**Translating theory into practice**

I want to tell you about a time when a presentation didn’t go as planned. It happened a few years ago now, but I remember it clearly. My colleague, Simon, had to give a presentation on healthy eating to a group of women aged 50 – 70 years-old who lived in a rural town in Australia. He told me he didn’t need to do any planning as he was only speaking about healthy eating, which we both knew inside and out. I decided to go along with him to provide moral support and before we left, he grabbed some healthy eating resources from the cupboard in our office.

The venue was the local town hall and there were about 50 women who had turned up for the presentation. I went and sat at the back of the hall while Simon got everything set up for his presentation. Simon began by introducing himself and telling the group a little about who he was and what he did. He introduced the topic and then started rattling off a bunch of statistics about disease prevalence in Australia. Then he spoke about each disease using scientific language.

As I was sitting at the back of the room, I could see that several of the women were whispering to each other and others were staring into space or checking their watches. Simon didn’t appear to notice that the women weren’t paying attention. Should I say something, or wait for him to realise? I decided to say nothing as I didn’t want to embarrass him in front of the women. Thankfully, he moved onto how healthy eating can help reduce the risk of disease and the women began paying attention again.

Simon explained each of the food groups and their importance for health, although it was more general information, not specifically for women in the 50 – 70-year-old age group. The dietary strategies he spoke about were also general. Again, I thought of saying something, but he began to talk to about eating more foods from the milk and milk-alternatives group. This was more on track with the women’s dietary needs, but unfortunately, he didn’t tell them how much to eat each day, what foods were suitable and how they could incorporate them into their diet.

At the end of the presentation, Simon went to hand out the resources he had brought and realised the information was more appropriate for young adults. Embarrassed, he quickly put them away. As the women were leaving, I overheard one say that they had just wasted 30 minutes of their time. Another said that they were disappointed because they had driven over an hour to get here, thinking they were going to learn more about the specific actions they could take to improve their health.

What went well for Simon? What didn’t go well for Simon?

Why did it seem like some of the audience annoyed or bored with his presentation?

What is the takeaway message of this story????

*Preparation and planning are essential. Also, know/consider your target audience!*