



Communicating NUTRITION

— The —
Authoritative Guide



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EDITOR

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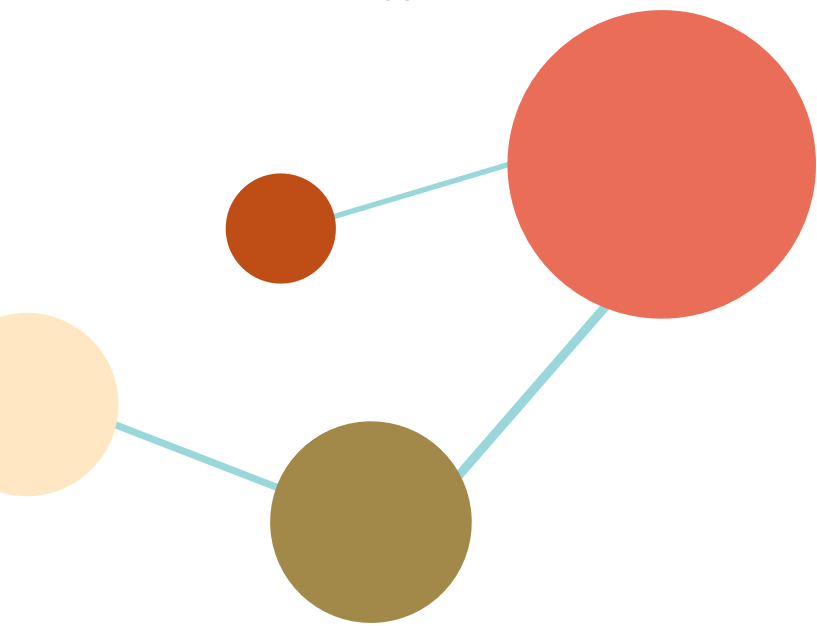
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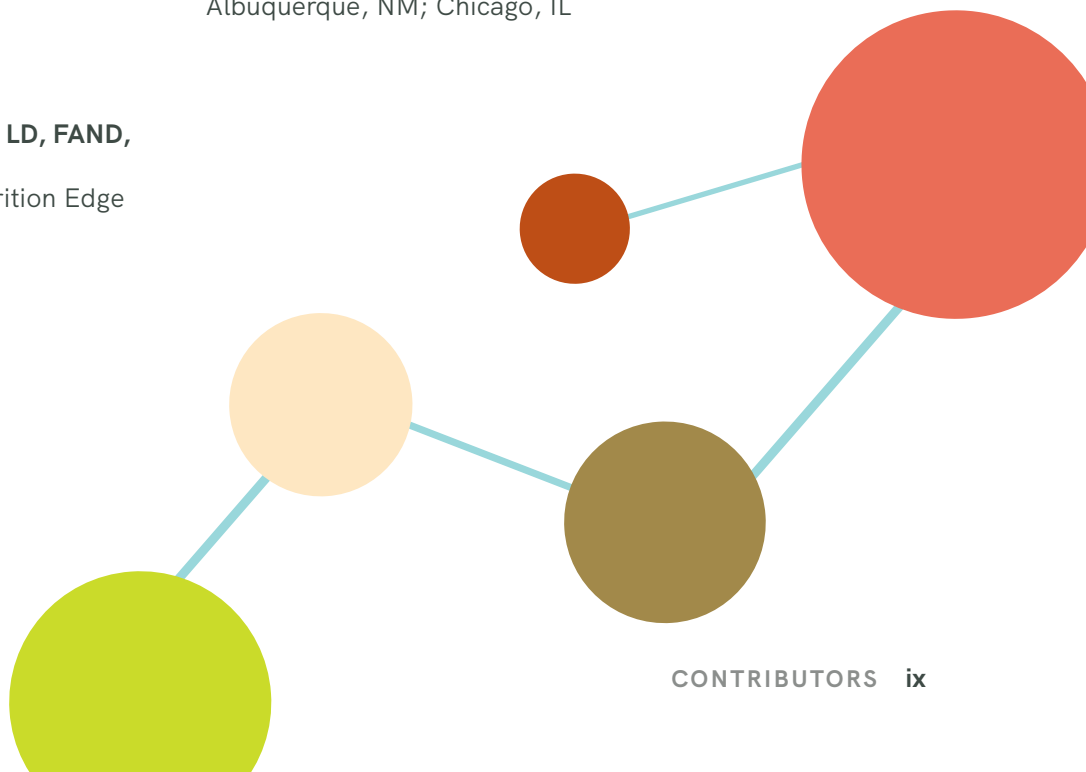
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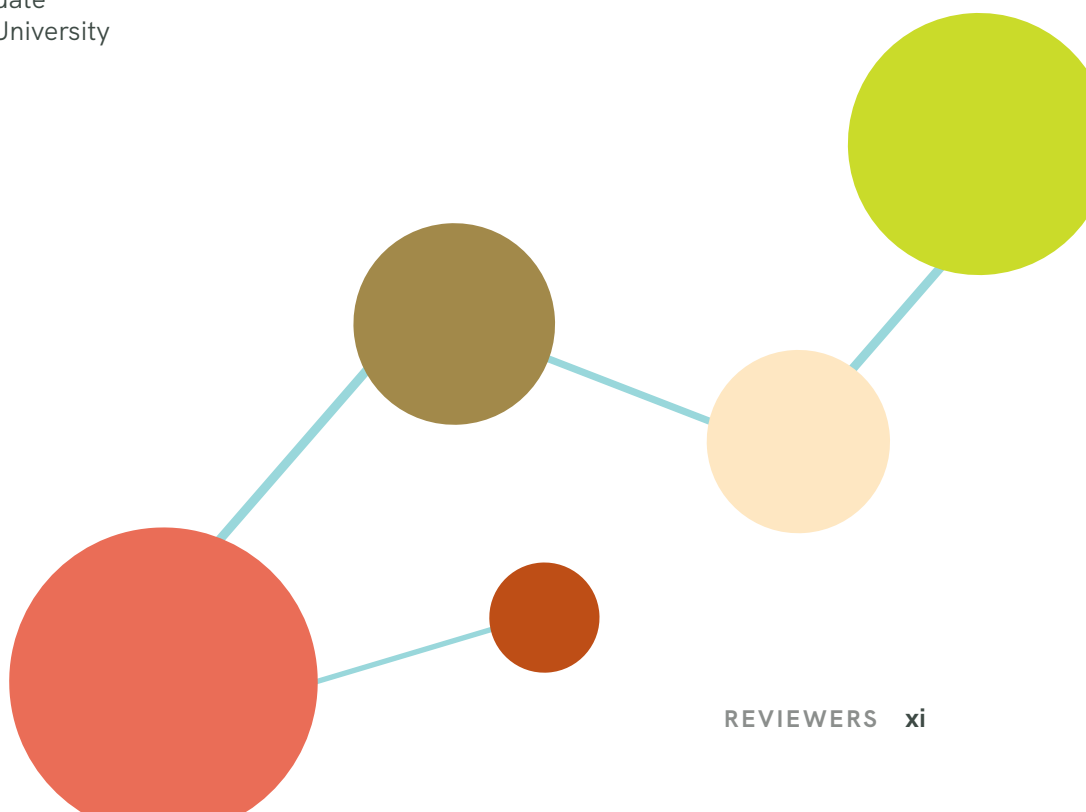
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FOREWORD



