

Gwen Brents Graduates from Home Visiting Program

Gwen and her children Josiah, Ayla and Blaise

Congratulations to Gwen Brents for graduating from Home Visiting!

Gwen began Home Visiting in December 2019 prior to the birth of her son Josiah. Gwen participated in the program until this January when Josiah turned three years old. Gwen experienced several changes while in Home Visiting. First was COVID not too long after her son was born. Due to COVID we entered lockdown and many programs were suspended. Home visits stopped for a while and then transitioned to virtual visits by phone or video. Gwen also had a change in Home Visitors. She persevered and adapted well to the changes without complaint.

When asked what she valued most about the program Gwen said, "Learning everything all over again and learning new things." She recommends the program for other families as well. She says "It is good for new moms and dads to know things. Parenting is different for everyone. The program is very good at helping you to learn and get other perspectives."

Gwen works hard to provide for her family and is in the process of starting her own business. Congratulations Gwen!



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NIGMS

How Do I Know Which Foods are Best for Me?

Nancy Ludwig, MS, RDN, LD, Head Start Consulting Nutritionist, March 2023

Today's topic is about a fantasy practice of storytelling (or writing) from a prompt. The goal is to learn to identify how our food choices impact our quality of life. The practice is to use a series of prompts, to allow a story to tell itself. This can actually be quite informing. In my role as consultant nutritionist to Siletz Tribal Head Start, I offer information for families. This month, let's use our imagination and see what happens. I will demonstrate an example, and then share what I learned from what I wrote in my fantasy story. Personally, I like to think of this as a way to find my most delicious and comforting foods that sustain me to be healthy, happy, and strong.

My prompt: On a dark and stormy night, while feeling hungry, I slipped into a dream state. A wise person asked me to consider what comforting and delicious food I could eat on that dark and stormy night, that would also help me to be healthy, happy, and strong. What follows?

My story: Suddenly I enter a scene from the children's book "Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs". I am cold, tired and hungry. Food is falling from the sky, and available for my choosing. I first reach out for a chocolate ice cream cone. After one lick, I remember I feel too cold for ice cream. I need warm food that would feel comfortable in my belly. I think about what that would be. I see hamburgers. I see chili dogs. I see fish tacos. I wonder how I will feel after eating any of these foods, because I don't want my belly to ache. Next, I see chicken lettuce wraps! Suddenly I remember how good I felt the last time I ate that, compared to how I feel after eating a bun or a tortilla.

Pause at this point. Take a moment to notice your observation about how certain foods made you feel. The story can stop here or continue with or without another prompt.

Next Prompt: I realize I'm thirsty, and the food I ate wasn't warm like I was hoping for. I want a warm beverage. What happens next?

My story: While still in my dream state, I know I need to get my own cup to catch the down-pour of beverages. I put on my rubber raincoat to protect me from the warm beverages raining down. I see hot cocoa. I see mint tea. I see steamed non-dairy milk with cinnamon. I see a peach smoothie. Ooh, the peach smoothie looks so delicious with the whipped cream chasing behind it, but it is very cold, and I want to feel warm. I love chocolate, but it might be too sweet and stimulating for me to sleep. However, wouldn't it be wonderful to stay up all night feeling happy from the hot cocoa? It sure is tempting, but I remember that I've been invited to go fishing early in the morning with my grandma. I've learned that it goes better when I'm not cranky from lack of sleep. I so want to have fun. Grandma would have suggested mint or chamomile tea, but I don't want it. I choose the steamed milk with cinnamon, knowing that it will be delicious, and it might feel comforting and good in my belly. After drinking my warm beverage, I feel so tired that I'm not going to brush my teeth. When I choose tea, my teeth usually feel smooth, compared to a sweetened milk beverage. I wipe my teeth with a nearby cloth, because I need to go right to sleep.

Pause. Whether you continue the story depends on how it is going. If this is an oral exercise with a child, be sure to keep it fun.

Because this was my fantasy, and I was writing for myself, I noticed that I realized my belly feels better without buns and tortillas. I also noticed that I realized the importance of food temperature, depending on how I feel. In my fantasy I considered flavor, how stimulating chocolate is, and whether that was an advantage or a disadvantage. Furthermore, because my teeth form plaque quickly, my choices matter, especially if I'm going to be too tired to brush my teeth. Lastly, my grandma's opinion was on my mind, even though I rejected it. I noticed that I chose to learn from my own experience! I observed my food choices and the consequences through this fantasy exercise. This observation comes with me into my daily life.

Your conclusions and wonderings will be different from mine, and possibly different from your child's. I recommend that adults try this practice first, before doing it with children. This experience and insight will likely help to keep the fantasy exercise fun. In order to have this process be a learning experience, you and your children will want to pay close attention to how you feel after eating or drinking certain foods and beverages in your daily lives. Over time, this will guide you and your children to choose the best foods for your desires -including being happy, healthy, and strong. This daily observation could make your fantasies more detailed and fun as the learning occurs without work. Children learn more from what adults do, than what they say. Children also learn from experimentation. When experiential learning is supported and fun, the results can be amazing. Prompted writing and storytelling are part of my recent exploration. I hope to receive feedback from you all about

how well it worked, and what were your favorite prompts.

Other possible prompts to use or change to suit your needs:

1. I'm packing my lunch and snacks before a long hike with my best friend and her big sister. What do I pack? How do I feel on the hike, and how well does it go? (Another activity can be inserted)

2. I'm lost in a strange place. I'm alone. I walk into a room with a large banquet table full of food. What do I choose to help me be smart, brave, and strong to find my way home?

3. I'm super hungry. I'm shaking. My head is confused. In my magical backpack I have anything I need as long as I know what to pick. What do I choose to eat to make me feel better?

The idea is to encourage the story to unfold after the food choices, with the learning leading to how the food choices support, or interfere, with the performance desired, such as focus, stamina, blood sugar control, or other. The lesson unfolds in real life as our food choices continue to inform us.

Another angle on prompted writing and storytelling is to tap into our ancestors (in all forms, human, animal, land, etc.). This work is at the heart of decolonizing our bodies and retrieving our deeper identities and ancestral memories. I believe we can learn through our ancestors which foods are best for us.

Siletz Tribal Head start offers nutritional support at no cost to head start families. This usually occurs over the telephone. If you have nutrition concerns about your head start child or want to discuss family nutrition concerns, please contact your teacher or the director and ask to speak to the nutritionist.