



**FRESH**  
CONVERSATIONS

**Training Guide for**  
***Fresh Conversations***  
**Small Steps, Big Results**  
**2016**





# Welcome

Welcome to *Fresh Conversations*. We are glad you could join us on this adventure. The goal of this program is simple. We want to generate enthusiasm and support for older adults in their desire to be the best that they can be – no matter what their age. Maintaining good health and independence is important to almost everyone.

As a facilitator, you will lead a group of older adults at a local congregate meal site as they discuss better eating and exercise habits. A *Fresh Conversations* newsletter is created each month. The newsletter is your main teaching tool along with a facilitator's guide. The guide is to be used as an outline for the monthly presentation.

Before facilitating a *Fresh Conversations* meeting,

1. Watch the *Fresh Conversations* video and review this training guide;
2. Talk with your nutrition education coordinator about your assignment; and
3. Read the monthly newsletter and study the facilitator's guide before facilitating each session at a meal site.

In addition to this training guide, you will find *Fresh Conversations* program materials and the training video on the Iowa Department of Public Health's website for the Iowa Nutrition Network. <http://www.idph.state.ia.us/INN/>



Funded by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program in collaboration with the Iowa Department of Public Health and the Iowa Department on Aging. Iowa Food Assistance provides nutrition assistance to people with low income. It can help you buy healthy food. Visit [www.yesfood.iowa.gov](http://www.yesfood.iowa.gov) or call 2-1-1 for more information. USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



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## Training Guide for

# *Fresh Conversations – Small Steps, Big Results Video 2013*

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## Introduction

In Iowa, about 20% of our population is over the age of 60. In fact, the fastest growing segment of our population is people older than 85. Only two other states have a higher percentage.

The congregate nutrition program is for adults who are 60 years old or older and in economic and/or social need. A typical participant is a 75 year-old female, living alone in rural Iowa with a high school diploma. It is important to note that 30% are widowed. As a facilitator you will want to become acquainted with each person who attends your *Fresh Conversations* group, so you can inspire them to change.

## Why do older adults come to congregate meal sites?

When older Iowans were asked why they came to a meal site, they shared several reasons in addition to the meal. Consider two of their reasons as you prepare for your *Fresh Conversations* meeting: socialization and stimulation.

**Socialization** is a simple idea. It feeds the soul and is important to health throughout life. Socializing with others provides an opportunity for communication, critical thought, creativity and emotional expression. It also plays a vital role in boosting personal meaning and identity.

**Stimulation** develops a stronger, healthier brain. Activities that challenge and focus the brain help it to remain strong. At nearly any point in your life, you can strengthen your brain by doing tasks that are new and complex.

## Section 1: Background

### Food Security & SNAP (Iowa Food Assistance)

People face multiple health issues as they become an older adult. When older adults have a limited income and are unable to buy enough healthy food, the health challenges and health consequences can be more severe. In fact, it has been estimated that older adults who are marginally food insecure are much more likely to have limitations in their ability to care for themselves and engage in activities of daily living. The effects of food insecurity are strong and are roughly equivalent to being 14 years older than a person who is food secure<sup>1</sup>. You can help *Fresh Conversations* participants find ways to address food insecurity and have better health outcomes.

One important food resource is SNAP or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as the Food Stamp Program. In Iowa, SNAP is known as the Iowa Food Assistance Program. You may hear or see all of these names but SNAP is commonly used by the media. Your nutrition education coordinator can provide more information about SNAP.

*Fresh Conversations* is funded by SNAP's nutrition education program called SNAP-Ed. The Iowa Department of Public Health and Iowa Department of Aging have used SNAP-Ed funds to develop and implement *Fresh Conversations* for congregate meal sites in Iowa's six Area Agencies on Aging (AAA). To find out more about SNAP-Ed, visit SNAP-Ed Connections.