As a nutrition professional, you will have amassed a wealth of knowledge about food and health. But what good is it if you can't communicate it effectively? If there is no one around to hear you, there is the possibility of our nutrition communication reaching nobody. No matter your focus in our vast profession, your impact depends on how well you get your message across.

Whether you are speaking, writing, posting, counseling, instructing, demonstrating, pitching, presenting, creating recipes, developing infographics, photographing images, or producing videos, the end goal is the same: getting through to people in a way that sparks understanding and change.

With so much noise to overcome, that task can seem more challenging than ever. A health journalist I know once described a popular social media influencer as “not burdened by science.” I chuckled at his witty description at the time but couldn't shake it out of my head because it got to the core of what I see as our greatest challenge as communicators. As credentialed nutrition experts, we are beholden to the science, which evolves at a glacial pace compared to the lightning speed of news today. We can't—and don't want to—grab people's attention with shiny trinkets of misinformation, lofty promises, or fear mongering, yet we have to compete in an environment where that is commonplace. It is a challenge for sure, but one I know we are up to, and keeping a good, sharp set of communication skills is essential to meeting it.

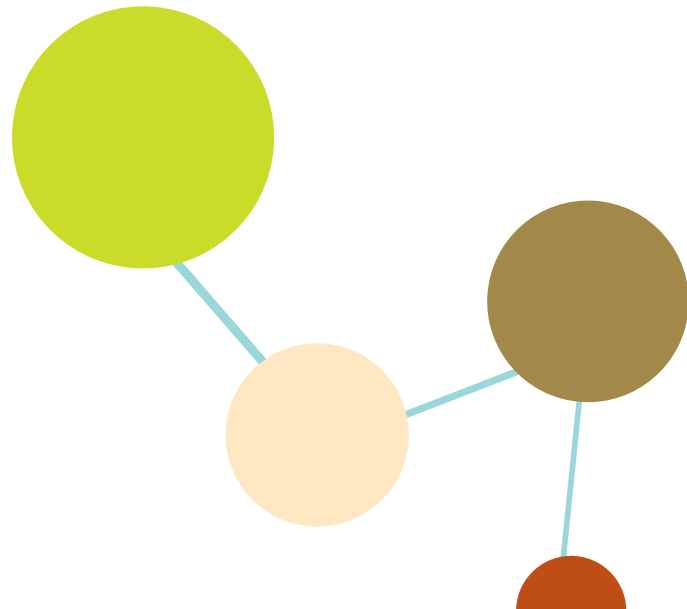
Perhaps the most important tool of all is listening. Little did I know as a loquacious child the wisdom of my grandfather's words when he'd tell me that God gave me two ears and one mouth for a reason. It's almost counterintuitive—we have so much knowledge we eagerly want to share, so it's tempting to just start downloading information. But when we listen first, finding out what our

audience needs, what motivates them, what confuses them—when we understand their resources, concerns, constraints, and ideas—we open the door to genuine, meaningful connection, and we can tailor our messages so they truly penetrate. That's the first step of any good communication cycle, which is essentially formatted like the instructions on a shampoo bottle: 1) Listen. 2) Create message. 3) Repeat.

