



International Childbirth Education Association

Using a Teaching T-Shirt – ICEA Teaching Idea Sheet #9

A fetal model teaching t-shirt has special appeal for some types of learners and can be an inexpensive and effective teaching aid.

The teaching shirt simplifies teaching and learning. It is especially appropriate when used to teach mothers and couples who are:

- In need of extra reinforcement
- Children in sibling classes
- Visual learners
- Less literate or “word oriented”
- Not likely to listen carefully to what is said
- Teenagers appreciative of non-lecture type learning

Upon seeing the shirt, the class is able to conceptualize a baby growing within the uterus. The shirt is also a visual reminder of the baby’s dependency on the mother.

Wearing the shirt during discussion of nutrition and substance abuse during pregnancy sends a subtle, but effective message.

The fetal model shirt allows the educator to “carry” her chart with her and makes reference to anatomy easier.

1. When teaching one-to-one it is sometimes more comfortable and convenient to refer to the

shirt than to retrieve a chart.

2. Learners are able to carefully look at the shirt during an entire learning segment. They might be self-conscious about spending that much time staring at a chart, but will closely observe the shirt worn by the teacher.
3. Wearing the shirt allows the educator to show the effect of normal and variant positioning:
 - a. The uterus, placenta, amniotic fluid and umbilical cord can be easily located.
 - b. The shirt simplifies the demonstration of pregnancy discomforts and their cause. For example, learners can see how the fetus presses against the diaphragm and the bladder.
 - c. Placenta previa and fetal position variations are easier to explain.
 - d. The shirt demonstrates the actual size and location of fetus, uterus, and organs.

The shirt can also be used to introduce a note of humor or

to surprise a “sleepy” class. When the educator pauses and pulls the shirt on, she is assured of getting the class’s attention. (For this reason it is recommended that the shirt be put on at a select time rather than wearing it at the start of class.) Children are delighted that a baby is finally visible. Teenagers enjoy the “fun” of seeing the educator pregnant and adults are amused to see anatomy from the inside out.

The childbirth educator should practice wearing the shirt at home before teaching with it. Learners sense an educator’s discomfort and it might take some time to become totally comfortable with one’s uterus visible. (Educators might also be sensitive to the potential for negative responses from those who object to seeing an inside view of the body.)

Modifications in the fetal model teaching shirt could expand its uses:

1. Elastic through the lower casing of the shirt facilitates adding a pillow for “pregnancy” padding.
2. The pelvis, abdominal organs, mammary glands, ligaments and the spinal column could be added with an indelible marker. This would simplify the

teaching of physical
changes, epidural/spinal
anesthesia and pelvic
station.

The uses of the fetal model
shirt can be as varied as one's
creativity. When the educator
is comfortable wearing and
using the shirt, it can be a
very effective teaching aid.