<http://snap.nal.usda.gov/>

People who participate in SNAP or Iowa Food Assistance receive a monthly allocation to purchase food by using a card that is similar to a

<sup>1</sup> Gundersen, Craig; Haist, Margaret; Ziliak, James P. 2005. *The Causes, Consequences, and Future of Senior Hunger in America*, report prepared for Meals On Wheels Association of America Foundation, Executive Summary, page iii, <http://www.mowaa.org/document.doc?id=13>

debit card. Participants can use the card at grocery stores, convenience stores and many farmers markets. Almost all grocery stores accept Food Assistance. To become familiar with this program, visit the website below. You will find information on making an application as well as where the Department of Human Services offices are located.

[http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/consumers/assistance\\_programs/foodassistance/](http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/consumers/assistance_programs/foodassistance/)

### **Nutrition Messages**

*Fresh Conversations* is a nutrition education program – and more. You will use motivation instead of just instruction to promote better eating and physical activity. When you work with participants, you will think of how to influence change and help them discover what their first step to change could be.

Nutrition messages used in *Fresh Conversations* include:

- Eat more fruits, vegetables, and calcium-rich foods;
- Prepare foods and cook food safely;
- Enjoy being active;
- Balance calories with activity;
- Limit sodium;
- Focus on older adult ‘special’ nutrients (protein, vitamin D, B12);
- Achieve and maintain a healthy body weight, avoiding weight gain; and
- Learn about Iowa Food Assistance.

### **Motivation for Change**

Knowing what motivates the older adults in your *Fresh Conversations* group is critical to your success as a facilitator. The Iowa Nutrition Network conducted a series of focus groups and discovered the following motivators for older lowans who participate in congregate meals.

**Independence** – This is number one! And people get very emotional about it. Losing independence is a major disappointment and they will do just about anything to maintain it. Whenever you can tie a healthy behavior to staying independent, people will listen.



Good nutrition and physical activity help older adults stay healthy and live independently. Yet the effect of nutrition on independence in later years is often overlooked and under-appreciated by older adults.

**Maintain or increase mobility** – Mobility supports independence and is vital for everyday activities like: 1. shopping, 2. accessing services such as the doctor or hair dresser, and 3. attending social, cultural, and physical activities. Exercises to promote balance and support mobility will be provided in the newsletter.

**Staying connected with family and friends** – Social participation and social support are strongly associated with good health and well-being throughout life. Staying connected isn’t always easy as you grow older. Congregate meal sites provide many ways to stay connected and *Fresh Conversations* can be one of the most enjoyable ways to socialize.

## **Section 2: Simple Secrets to a Successful *Fresh Conversations* Group Meeting**

Now it is time to take a look at the video. The video gives great suggestions on how to facilitate a successful meeting. After you view the video, use the following information to remind yourself of important points.

## Simple Secret #1

### Preparation Builds Confidence

**Study monthly newsletter and facilitator guide** – Everyone studies and learns new information in his/her own way. Be very familiar with the content of the newsletter so you can project confidence. The participants are looking for this. They can read the newsletter. What they need is for you to bring the newsletter information to life. You will be adding the emotion. It is critical to show how the information connects to a better life; how it helps solve a problem in a participant's life.

**Don't Just Read** – As you prepare and study the materials, highlight the key points and the steps suggested in the facilitator's guide. Knowing the key points will help you avoid the temptation to read the newsletter to participants during the meeting. If you have questions, make sure to get answers before facilitating the group. (See Section 5)

**Prep, Plan, Practice** – Make sure to take time to practice your presentation. Practicing in front of a mirror can be helpful and don't forget to practice with the props listed in the facilitator's guide.

Try using visualization techniques in your preparation. Once you have learned the key points, sit and just think about your meeting and dream about how it will play out. What is exciting to you? What makes you go WOW! What makes you shiver when you think about the impact of this for your group? If you are not excited about the material it will be hard to get others excited.

Set your own action step. You may want to share your action step with the group to illustrate that you think this is so important that you too, are participating.

Be confident!

Where ever you are, be all there.  
Jim Elliot

## Simple Secret #2

### Be Likable

To be frank, we are not looking for a likeable program... we want a likeable person. So what does a likeable person look like? In your circle of friends, is there someone who inspires you? After you have talked to them, do you feel like they really listened? It may be not so much what they say, but the feeling and emotions that they use when they speak to you. What characteristics come to mind when you think of this person? Here is a list of characteristics of a person that can make *Fresh Conversations* ZING.