While it might seem like some people just have a natural knack for communicating, much of it is a learned and practiced skill. I can tell you that firsthand. I have always enjoyed public speaking and writing, but I cringe when I look back at my early work—when I read the dense wordiness of my first magazine articles, watch my deer-in-the-headlights expression during television interviews, and read the vague instructions I wrote into my early recipes. But no one starts out a communications expert: You get there by stepping into the ring and keeping at it, integrating the tools of the trade and building your skills along the way. This comprehensive text, filled with the insights of the best in the business, is your trusty companion for doing so. Turn the page and start the journey.

ELLIE KRIEGER, MS, RDN

Award-winning cookbook author, columnist, and television personality



PREFACE

“Education is not the filling of a pail,
but the lighting of a fire.” —WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

Nutrition professionals have a passion for going beyond acquiring knowledge of food and nutrition to sharing that knowledge with others—a passion for *communicating nutrition*. Achieving this desire requires expertise in the art and science of nutrition communication. *Communicating Nutrition: The Authoritative Guide* provides expert guidance—based on evidence and experience—to communicate effectively.

An Idea is Born

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics identified a need for a nutrition communication text based on requests from educators and practitioners for resources on this topic. A book published by the American Dietetic Association on this topic called *Communicating as Professionals* went out of print in the early 2000s. Since then, there has not been a book published on the topic of nutrition communication. Although there are books about nutrition counseling and nutrition education, they have a different focus, purpose, and scope. The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics determined to fill this gap with a comprehensive book that spoke to both future nutrition professionals and to those already in the field.

One contributing author described the authors’ collective opinion about the need for this book: “This is the book we wish we would’ve had as a reference and guide to prepare us for our careers and the many ways we communicate.”

Reflecting on the origin of my contribution to this book, I realize it began when I took Purdue University’s nutrition communication course as an undergraduate more than 40 years ago. While enrolled in this course, I realized that

communicating nutrition was to be my primary objective, no matter my practice setting. Over the next two decades, I built on the knowledge and skills learned in that class and derived great career satisfaction through a variety of communication experiences: speaking, writing, and media.

When the professor who designed Purdue’s nutrition communication course retired, my former department invited me to fill the position. It was like a dream come true, being able to teach my favorite course and pass on to future nutrition professionals the ability and desire to communicate nutrition. For 32 semesters, together with hundreds of students, we learned and practiced the art and science of nutrition communication. What we learned is captured in this text. Long after graduation, former students consistently recognize the importance of their knowledge and skills in nutrition communication to their career success in a variety of settings.

Soon after I retired from teaching, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics approached me about using my experience to lead the development of a book to fill the void in resources about nutrition communication. This felt similar to my invitation to teach—it was an opportunity not to be missed. This time, the reach would be to an exponentially larger audience of not only future nutrition professionals but also fellow practitioners and educators. I accepted the challenge.

Collaboration Brings the Idea to Life

If there is one thing that teaching has taught me, it’s that I do not know everything—no matter my level of expertise. Therefore, if I was going to take

on writing this book, it would not be alone. By design, this book has been a collaborative effort from its inception to its completion:

- During development, we solicited the input of educators and practitioners to determine its depth and breadth.
- We invited the participation of other credentialed food and nutrition professionals to serve as writers and dozens volunteered. In the end, 57 authors contributed to the writing. Each one wrote from their unique knowledge and experiences creating a truly authoritative guide.
- We enlisted dozens more credentialed food and nutrition professionals to serve as peer reviewers of the book. With their input, the original manuscript was revised and improved.
- Once we had a good working draft, we invited educators to pilot sections of the book in their classes. Over several semesters, dozens of students read the book and provided feedback along with their instructors. This feedback provided insight into how to best utilize this resource as a textbook, not only in programs with dedicated nutrition communication courses but in those where the subject is covered in multiple courses.
- Additional experts in copy editing, book design, and publishing helped bring the book to completion.

The expertise and enthusiasm invested in this project cannot be measured but is evident on every page.

The Book Takes Shape

This book is divided into eight sections split into two parts. The first part establishes the foundation of nutrition communication and the second part focuses on the design and delivery of nutrition communication via a variety of channels. Each section opens with a Showcase that illustrates a real-life nutrition communication example that sets the stage for the topics covered in that section.

Part 1: Nutrition Communication Is Built on a Firm Foundation: Professional, Science-Based, Audience- Focused

The first part of the book provides the basis for what sets effective nutrition communication apart, and how it is supported by three foundational pillars: (1) the professionalism of the registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN), who is credentialed, ethical, and knowledgeable in both nutrition and communication; (2) the scientific evidence-base for nutrition messages; and (3) its focus on the audience, addressing their needs, culture, and preferences.

- Section 1 orients the reader to nutrition communication and sets the stage for the remaining chapters. It serves as a review of communication theory put into the context of nutrition science. It establishes the importance of communication for both the dietetics student and the practicing nutrition professional.
- Section 2 establishes the rationale for communicating accurate, current, science-based messages. Students and practitioners alike will learn how to read and interpret research in their communication. Properly citing references, both orally and in writing, is a critical skill along with avoiding plagiarism. Professional ethics related to communication is also addressed.
- Section 3 sets the stage for designing audience-focused communication. Models for message development are described along with practical strategies. The importance of a needs assessment is established, and techniques for completing one are described. An overview of behavior change theories used successfully in nutrition education and communication is provided along with examples for their practical use. Tailoring messages to audiences based on culture, gender, age, and generation is discussed. The section culminates with how to write communication goals, learning objectives, key message points, and how to outline and organize a message.

