PROVIDING CHOICES

Change is hard!
Any change brings about both positive and negative consequences. As an instructor, you can help learners make positive changes by encouraging them to consider what change could look like in their lives. Use these tools and techniques to discuss possible changes with participants and to help identify barriers and possible outcomes.

TOOL #1: Creating a Pro/Con Chart
Using a Pro/Con Chart like the example below helps learners to see what can happen if there is change, and if there is not.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHANGES YOU ARE CONSIDERING</th>
<th>PROS</th>
<th>CONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If I don’t change...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I do change...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pro/Con Charts can help...
• Allow learners to bring their personal experiences into the dialogue and to discuss barriers they face around making healthy choices
• Safely acknowledge the reality of learners’ experiences without judgment, yet can also introduce or reinforce some of the positives associated with behavior change
• Facilitators and learners see both sides of making a proposed change; experiences and ideas of each learner are shared and compared, helping learners help each other
• Empower learners to identify the changes that they are willing and able to make. Not all class participants will be ready and willing to make the same changes. Learners will leave understanding what it will take to change when the timing is right for them.

In addition, Pro/Con Charts are especially helpful to use when you are sensing resistance to a particular change or when the change has broad effects. If it isn’t appropriate or feasible to create an actual chart you can simply use the concept to have a conversation about pros and cons.

Examples of when a pro/con chart might be useful:
• Determining the merits of the different forms of produce
• Identifying barriers that might prevent someone from adding more whole grains to their diet
• Highlighting the benefits of menu planning
Providing Menus and Choices is another technique to engage participants in discussion about potential behavior changes. Learners are provided with a list (or menu) of possible behaviors to achieve an outcome. The group of learners considers the choices together and decides which, if any, of the choices they would be willing to try. The group situation promotes teamwork and provides a safe place to discuss concerns.

“Weekly Challenges” are presented at the end of each lesson in the *Cooking Matters* curricula. Instructors present several ideas that learners may choose to try during the upcoming week and encourage them to come up with their own if they prefer. For example:

- Make recipes at home using your take home groceries.
- Eat at least one more fruit, vegetable, and whole grain every day next week.
- Develop your own weekly challenge based on something you learned today.

By having a menu of options, learners are able to select the idea that works best for them and assess why they made that choice. In addition, the “Weekly Challenge” provides a summary of the important topics discussed in class.

The Menus and Choices technique offers a non-threatening way to help get a dialogue going in class for exploring different choices in response to a given situation. The instructor can present a few options or ideas, but will also encourage learners to come up with additional choices that may be more personally relevant or realistic for them.

As weekly challenges are presented, instructors can use open-ended questions to generate dialogue about whether learners have concerns about making changes at home and what strategies they might use to meet the challenge.

In addition to helping direct a summary of the important topics discussed in class, Menus and Choices offer choices that participants can consider to integrate the new information at home. Class participants should be encouraged to develop their own weekly challenges that are personally appropriate too.

Review the chart on the next page for an example of how to incorporate Menus and Choices into your discussions.
### Menus and Choices sample chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SITUATION</th>
<th>MENUS AND CHOICES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| You are discussing the benefits of food shopping for nutrition and price. | Here are some ways to shop for nutrition and price. Which might you consider?  
1. Create a list of items you need to help avoid impulse buys.  
2. Compare unit prices to get the best buy.  
3. Read Nutrition Labels to make healthy choices.  
4. _______________________________________________________________________  
5. _______________________________________________________________________ |
| You are presenting a lesson about the importance of physical activity and will to discuss ways to increase activity each day. | Here is a list of simple ways to add physical activity each day. Which ones make sense to you?  
1. Take the stairs instead of the elevator  
2. Get off the bus one stop before your final stop.  
3. Do jumping jacks during commercials.  
4. _______________________________________________________________________  
5. _______________________________________________________________________ |
| You are presenting a lesson about the importance of vegetables and will discuss increasing the vegetables they eat each day. | Here are some ideas for adding vegetables to the meals you already eat. Which would you choose?  
1. Add peppers, spinach, or tomato to your sandwich.  
2. Top homemade pizza with roasted veggies.  
3. Add carrots or broccoli to marinara sauce.  
4. _______________________________________________________________________  
5. _______________________________________________________________________ |