- Very expressive and uses feelings to motivate
- Completely listens to the group yet pays attention to the individual
- Authentic – you just want to be around them
- Use emotion and feelings to influence the participants – the behavior change will come

How do you feel about this list?

## Simple Secret #3

### Involve the Audience

Your enthusiasm will encourage participants to participate. Participation is the first step in trying new behaviors. Adults have great life experiences. Ask participants to share their experiences. In fact, you will discover that they already have knowledge about healthy behaviors. They just need someone to lead them to action with a touch of emotion and feelings.

You may have to share a personal experience to get things started, but be careful to keep it brief and to the point. Your personal experience can easily slip into a lecture. Do not be afraid to share your weaknesses. It is good to show how you do walk in their shoes – but don't make the session "about you."

Maintain control of the group by watching for people who offer too much advice and ask too many personal questions. Be respectful of the person and try to redirect the discussion. The person usually does not mean harm. Ask the person to help distribute the newsletters or pass

food samples to provide an outlet for their enthusiasm.

How will you know the group is involved? What percentage of meeting time are you talking? If it is more than 50% your group is not engaged.

### Tip to Try

Ask for group participants to share any time you see an opportunity.

The size of your group may influence how you facilitate the program. Work with your nutrition education coordinator and meal site manager to determine which size of group is best. You may want to start with a small group and graduate to a larger group as the interest in the program grows, and it will.

**Large groups** may gather for *Fresh Conversations* if the meeting is held right before meal time. Groups like this will take more preparation time at the site, so plan to arrive early. With more people to meet and engage, ask participants ahead of time to help with some of your chores like handing out the newsletter. This will give you time to talk with people before the program starts.

Make sure people can hear you and each other. Use a mobile microphone, if available. A mobile version lets you move around and share the microphone allowing others to answer questions and tell their experiences. A stationary microphone can help, and repeating the participant's information or question is a good idea. Any time



you are leading a discussion, create small groups. Ask groups to give short reports and share their best ideas or commitments.

You may encounter people who are not interested in participating. In fact, they may want to just play cards or read their books. Be respectful of their decision but try to engage them when possible with table activities. If you are leading the group before the meal is served, make sure to end on time as being late for the meal can cause people to be anxious.

**Small groups** usually form when the *Fresh Conversations* program is held at a time other than meal time. The participants, because of self selection, may be more interested in the discussion; therefore, small groups are often easier to facilitate.

One potential outcome of small groups is exclusivity. You do not want the group to become a clique, so take extra precautions to make sure all people feel welcome no matter the size of the group. Regularly invite others to join *Fresh Conversations*. Perhaps you can share what you do with the larger group before a meal. Let them know how much fun you are having! Think about what makes you want to join a group.

### Testimonials

Testimonials are a great way to share success. Look for people who share your excitement for behavior change. Peers can promote healthy behaviors more effectively than a group leader. In fact, people listen carefully to their peers when they are considering change. If a peer shares how walking has made her feel so much better, that is powerful. The facilitator sharing the idea is good, but a peer that actually did it and felt successful will mean even more. Could you place photographs of *Fresh Conversations* members on the bulletin board to celebrate success? One word of caution, you will want to have several people willing to put their success on display. Only one or two will suggest that not many people are feeling successful.

Each *Fresh Conversations* newsletter will have a testimonial that highlights one person's experience. Watch for participants that you think would provide an inspiring testimonial. A template is provided to help gather the information. Testimonials can be submitted to your *Fresh Conversations* nutrition education coordinator. Suggested questions are provided on the last page of this guide.

#### **Simple Secret #4** **Keep It Simple, Practical, and Relevant**

People attending your meeting will be polite if you provide just the facts, but they will be transformed if you make the facts relevant to their lives. You have to talk their language and illustrate the information for an everyday audience.

#### **Simple Secret #5** **Walk in Their Shoes**

Which would help you make a change in your eating habits – a nutrition expert who explained the importance of fruits and vegetables or your friend who started eating fruits and/or vegetables and told you how much better she feels? Peers or friends are very influential in helping change behaviors. They are walking in the same shoes as the other participants.