Part II: Nutrition Communication Is Designed and Delivered with Excellence

With the foundation of insuring that the communicator is professional and prepared—their message is supported by scientific evidence and has been tailored to meet the audience's needs—the second part of the book focuses on how nutrition communication is designed and delivered to be most effective: engaging the audience, presenting information meaningfully and memorably, and motivating positive lifestyles. All types of nutrition communication are described with practical strategies for excellence in design and delivery provided.

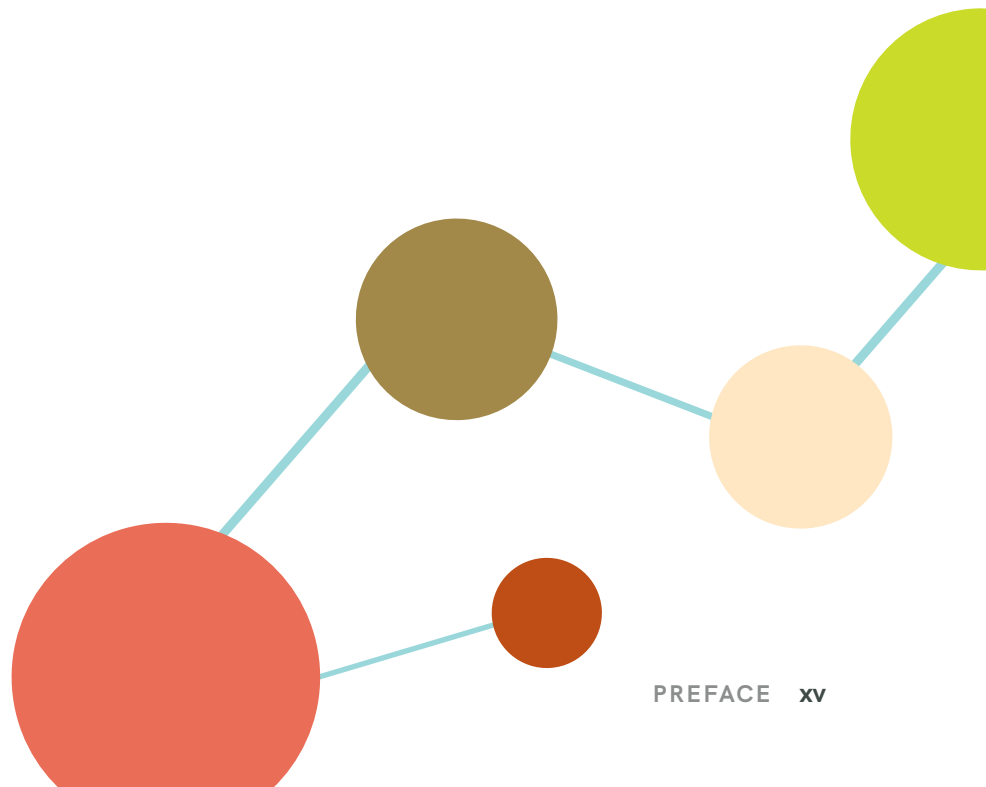
- Section 4 focuses on traditional oral presentations, breaking down the parts of an effective presentation as well as effective presentation skills and tools.
- Section 5 covers several channels used effectively by nutrition communicators including writing, video, food demonstrations, and food photography.
- Section 6 explores the wide variety of channels that effectively reach large numbers of people via mass media.
- Section 7 investigates a number of topics that are often overlooked but can make or break the success of any form of communication endeavor.
- Section 8 is primarily for the practicing nutrition professional, covering topics related to business and professional communication.

Application and Education

This book is for both credentialed food and nutrition professionals seeking to expand their knowledge and skills in nutrition communication and for future professionals building foundational knowledge and skills. Equipped with the guidance contained in this book, nutrition communicators can reach any audience, through any channel, with accurate, well-crafted messages that meet audience needs and improve lives.

Speaking on behalf of all of the authors, reviewers, editors, and designers, it has been our privilege to create this book. May it be a valuable resource that you turn to often and may it ignite your passion for communicating nutrition

BARBARA J. MAYFIELD, MS, RDN, FAND
Editor



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Communication is a collaborative endeavor. Creating a book requires extensive collaboration from start to finish. From its inception, throughout development, until its completion, this book is the result of countless individuals who contributed in numerous ways. I would like to acknowledge everyone who helped bring this book to life.

You, the reader, are first. Without an audience, communication doesn't exist. A book is no exception. Therefore, I wish to thank the food and nutrition students and colleagues who inspired the need for this text. All current and former audience members of the author team, whether students or fellow nutrition professionals, contributed (largely unknowingly) to every word. This book is because of you and for you, our audience.

