid the obvious unhealthy choices or if you can't, don't go in there because you might be prompted to buy something. Bring your own snacks from home (it's cheaper, convenient and healthy to do so) until you have self control and the knowledge to choose healthy snack options.   |

#### Step 4: Educational Objectives

Since our surveyed audience was very interested in learning about healthy snack alternatives, we want to give them that information. Our main focus will be to inform them about where they can purchase healthy snacks on campus and what snacks are the healthiest to buy. We're also going to show them ways to prepare snacks at home

that are fast and easy. Since price is their biggest barrier between eating healthy and unhealthy, our message that healthy can be affordable will be integrated throughout our presentation. By the end of our presentation, program participants will be able to list three snack items found on-campus that are healthy, cheap and convenient. They will also be able to list three snack items that they can prepare at home and bring with them to campus. Finally, they will be able to recognize the reasons behind why they snack and will be able to list two smart snacking tips.

After our presentation, participants will have improved self-efficacy regarding how to purchase or prepare healthy snacks. They will also learn that healthy snacks can be affordable, easy to buy/make, and taste good. It is by absolving these barriers that we can change their attitude about eating healthy snacks, and ultimately change their behavior. We hope that at the end of this presentation, participants will have improved self-efficacy for incorporating healthy snacks into their daily routine.

#### **Step 5: Theory Based Education Strategies**

To change the behavior of our participants, we have developed some intervention strategies. We will begin by sparking the interest of the audience by promoting consciousness raising and awareness of their current snacking habits. We will show them a few common snacks, like chips or cookies, and discuss caloric and fat composition. We will show how eating certain high calorie/high fat snacks can “add up” in terms of weight gain over different periods of time: a week, a month, a semester, a year. We will also discuss the ideas behind discretionary calories.

We will also show the opposite effect: how low calorie snacks can contribute to an overall calorie deficit to promote weight loss. We will administer dramatic relief by passing around fat tubes of certain high calorie snack foods so our participants have a visual image of how much fat they are consuming. There will be a demonstration involving a “sugar board,” which contains bags of measured sugar specific to certain sodas and snack foods our participants may be consuming daily. It is through this dramatic realization that we hope to raise the consciousness of our participants as it relates to snacking.

Our main goal is to focus on the positive aspects of snacking by showing the participants ways to snack that are healthy and fulfilling. We will give them ideas regarding ways to prepare snacks in a healthy way that is convenient, affordable, and tasty. For example, we will bring in some items that we purchased on-campus and explain where we got them. We will bring in some fruits and vegetables and quickly chop them up in front of the participants and put them in individually sized bags for on-the-go use. We will explain the cost of each item as a purchase unit (a bag of oranges) and how much each day would cost (price per orange). We will compare these to more expensive and less healthy options. By showing our participants where to buy healthy snacks and how they can be affordable, we hope to promote self-efficacy.

We will talk about the environment in which they’re snacking. Do you feel that your roommate’s bad snacking habits influence you? If so, we have ideas that will promote a healthy relationship and healthy snacks for our participants (like asking your roommates to keep non-refrigerated snacks in his/her room). We will discuss location of

snacks, not only in the fridge/cabinet, but on-campus. We will also raise awareness regarding why the participants snack and what they can do to snack smart (like pre-portioning the food, eating while sitting on a yoga ball etc).

We will discuss that unhealthy options are always going to be out there and that it's important to exercise self-control. Of course, there are no foods that are ever going to be off limits but there are foods that should only be consumed once in a while. If the participants feel pressured by the on-campus environment to purchase unhealthy snack items, then we'd suggest that they pack their own snacks until they feel ready and confident to make healthy choices.

## 6. Evaluation

1.) How familiar are you with the healthy snack options on campus?

Not at all      A little      Somewhat      Quite a bit      Extremely

2.) How confident are you that you'll be able to make healthy snack choices?

Not at all      A little      Somewhat      Quite a bit      Extremely

3.) How well are you able to identify healthy snacks from unhealthy ones?

Not at all      A little      Somewhat      Quite a bit      Extremely

4.) How well do you recognize the reasons behind why you snack?

Not at all      A little      Somewhat      Quite a bit      Extremely

5.) How confident do you feel about preparing snacks and bringing them with you to campus?

Not at all      A little      Somewhat      Quite a bit      Extremely

6.) List three snack items found on campus that are healthy, cheap and convenient

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7.) List three snack items that you can prepare at home and bring to campus

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8.) List two smart snacking techniques

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