By sharing experiences that show you are trying to change, you model “walking in their shoes.” Modeling change is more effective than just sharing what people should do.

#### **Simple Secret #6** **Small Steps, Big Results**

If the action feels too big to achieve, you will not even start to try change. That is why taking a big change and cutting it into several small steps adds up to success. Celebrate and support all successes. Let them know how excited you are to have them take those small steps. This will encourage people to try the next step.

We want participants to try small steps. Sending them home with an action step that they can achieve within the next 24-36 hours is a good example of a small step. Another technique to

encourage change is to write down what you plan to do. It seems more official when you have written it. Each newsletter will have a **Take Action Corner** where the action can be written down. Each of the facilitator's guides will also have sample actions to get you started.

Another way to promote success is to make sure that the action step is reachable. Keep it small and make sure it is something you can remember. People will not start eating more vegetables if their action step is “I will eat more vegetables.” Better to make a small step like “I love carrots. When I am at the store Tuesday, I will buy a bag of baby carrots and eat all of them before I shop next week.”

### **Section 3: Food Tastings**

Iowa focus groups shared three important ideas about food tastings at congregate meal sites.

1. They like the food samples. In fact, that is one of the reasons they attended. But.....
2. They have very little desire to cook at home, and
3. They have limited cooking skills.

The food samples are primarily used to promote healthy snacking. Snacking for older adults can be critical to maintaining health. Caloric consumption often decreases as people get older. Snacking is not just extra food for older adults, but a way to make sure they receive nutrition their bodies need. It is true that frequent snacking can result in unwanted weight gain; however, healthy snacking can help many older adults consume an adequate diet.

The snack tasting is fun for the participants, and will be used to teach a simple food message. The message will be in the **Take Action Corner** of the newsletter. The facilitator guide will also provide 5-6 teaching points with the snack recipe for you to emphasize.

Each AAA will decide how to provide the food for tasting. It is important for you to practice

making the recipe at home, calculate the cost of the recipe (per serving and per recipe) and be ready to share what you learned from making the recipe.

Talk about needing enthusiasm! Since the participants enjoy the snack but are not inclined to make the snack at home, you will need to sell the idea with excitement.

### **Tasting Tips for Success.**

**Tip #1 Know your Audience.** Do they like to cook at home? Do they have grandchildren to cook for? Would they prefer simple recipes and small quantities? Are your participants interested in trying new foods?

**Tip #2 Give clear and simple messages.** Include key messages with the tasting. The facilitator's guide will have suggestions for you.

**Tip #3 Be organized and well-prepared.** Be sure to read the recipe beforehand and practice making it at home. At the meeting, share the cost of the recipe and give tips on saving money on the ingredients or changes you could make in the recipe if all ingredients are not on hand. The facilitator's guide will give you ideas.

**Tip #4 Make the setting colorful and attractive.** Use inexpensive ways to make the table colorful and attractive at the meeting. Dress appropriately. Wear a clean apron and do not put it on until you are ready to serve the food. Make sure to restrain your hair so it will not get into the food. Do not chew gum.

**Tip #5 Always have a tasting.** Serve two or three bites in a small disposable cup. Talk about eye appeal, aroma and flavor. Share how easy it is to make at home and provide nutrition information about the ingredients.

**Tip #6 Always follow food safety guidelines.** If you have questions about food safety ask your meal site manager or the *Fresh Conversations* nutrition education coordinator.

- If you are sick, do not present your program or handle the food.
- Clean the demonstration surface with a sanitizer like Clorox Anywhere.
- Wash your hands before you put on a disposable glove to distribute the food. Use disposable gloves when working with all ready-to-eat ingredients in a demonstration. If group participants volunteer to help hand out food, make sure they wash their hands and use disposable gloves. Volunteers can also help in cleaning up the demonstration area.