This book would also not exist without the editorial and financial support of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. The Academy recognized the need, spearheaded its creation, and was instrumental in every stage. I am grateful for the privilege of working alongside the Academy's dedicated staff throughout the process, which began in 2016, when Betsy Hornick, MS, RDN, Manager of Acquisitions and Development at the Academy, contacted me after learning about the nutrition communication class I had taught for many years at Purdue University. This springboarded into a publishing contract where I would serve as editor-in-chief for this Academy book on nutrition communication. Betsy and I collaborated closely from the book's inception to its completion: developing the initial surveys to identify topics, authors, and reviewers; creating a table of contents and outline; and then working through development, peer review, revision, and

pilot testing. I also had the pleasure of collaborating with Erin Fagan Faley, Manager of Production and Digital Content Development, who took over the production phase and skillfully managed the copyediting, design, proofreading, indexing, and finally taking this book to print, along with the help of graphic designer and Production Specialist, Alison Staffin. Betsy, Erin, and Alison, you are my superheroes.

I extend my deepest gratitude to the entire author team, listed by name on pages vii to ix, who contributed their expertise without financial compensation out of their dedication to our profession and as a gift to all future and current food and nutrition professionals. It was my honor to work alongside them and count them as both colleagues and friends.

Working behind the scenes, with their only recognition on pages x to xi, is our team of reviewers. I would like to express my appreciation to each of them for strengthening the book's content and writing. Like the authors, they contributed their expertise and dedication to enhancing our collective skills in nutrition communication as a service to their profession.

Finally, I wish to thank all of the family members and friends of the above individuals who supported and encouraged this project. We welcomed seven new babies among the authors' families, along with numerous job changes and other life and national events that were navigated while writing, reviewing, editing, and bringing this book into being.

Yes, communication is collaborative. Thank you, Academy. Thank you, authors. Thank you, audience.

MEET BARBARA J. MAYFIELD

Barb Mayfield has been communicating nutrition throughout her career. As you read her career story below, Barb invites you to reflect on your journey and the varied and valuable contributions you have made, are making, and will make, as you find your unique voice.

Barb's journey as a nutrition professional began at Purdue and was profoundly inspired by her favorite course, nutrition communication. She continued her education at Cornell, where she was inspired and mentored by her coauthor for Chapter 1 and where she investigated the role of sender-receiver interaction, leading to a lifelong interest in nutrition communication.

Barb's early work as a registered dietitian included a private practice, an unconventional position in the early 1980s. She focused on communicating evidence-based information using audience-centered approaches even before those phrases were coined as best practices. A stint in long-term care allowed Barb opportunities in the only setting of her career that included clinical and food-service. Communicating effectively with staff, residents, and family was the key to making changes and achieving positive outcomes and centered on creating articles and in-services.

Community nutrition and nutrition education formed the centerpiece of Barb's career, with 20 years in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program. Highlights included developing a curriculum for preschoolers that was implemented in all 50 states and creating trainings for staff that enhanced support for breastfeeding, parent-infant bonding, addressed childhood obesity, and promoted family meals. Concurrently, Barb worked with families as an early intervention specialist and provided nutrition education resources and training via her company, Noteworthy Creations, Inc.

Barb's experiences as a nutrition communicator led to her invitation to return to Purdue to teach. For 16 years she served on the Nutrition Science faculty, teaching future nutrition professionals to be effective nutrition communicators. She continued to create resources and trainings throughout this time reaching audiences of all ages with evidence-based, audience-centered nutrition information.

Upon her retirement from teaching, Barb took her work in new directions with unprecedented opportunities to reach even greater numbers of current and future nutrition professionals—online via her LLC, Nutrition Communicator, and via the pages in this book.

No matter your current or future work setting, you have the opportunity to share your knowledge and skills with unique audiences utilizing every available channel.

Go forth, be heard, and make a difference!!

ALL THE BEST,



SECTION

1



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CHAPTER

1

Communication Is the Essence of Nutrition Practice

Barbara J. Mayfield, MS, RDN, FAND
and Ardyth H. Gillespie, PhD



“The role of communication in nutrition practice is so pervasive that its importance could be overlooked. Communication knowledge and skills must not be taken for granted. Being an effective communicator is essential for effective nutrition practice.”





"You cannot not communicate."

—PAUL WATZLAWICK

Introduction

Communication is a universal experience that begins with a baby's first cry. It develops through language acquisition, learning to read and write, and throughout life as a person interacts with others in an increasingly complex world. Communication is an essential life skill that includes not only words but also body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice. People communicate through spoken and written words, illustrations, videos, and even silence. As Hybels and Weaver succinctly state in *Communicating Effectively*, "To live is to communicate."¹

Nutrition professionals communicate about nutrition, food, and health with diverse audiences to meet a multitude of needs. Eating is a universal experience, but what, where, when, and how people eat varies widely. Health is a universal concept that is also deeply personal. Effective communication is audience-focused. It is accurate and evidence-based. It is creatively delivered and requires expertise in the subject matter *and* communication.

This chapter answers four questions:

- What is nutrition communication?
- What is the role of communication in nutrition practice?
- How do models and theories enhance nutrition communication?
- How is nutrition communication both an art and a science?

This opening chapter provides foundational knowledge of nutrition communication concepts that will be discussed throughout the book. Food and nutrition professionals communicate with

diverse audiences in a wide variety of settings and applications, which are introduced here and addressed in future chapters. Note that the focus of this book is primarily on communicating with people via group settings or via media channels rather than counseling and direct patient care; however, the foundational principles are similar and widely applicable.

This book will serve as a guide in combining nutrition knowledge with the art and science of communication. Credentialed food and nutrition professionals who build expertise in nutrition communication will maximize the impact of their messages.

