

Increasing consumption of healthy foods?

Background

Ever try to get a small child to eat an apple instead of ice cream for dessert? It's not impossible. By focusing on the situation and not the other food, many people will switch to a healthier snack with little resistance.

Rather than trying to convince children that apples are better than ice cream, just reminding them how much they enjoy apples for a snack can effect how they think about apples come dessert time. Crunchy, sweet, satisfying apples can be eaten for a snack or dessert. Studies show this increase can be up to 62% more.

Key Teaching Point

- Choosing healthy snacks depends on the situation, not the product choice.
- Reminding children of the situation in which they usually eat a product (such as eating an apple for lunch) makes them think of it as more appropriate in the new situation.

** This study was conducted at the University of Illinois, former location of the Cornell Food and Brand Lab*

Student Demonstration

At the beginning of this session simply ask the students to use a show of hands and tally the results on the board. *Ask them if they notice the difference in the following scenarios:*

- *Having either ice cream or apples for dessert*
- *Having an apple as a snack or for dessert*
- *Eating apples*

After getting at the Food and Brand Lab*. Specifically, emphasize the point about situation vs. product comparisons. That is, people tend to have no problem eating a food in a different situation, but often resist when they have to replace another food.

Finally, give the class the following scenario:

You are watching your cousin, Timmy the Crier, and will do anything to keep him from crying. His mother asked you to make sure he gets some fruit for a snack, not sweets. Timmy, of course, is dead set on having something sweet and crunchy. You can either use situational comparison, or product comparison to get Timmy to eat the fruit. What would you do?

Ask the class to share what they would do. Note aloud how many times the situational comparisons would work better than the product comparisons. A crunchy, sweet apple would be just as good for a snack as any other time of the day.

Wansink, Brian and Michael L. Ray (1996), "Advertising Strategies to Increase Usage Frequency," *Journal of Marketing*, 60:1 (January) 31-46.