**Special safe food handling tips.** Adults over 60 years of age are at a higher risk for food borne illness. Both a slower digestive system and less gastric juice in the stomach can cause concern for even healthy older adults. So, if you are responsible for transporting the food for tasting, make sure to **KEEP HOT FOODS HOT and COLD FOODS COLD.**

Cold food must be transported in a cooler with ice or frozen packs to maintain a temperature below 41 degrees. Cooked food needs to be packed in insulated equipment to maintain temperature above 140 degrees. Always check the temperature with a food thermometer before leaving to insure the temperature is not between 40 and 140 degrees. When you arrive check temperature again and if the food has been in transport for longer than two hours and is between 40 to 140 degrees do not serve the food as it has the potential for making people sick. Remember that food samples transported in the hot Iowa summers are at great risk for growing harmful bacteria.

### **Tip to Try**

**To save time assemble a food tasting kit of a cooler, ice packs, cups, napkins, plastic ware, disposable gloves, sanitizer wipes or spray for work area and a food thermometer.**

## Section 4: A Successful *Fresh Conversations* Meeting

Each month, begin your preparation for the *Fresh Conversations* meeting by reading and studying the newsletter and facilitator's guide. Your *Fresh Conversations* nutrition education coordinator will help you access these materials. The monthly newsletter and facilitator's guide will be ready to download six weeks before your presentation(s) at the Iowa Nutrition Network website <http://www.idph.state.ia.us/INN/>. You will receive an e-mail alerting you to the posting. Multiple copies of the newsletter will be printed for you to distribute to the group. Contact your nutrition education coordinator for details.

The facilitator's guide is an outline for the meeting. It will include a statement of the main concept to be taught, one core activity to teach the main concept, teaching points to be included with the tasting, and sample action steps. Of course, you will provide the enthusiasm needed to excite the participants. Gather any teaching props you need in advance. The facilitator's guide will have a list.

For the food tasting, check out the information in Section 3. The *Fresh Conversations* nutrition education coordinator will assist you in securing the samples for the tasting.

Pay attention to the details. If the facility is new to you, you will want to ask several questions when you schedule the program. Start by talking to the nutrition education coordinator and the



local site manager about arrangements. Below are questions that may help:

- How many people on average attend your congregate meal site?
- Will all people in the room participate?
- If you are organizing a small group (not everyone who eats the meal) how many people do you think will attend?
- Can all participants hear a presenter? What needs to be done to achieve this?
- When is the best time to provide the program?
- Does the center have exercise equipment like stretch bands?
- Does the center have access to armless chairs for exercises? How many?
- How will the food tasting be provided?

Arrive before the program starts and allow enough time to get settled and organized. An early arrival will give you time to visit with the participants before the meeting starts. Chatting with participants gives them a good feeling and you can pick up valuable information about the audience.

### Tip to Try

**Participants can help set up chairs, round up equipment, distribute the newsletter to everyone or handout the samples.**

When it is time for the meeting to start, use the first five minutes to give the participants time to share successes and challenges. As a group, review the information from the last meeting. Give positive feedback and share your excitement about what small steps they have taken and found success.

As you share the main concept from the newsletter, remember to have a conversation and don't lecture. The more you can involve the participants, the better. Many times their life experiences support the main concept you are sharing. Don't be afraid to ask group participants to lead discussions in small groups or exercises found in the newsletter. Recall conversations you had

earlier with participants that could be good examples of the concept you are sharing. Some people will not be interested in sharing, but all people can be encouraged to write down some ideas that they think they would try to do.

The tasting of the snack recipe will fit in at the end of the main concept discussion. Distribute the samples and share your experience when you made the recipe. How long did it take you? How easy is this to fix. What was the cost? How should it be stored? What substitutions could you make? The facilitator's guide will provide five or six points to share. Encourage participants to share what they think and how they think the snack could fit in their day.

And now for the closing of the sale. While tasting is winding down, it is time to select an action step. Expect each participant to select and write down at least one action step to be accomplished in the next couple of days.

At first this may seem hard. Feelings sell change. Ask the question – What are you excited about trying next week? The guide will have some examples each month to get the people started and don't forget to create yours as well. Sharing your action step will be meaningful to the group. The action is to be a small specific step.

And one more step for you. After leaving the meeting, jot down notes about how things went. Record some of the action steps and/or experiences that were shared. Make notes on questions that needed answers. Note what techniques worked well for you and the group.