What Is Nutrition Communication?

The study of nutrition communication begins with building a working definition. Consider what the term *nutrition communication* means. How is it defined? Definitions will vary based on experiences, but the meaning is intuitive. Read on to learn more about nutrition communication.

Nutrition Communication Is Self-Explanatory

Nutrition communication is just what it says it is—communication about nutrition. Though obvious, the term deserves further definition in a book dedicated to its study.

Fully defining *nutrition communication* requires first appreciating its origins—the science and art of

communication. When communication principles and theories are applied to the field of nutrition and dietetics, the result is nutrition communication.

COMMUNICATION TERMS TO KNOW AND USE

Understanding nutrition communication requires familiarity with a core set of communication terms, which are listed in the Terms to Know box. The bolded words are generic terms used in communication literature. These are followed by their definition and then more specific terms that are used throughout this text. These more specific terms are synonyms or are specifically related to nutrition communication and are followed by examples.

DEFINITIONS BUILD FROM GENERAL TO SPECIFIC

The definitions that follow progress from general and all-encompassing to increasingly specific.

Communication is ... the act of transmitting or exchanging information, thoughts, or ideas (as in non-verbal, verbal, or written messages) between a sender and one or more receivers. The term is also used for the message itself, for the means used for transmitting messages, and for the field of study concerned with the interchange of ideas and messages.²

Science communication is ... “the use of appropriate skills, media, activities, and dialogue to produce one or more of the following personal responses to science (the AEIOU vowel analogy): Awareness, Enjoyment, Interest, Opinion-forming, and Understanding.”³ This definition focuses on outcomes and is intended to promote further research and evaluation of science communication.

Health communication is ... “the study and use of communication strategies to inform and influence individual and community decisions that enhance health,” as defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Cancer Institute.⁴ In health communication, the same principles apply for groups as for individuals; however, different strategies are employed.

Nutrition communication is ... communication about food and nutrition for the purpose of developing a platform for inquiry and exchange of ideas or to influence knowledge, understanding, attitudes, decision-making processes, or behaviors. A related term is *nutrition education*.

Nutrition education is ... “any combination of educational strategies, accompanied by environmental supports, designed to facilitate voluntary adoption of food choices and other food- and nutrition-related behaviors conducive to health and well-being. Nutrition education is delivered through multiple venues and involves activities at the individual, community, and policy levels.”⁵

The words used in each term above imply *why* communication is taking place. The next section explores the varied reasons for nutrition communication.

Nutrition Communication Fulfills Varied Goals and Purposes

Nutrition communication is designed to address a perceived need or interest. A variety of terms may be used to convey the reasons for nutrition communication: *purposes*, *goals*, *outcomes*, and *objectives*. Each has a slightly different meaning; however, they may be used interchangeably.

- **Purposes** for nutrition communication may include building awareness, education, promotion, inspiration, motivation, entertainment, forming a relationship, or building a platform, among others. A purpose is a broad statement and is more general than goals, outcomes, or objectives. It helps create goals, which will then lead to outcomes or objectives.
- A **goal** contains more detail than a purpose statement. Goals can relate to a particular program, a series of events or delivered messages, or an individual message. Goals can be written from the perspective of what the nutrition communicator will accomplish or what the audience will achieve.
- Desired **outcomes** or **objectives** are specific measurements that indicate whether the goal was achieved. They are written from the viewpoint of what the audience members will learn, engage in, or demonstrate.

In subsequent chapters, a variety of nutrition communication purposes, goals, and desired outcomes will be discussed. Box 1.1 on page 10 provides an example of how these terms work together. Note the use of the word *strategies* in the objective. Throughout the book, strategies for achieving specific chapter objectives will be described. Likewise, audiences need to know how to accomplish a goal.

How to write goals and objectives is covered in Chapter 15.



TERMS TO KNOW

Sender	The person or group of people who initiate communication. The sender conveys ideas or information to one or more other individuals.
Specific term:	Nutrition communicator
Examples:	Speaker at a nutrition conference, author of an article, organization promoting a health or nutrition campaign
Receiver	The person or group of people to whom the transmitted information is directed.
Specific term:	Audience
Examples:	Attendees of a nutrition class or conference, subscribers to a health or nutrition resource, target audience of a health campaign
Message	The ideas or information transmitted from sender to receiver.
Specific term:	Main idea(s) are called key messages, which are succinct summaries of main concepts.
Examples:	Annual National Nutrition Month slogan
Channel	The means through which the message is conveyed.
Specific term:	Varies depending on type of media used (written, verbal, visual)
Examples:	Verbal and written messages sent via articles, blogs, websites, videos, presentations, illustrations and images
Feedback	The response sent back to the sender from the receiver about the message via the same or a different channel from the original message.
Specific term:	Evaluation, data collection
Examples:	Evaluation survey (formal), body language such as confused expression (informal), answer to icebreaker question designed to evaluate audience knowledge (formal), raising hand to indicate understanding (informal), comments on blogs or social media posts
Environment	The physical, social, and emotional context in which a message is transmitted, including external and internal environments.
Specific terms:	Context, physical setting, social group, cultural background, emotional state
Examples:	Meeting room, auditorium, community center, park, restaurant, family gathering, club meeting, group of friends vs crowd of strangers, calm vs stressed
Interference or “Noise”	Any physical, social, mental, or emotional hindrance to a message being transmitted clearly and completely.
Specific terms:	Internal or external barriers
Examples:	Preoccupation, multitasking, personal beliefs and biases
Predisposition	A frame of mind rooted in a person’s values, beliefs, knowledge, and past experiences that inclines the person toward certain patterns of selective perceptions, interpretations, feelings, and actions when presented with any particular situation or stimulus.
Example:	Negative childhood experience with broccoli

Purposes, Goals, and Objectives Work Together

Purpose:	To motivate
Goal:	Motivate the audience to prevent food waste
Objective:	Audience members will describe four strategies they plan to implement to prevent food waste. (This is considered a behavioral intention.)

