

**From Science to Soundbites: Communicating Nutrition to the Public
by Melissa Joy Dobbins, MS, RDN, CDCES, Sound Bites, Inc., The Guilt-Free RD**

“Effective communication is more than simply being comfortable in front of an audience and sharing good content.

It’s about engaging and empowering people.”

- Melissa Joy Dobbins MS, RDN, CDCES

Leveraging Communication Skills In Your Career

Consider the many different ways you communicate:

Benefits of Effective Communication

- Deliver compelling presentations with confidence
- Get your point across when speaking to the media or the public
- Respond to nutrition in the news – online or in person
- Promote evidence-based nutrition information
- Promote our profession
- Enhance your career: opportunities, visibility, recognition, confidence, influence, success

What are your biggest communications challenges?

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Nerves, confidence | 6. Sharing evidence-based info |
| 2. Creating ideas/topics | 7. Talking points/script, avoiding filler words |
| 3. Organizing content (being concise) | 8. Using visuals |
| 4. Handling questions | 9. Finding/creating opportunities |
| 5. Telling stories (being compelling) | 10. Preparing/practicing |

What are your communications goals? What is your WHY? Your “brand” influences your communications

RDNs can effectively distill the science into soundbites – *being compelling is key*

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION: Be Clear, Be Concise, Be Compelling

- Who is your audience?
- Simple (but not oversimplified)
- Take your “ocean” of knowledge and boil it down to a glass of water
- Repetition = Retention
- Focus on Solutions, Actionable advice, Perspective
- Accurate vs Meaningful
- Swim in your OWN lane, Stay out of the DEEP end, Pass the baton

MESSAGING

MENU:

- Appetizer - a strong opener
- Main Course - 3 key points
- Dessert - a closing call-to-action

The Power of Three (The Rule of Three)

- Concepts grouped in 3s are inherently more engaging, satisfying and memorable
- People easily recognize patterns of three and are programmed to learn in 3s
- Simplifies your message, makes it tangible, makes it memorable
- Helps make your message more actionable

Beginning/Middle/End

1. Open with an attention grabber

- What is your hook or headline? A surprising stat or DYK question?
- Begin with the end in mind

2. Make the middle meaningful (& interactive if possible)

- Keep your 3 main points concise – like a “headline”
- Use supporting points to enhance your content and engage in conversation

3. Close with a strong call-to-action

- Is it inspirational? Is it clear?
- What is the “moral” to your story?
- Can you bring it full circle?

“Secret ingredients” for making your content/messages more meaningful and memorable!

facts or figures (stats, science, research)	<i>e.g. X% of kids today have overweight or obesity (source: XYZ)</i>
credibility (credentials, area of expertise, third-party support, etc.)	<i>e.g. As a registered dietitian and a mom – I know how important it is to role model healthy behaviors</i>
personal experience, stories, feelings	<i>e.g. My 4 yo son likes tomatoes and black beans more than French fries because that's what I have offered him and what he's familiar with</i>
analogies, comparisons	<i>e.g. Dietitians are not the food police – we're more like coaches than referees</i> <i>e.g. To get 25 grams of protein you would need 3 oz of lean beef (150 cals) OR 1 ¾ cup black beans (382 cals)</i>
examples, 'how-to' tips	<i>e.g. Use smaller plates, bowls, glasses to control portion distortion</i>
triplets, alliteration, rhyming	<i>e.g. Build a better breakfast by aiming for 2-3 food groups like whole grains, fruit and lowfat dairy</i> <i>e.g. Breakfast can refuel, recharge and replenish</i>
word pictures, one-liners, unexpected quotes, pop culture references	<i>e.g. Be a good role model for your kids – the apple doesn't fall far from the tree!</i> <i>e.g. Don't get into a food fight – let your kids choose from the healthy options you provide</i> <i>e.g. Melissa's Harry Potter TV segment</i>
visuals	<i>e.g. food, props, images, videos, word pictures, etc.</i>

Second City Story Activity (try this at home)

1. Pair up and tell your partner a story in 60 sec
2. Tell your story in 30 sec
3. Tell your story in 1 sentence or a “headline”

ABT Framework: And, But, Therefore – “Science Needs Story” – Randy Olson, PhD

- The ABT Framework provides the core of narrative structure, which is what determines whether you interest and engage your audience or not.
- A = Agreement; B = Contradiction; C = Consequence

HANDLING QUESTIONS CONFIDENTLY

Confidence & The STAR Ingredient: Bridging

- ✓ Be prepared – don’t try to “think on your feet”
- ✓ Rely on a few “bridging” statements or transition statements
- ✓ Bridge from their QUESTION to your ANSWER and KEY POINT

Examples of bridging statements

- “I don’t know about that, but what I DO know is this....”
- Thanks for asking that – what’s most important for people to know is...
- I’m not familiar with that specific study, but in the overall context of research in that area.....
- “Actually, the opposite is true”
- I cannot speculate on the future, but what I can tell you is this...
- That’s outside my area of expertise so I would need to refer you to....
- I cannot speak for (someone else), I can only tell you from my experience as a registered dietitian that...

DELIVERY TIPS

Use nervous energy to work FOR you

“Internalize” DON’T “Memorize”

Filler Words

- Become AWARE – WHAT are your favorite filler words?
- Become aware of WHEN you are using them
- Catch yourself – stop, PAUSE
- PRACTICE!

REMEMBER:

1. Prepare & leverage the power of 3 key points
2. Bring your personality & perspective
3. Prioritize practicing

What are you going to do after this webinar to improve your communication skills?

1.

2.

3.

Informational Resource Examples & References

1. Mayfield B. Communicating Nutrition: The Authoritative Guide. 1st Edition. Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics; 2020. <https://www.eatrightstore.org/product-type/books/communicating-nutrition-first-edition>
2. International Food Information Council. Understanding & Interpreting Food & Health Scientific Studies: Guidance For Food & Nutrition Communicators. March 26, 2024. <https://ific.org/resources/toolkits/science-communications/>
3. Diekman C, Ryan C, Oliver T. Misinformation and Disinformation in Food Science and Nutrition: Impact on Practice. The Journal of Nutrition. 2023;153(1):3-9. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0022316622131020>
4. ABT Framework video (see especially 8:34 – 10:48): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nwbeAEswnbk>
Randy Olson's ABT books and info: <http://abtframework.com/books-abt/>
5. [Sound Science Toolkit](#)

Connect with Melissa:

Podcast: [Sound Bites \(Free CEUs\)](#)

Instagram: [@MelissaJoyRD](#)

Facebook: [Melissa Joy Dobbins, Sound Bites, Guilt-Free RD](#)

Website: www.SoundBitesRD.com

Email: Melissa@SoundBitesRD.com