AND when you prepare for your next meeting, look back at your notes for ideas of action steps you want to follow up on or questions that need to be answered.



## Section 5: How to Answer Questions

Facilitators are not expected to know the answer to every question. When you have questions, respect the participant by telling him/her you will find the answer and bring it back.

### Do: ✓

- If you don't know an answer to someone's questions, tell them you will have an answer before the next meeting. You should not answer any question that you are not confident in answering. Many foods interact with medication and individuals may not tolerate all foods. If you stay focused on the content of the newsletter and facilitator's guide, there should not be any problems.
- Reference previous newsletters (remind group of this as a resource)
- Contact your *Fresh Conversations* nutrition education coordinator with questions. Ask questions early so they have time to research questions and respond with answers. Staff from the Iowa Department of Public Health or Iowa Department of Aging are available to answer questions, as well.
- Read **recommended** web pages found in the newsletter or facilitator's guide. Most reliable site addresses will end with .gov or .edu.
- Direct specific medical questions to the participant's health care provider.

### Don't: ✗

- Find answers to questions or search for new content from popular magazines, talk shows, TV health reports or on-line websites you have found while surfing the internet.
- Tell people to buy or avoid individual food brands. Your *Fresh Conversations* nutrition education coordinator will provide more information about SNAP-Education program rules that must be followed by *Fresh Conversations* facilitators.

## Section 6: Newsletter Features

The monthly newsletter will have articles relevant to everyday life. The articles will focus on low-cost dietary changes directly tied to health challenges. Other topics in the newsletter will be:

- Physical Activity – Directions for simple exercises using items like armless chairs or stretch bands. Watch the participants closely and if there is a safety concern ask the participant to stop or do an alternative exercise.
- Food Safety – Older adults are at a greater risk for illness from food, so the articles will promote safe food practices at home.
- Testimonial – No one can convince people to change habits better than a friend or peer. Each newsletter will contain one testimonial. Look at page six to learn more about testimonials.
- Take Action Corner – Participants will write down the action they want to accomplish within the next couple of days. You can write yours on your copy as well. Encourage participants to jot down an idea they would like to do as they listen and participate. To encourage support of each other, **share** ideas written down to conclude the session. In case people forget to bring pencils, make sure to have a few with you.
- Puzzles – There are two puzzles based on newsletter content, so the participants will have to read the newsletter. All the answers are there.
- Snack Recipe – This will be simple, easy to prepare and use as a tasting at the program.



## Evaluation of Project

The *Fresh Conversations* program is funded by USDA’s Food and Nutrition Services and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP. Maintaining a quality nutrition program requires evaluation. Evidence that a program works is essential for continued funding. As a facilitator, you will be asked to participate in the evaluation at some level. Details are still being developed for the first and second years of evaluation.



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## Questions

Nutrition and physical activity questions; recipes and food samples	Contact your <i>Fresh Conversations</i> Coordinator		
Distribution of newsletter and facilitator’s guide	Marilyn Jones	(515) 281-6047	Marilyn.jones@idph.iowa.gov
Development of <i>Fresh Conversations</i> content	Doris Montgomery	(515) 661-7913	Doris.montgomery@idph.iowa.gov
	Carlene Russell	(800) 532-3213	Carlene.Russell@iowa.gov

# *Fresh Conversations* Testimonial Template

Name\_\_\_\_\_

Congregate Meal Site\_\_\_\_\_

Facilitator's Name\_\_\_\_\_ Facilitator's phone #\_\_\_\_\_

Facilitator's e-Mail address\_\_\_\_\_

We are specifically looking for behaviors changes in the following areas:

- Eating More Fruits and Vegetables
- Eating more low-fat dairy foods
- Exercising more
- Adding strength training
- Shopping for better food choices
- Using recipes from the newsletter

While interviewing program participants, use these questions to learn more.

1. You have made some good changes and I have noticed you are really excited about them. What makes you feel this way?

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2. What inspired you to make the changes?

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3. Share with me the steps you took to make the changes.

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4. What do your friends and family think about this? What advice would you give to them?

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