GOALS FOR NUTRITION COMMUNICATION

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine Committee on the Science of Science Communication identified five goals for communicating science.⁶ These goals served as inspiration for generating the goals for nutrition communication listed below. Think of these as categories of nutrition communication goals.

- Increase appreciation of science and the role of food and nutrition in health and well-being.
- Influence individual or collective decision-making processes related to food, nutrition, and health.
- Improve knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors related to food, nutrition, and health.
- Engage change agents in collective inquiry, analysis, reflection, and innovation. Change agents are those in a position to influence others, such as parents, educators, other professionals, including those in industry, government, academia, and more.
- Inspire creative thinking, goal setting, behavior change, and long-term improvements in health and well-being.

What are other nutrition communication goals? The goals for nutrition communication may seem to be the same as the overall goals for nutrition practice. This is because nutrition cannot be practiced effectively without communication. Communication is the essence of nutrition practice.

What Is the Role of Communication in Nutrition Practice?

The role of communication in nutrition practice is so pervasive that its importance could be overlooked. Communication knowledge and skills must not be taken for granted. Being an effective communicator is essential for effective nutrition practice.

Communication Is Essential to Nutrition Practice

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics describes registered dietitian nutritionists (RDNs) as “food and nutrition experts who translate the science of nutrition into practical solutions for healthy living. Working in a number of areas, RDNs advance the nutritional health of Americans and people around the world.” The tagline used for RDNs is “Optimizing the Public’s Health Through Food and Nutrition.”⁷ To “translate science into practical solutions” and “advance nutritional health” requires more than nutrition knowledge; it requires communication knowledge and skills.

“If you can’t communicate, it doesn’t matter what you know.”

—CHRIS GARDNER, *THE PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS*

An Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics practice paper⁸ describes the role of communication as follows:

RDNs must actively take steps to position themselves as reliable sources of science-based food and nutrition information and communicate through a variety of new media and traditional channels. RDNs are uniquely qualified to evaluate and interpret nutrition research within the context of the body of science, and appropriately translate the findings into positive and practical food and diet advice for the public.

EVERYTHING INVOLVES COMMUNICATION

Nutrition professionals use communication skills in every aspect of their career, and over the course of a career, nutrition professionals will participate in a wide variety of nutrition communication activities. Even on a daily basis, nutrition professionals are engaged in communication in numerous ways, from writing emails and meeting with colleagues to creating and delivering science-based messages to various audiences. Those who excel at communication are often sought to fill job vacancies and are generally more effective in all they do. Communication skills are recognized as a critical skill for all professionals, including those in health care, education, and business.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS ARE HIGHLY SOUGHT BY EMPLOYERS

The importance of preparing health care practitioners and other professionals with communication knowledge and skills has been recognized by numerous organizations and agencies. For example, the Institute of Medicine, in their report titled, *Who Will Keep the Public Healthy?*, identified communication as one of eight new competency areas for public health practitioners in the 21st century.⁹ In the decade since, communication education has become a mainstay in public health academic programs and continuing professional education.

The National Institutes of Health published a series of special issue papers presenting the role of communication science in nutrition.¹⁰ Collectively, these papers recognize the value in taking a multidisciplinary approach to promoting optimal nutrition through the use of communication science. In addition to their extensive knowledge of food and nutrition science, nutrition professionals also need to expand their communication knowledge and skills to effectively promote optimal nutrition.

In a broader context, employers are seeking candidates with soft skills (interpersonal or people skills) in addition to the technical skills specific to a job function. Surveys of employers consistently rank communication at the top of desirable skills in new hires. These skills include written and oral communication, listening, and presentation skills, among others.¹¹ A CareerBuilder survey found that 52% of employers said recent college graduates lack interpersonal skills, 41% reported a lack

of oral communication skills, 40% pointed to a lack of leadership skills, and 38% said new graduates need better written communication skills.¹² No matter what the professional setting, strong communication skills are essential to success. Poor communication can be costly and can inhibit professional growth and advancement.

