



Heart Buttons

What are the Emotional Drivers of Texas WIC Moms?

Research purpose:

Determine emotion-based drivers of behavior change for Texas WIC mothers

The Texas Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) is charged with changing health-related behaviors of the people it serves. Changing behaviors is never easy, especially when WIC clients often struggle with financial, relationship, education and job issues that take priority. Who has time to worry about a toddler's vegetable intake when they don't have a place to sleep that night?

Adding to the behavior change challenge is the short time—five to fifteen minutes—that WIC educators have to engage clients in conversation. Throw a fussy infant, toddler and/or young child into the mix and the distracted mother may have even less time to focus.

With over 40 years of traditional educational approaches, WIC is at a crossroads. It needs a transformational way to quickly engage clients in conversations that lead to behavior change.

Will emotion-based behavior change reinvent WIC?

To achieve WIC program objectives and remain relevant to WIC clients, Texas WIC seeks to identify evidence-based ways to change behaviors in a busy WIC clinic. Chickasaw Nation WIC is in the process of implementing a unique emotion-based behavior change program called Heart Buttons (HB). Based on commercial marketing research that emphasizes feelings over facts, Heart Button approaches seek to trigger client emotional drivers before presenting logic-based information in the behavior change conversation.

Research suggests that about 15 emotions drive people regardless of their cultures. Some of these are primary and some are secondary. The purpose of this study is to identify the primary emotional drivers of WIC mothers.

PROJECT PURPOSE



Which emotional drivers are most likely to trigger behavior change in mothers participating in the Texas WIC program?

Primary research objective

Research suggests that emotions—along with a small dose of logic—drive behaviors. Some of these “Heart Buttons” are primary motivators, some are secondary motivators and others are less influential. The purpose of this research is to determine which emotional drivers are most important to mothers participating in the WIC program.

Secondary research objective

A secondary research objective was to see if Heart Buttons were consistent among mothers in different regions. The Chickasaw Nation WIC program conducted similar Heart Button research in 2013. Their findings are the foundation of the Heart Button program currently in development.

HEART BUTTON RESEARCH OVERVIEW

Three focus groups

Pam McCarthy moderated three, two-hour focus groups with WIC clients on October 20-21, 2015 in Dallas, Texas. Group size varied between five and six respondents. Groups were segmented by pregnancy status and age of children.



Projective techniques

Most people aren't aware or able to articulate their Heart Buttons. Projective techniques were used to trigger Heart Button conversations. Projective techniques are questions with no obvious answer, requiring respondents to project from what they hold as truth.

Internal Review Board (IRB)

This project was reviewed by the Texas Department of Health IRB and received expedited approval on August 19, 2015.

Recruitment

Dallas WIC clients received a focus group flyer inviting them to call about participating in focus groups. Callers who qualified were invited to attend. Each respondent received a \$75 gift card for participation.

WHAT ARE HEART BUTTONS ?

Heart Buttons are the dominant reason(s) people want to change

Heart Buttons are unmet needs

Ever wonder why people choose to follow their hearts instead of making “wise,” rational choices? People seek to meet unfulfilled needs. Those unfulfilled needs are Heart Buttons. Rational advice that doesn’t meet unmet emotional needs is rarely attended to or heeded.

Emotion-based Heart Buttons trump logic

Everyone likes to think they make choices based on logic, facts and rational arguments. But research suggests emotions are the true drivers of decisions. In other words, Heart Buttons are the true drivers of behavior.

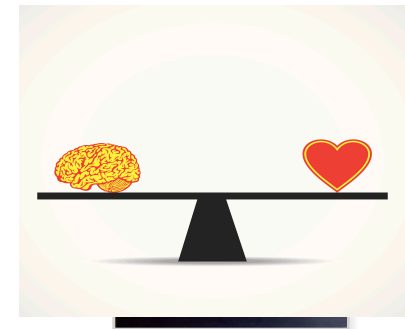
Heart buttons are aspirational

Heart buttons “speak” to people about how they want their lives to be and how they want to view themselves and be viewed. Heart Buttons are aspirational-- how people want to be rather than they way they are.

Heart button are invisible and internal

Although Heart Buttons are powerful drivers of behavior and decisions, most people aren’t aware of their own Heart Buttons or how they affect their decisions. People simply respond to ideas or conversations that trigger them.

Harvard Business School professor Gerald Zaltman states that 95% of decision making takes place in the subconscious mind.