POOR COMMUNICATION LEADS TO NEGATIVE OUTCOMES

Research on the economic and health impact of poor communication among care providers indicates a great need for improved communication skills in health care settings. A qualitative study of communication challenges was undertaken in seven hospitals of varying sizes and locations. The economic costs were derived from wasted physician time, wasted nurse time, and increase in patient length of stay. Costs associated with medical errors, patient or staff satisfaction, and other negative outcomes were not included, making the estimates only a portion of the total economic burden. Poor communication among care providers was estimated to cost a 500-bed hospital more than \$4 million in lost revenue per year. The total economic impact of communication inefficiencies for all US hospitals was estimated to be over \$12 billion annually.¹³

Researchers have also studied the impact of poor written communication in health care settings. A narrative literature review of 69 research articles found that poor written communication occurs between caregivers as well as between caregivers and patients. Common negative outcomes include compromised patient safety, patient dissatisfaction, discontinuity of care, and inefficient use of resources. The authors recommend improved content and timeliness of written communication in health care.¹⁴

Poor communication is also recognized as costly in the business sector. Data collected from 400 US corporations with 100,000 or more employees indicate the total estimated economic burden resulting from employee misunderstandings is \$37 billion annually. The average cost per company is more than \$62 million annually. This data set indicates that companies with leaders who are considered highly effective communicators had 47% higher earnings over a 5-year period compared to companies with leaders with poor communication skills.¹⁵

No matter the setting, poor communication has a significant negative impact. In health care,

the impact leads to both poorer economic and health outcomes. Poor communication also results in decreased productivity and reduced patient and caregiver satisfaction. Improved communication skills can save time and money and result in improved health and well-being.

Nutrition Communication Takes Many Forms

Nutrition communication occurs in many different settings and through a variety of channels. These can be grouped into several categories that form the basis for the major sections within this book.

PRESENTATIONS TO VARIED AUDIENCES

Nutrition communicators present to all sizes of groups, from small, intimate groups to audiences of thousands. Audiences can consist of employees and staff, students and interns, clients and patients, community leaders and members, children, and various professionals. Section 4 of the book is focused on the knowledge and skills needed to design and deliver effective oral presentations.

An effective presentation has a logical, well-organized structure designed to present well-written key messages with supporting evidence and meaningful illustrations. It has a strong opening and closing that capture the audience's attention and inspire taking action. To enhance the presentation and help deliver the content in an engaging way, graphics and other media, such as videos, can be included.

Effective nutrition communicators enlist a variety of audience participation techniques to engage the audience, enhance learning, and promote behavior change. These include facilitated discussions and other activities to promote audience engagement. Effective nutrition communicators learn and master presentation skills to excel at message delivery. The skills covered in Section 4 are transferable to other types of communication, such as videos, demonstrations, and webinars.

WRITING, VIDEOS, FOOD DEMONSTRATIONS, AND PHOTOS

Section 5 of the book is focused on the knowledge and skills needed to design and deliver effective communication via writing, video, food demonstrations, and food photography. Communicating in writing is a major form of nutrition communication and a great way to reach large audiences. Most

types of communication are based on writing, making these skills essential for communication success. For example, most verbal and visual messages are based on a written plan or script.

Video is one of the fastest growing channels for nutrition communication, but one for which very few nutrition professionals have received any training. This section includes a chapter covering how to create video, whether independently or working with a professional.

Communicating with food is an effective form of nutrition communication that includes culinary demonstrations and food photography. Food demonstrations are a multisensory way of communicating about food and nutrition that are entertaining as well as informative. Food photography is considered an essential feature of print and online recipes as well as articles about food and nutrition. Photos can help teach how to prepare a recipe, show the ingredients, suggest portion size, or simply entice the reader. Photos are also critical to the “shareability” of an online article or social media post¹⁶—without a photo, a nutrition-related article cannot effectively be shared on social media sites, such as Instagram or Pinterest, and is less likely to garner high engagement on Facebook and other online social platforms.

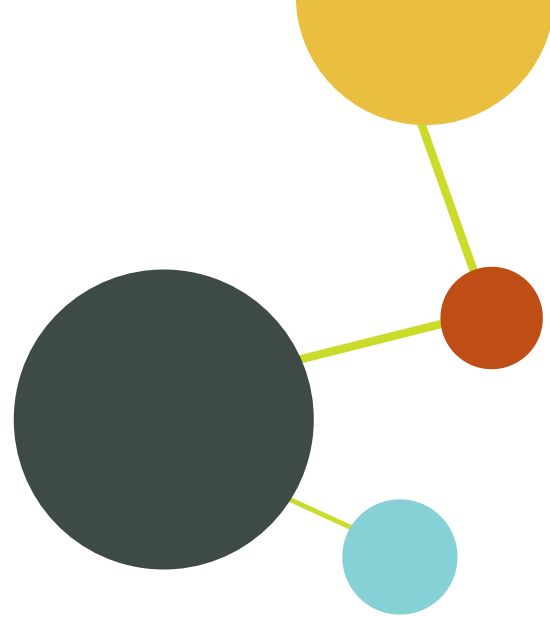
TRADITIONAL AND NONTRADITIONAL MEDIA CHANNELS

Section 6 of the book is focused on the knowledge and skills needed to design and deliver effectively via mass communication channels, including traditional and newer channels. Channels covered in this book include newspapers; magazines; social media; web-based communication, such as blogging; online courses and webinars; and shows and interviews for television, radio, and podcasts. These channels can reach hundreds of thousands of people, which means effective communication skills have the potential to influence and inspire widespread change.

This section will build the knowledge and skills for being the host or the interviewee. Roles may be reversed, but the principles and best practices are the same. With strong media skills, nutrition professionals expand their reach and influence and serve as a source of credible, science-based information in an era where nutrition misinformation is pervasive.

Principles for communicating through today's mass media channels will prepare the nutrition communicator for the channels of the future.

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