KEY INSIGHTS RELATED TO EMOTION-BASED APPROACHES

Emotional forces can lead people to ignore barriers and move them to action. Heart Buttons are emotional forces that can lead WIC clients to action.



WIC educators can have more influence if they align WIC behavior goals with the invisible but powerful motivators that drive behaviors.

Tapping into people's current emotional drives, and then aligning desired behaviors requires a mind shift and practice, but not more conversational time.

A behavioral message is more likely to be acted on if it promises emotional benefits that trigger clients' deepest desires and feelings.

WIC strives to provide client-centered services. What could be more client-centered than triggering people's deepest desires? This instead of talking to their surface, superficial "masks?"

Why can't we just ask people to share their motivational drivers? Humans are complex. It may be difficult or impossible for people to know, understand and believe what their true motivations are. And even if they know them, clients are unlikely to openly share them during a busy WIC appointment. Discovering what motivates WIC moms as a group will allow WIC educators to align WIC behaviors with their clients' true motivations.

HEART BUTTONS: 15 EMOTIONAL DRIVERS OF BEHAVIOR

Logically, people should change for rational reasons. They should want to offer healthy foods to their children and be active as a family as a way to reduce diabetes or reduce childhood obesity.

But people are not wired this way. Instead of choosing to act on logic-based messages, we choose to fulfill unmet needs. People take action when doing so will boost their lives emotionally. Therefore, emotions—as well as tiny doses of logic—drive behaviors.

WIC providers will continue to be frustrated by client lack of attention and behavior change unless they learn how to align desired behavior changes with unmet needs, for example the need to feel in control, nurturing or smart.

The 15 Heart Buttons that drive behaviors are listed next for quick reference.

Control

People want control over finances, health, safety, self-respect and the respect of others. Loss of control increases a fear of the future. Order and predictability lead to secure feelings.

Reinvention

People want to invent a better life for themselves and their family. Regrets, loss, and a desire for something better fuel reinvention.

Status

People want to fit in and belong, and are willing to pay or make changes to enhance themselves in the eyes of peers. They want to feel (or let others believe) they are better than average.

Family values

People want to celebrate and transfer family values to others. They want to share values that build character and lead to success.

HEART BUTTONS: 15 EMOTIONAL DRIVERS OF BEHAVIOR

The desire to belong

Emotional connections are important. Groups provide opportunities to feel accepted and increase personal worth.

Fun

The desire to laugh and have fun is universal. Fun prevents boredom and increases stimulation.

Poverty of time

Saving time is one of the biggest motivators for busy men and women—especially women of child-bearing years.

Sex, love and romance

Sexual and romantic interests and the desire to love and be loved are two of the most basic emotions.

Self achievement

People want to feel good about their success and their personal growth.

Stimulation, novelty and diversion

People love the new and unexpected, and the thrill of discovery and fresh thinking.

Nurture

Protecting and ensuring future success is important to many people, especially parents.

Wish fulfillment

Hopes, dreams and wishes can be motivating forces for future actions.

HEART BUTTONS: 15 EMOTIONAL DRIVERS OF BEHAVIOR

Although it may appear that Heart Buttons are distinct and unique from each other, there is considerable overlap between them. A mother may want to reinvent a better life for her child by ensuring her child has strong family values and happy family memories. Three Heart Buttons are at play for this mother: reinvention, family values and fun.

Make me smarter

People want to feel they are gaining knowledge and wisdom that positions them for success, power and achievement.

Power and influence

Shaping the thoughts and behaviors of others leads to positive feelings of power, control, and meaning.

Recognition

The desire to feel lifted up or celebrated because of personal contributions or skills. Being recognized can lead to positive feelings like feeling smarter, more influential, and with higher status.



Findings

*The Emotional Drivers of
Texas WIC Moms*

PRIMARY EMOTIONAL DRIVER: REINVENTION

Reinvention--Seeking a better life for themselves and their children

People reinvent themselves for many reasons. WIC respondents seem unhappy with where they are in their lives, their roles in their world and their economic futures. They feel extreme stress over finances and their chances of future success with limited education and experience. They are tired of working “dead end” jobs instead of having careers that provide well and allow them to feel more successful. Health issues, absent fathers, strained family relationships, and incarcerated partners add additional stress to their lives.

What do respondents want? They want better lives—different lives—for themselves. They want greater financial security, degrees that lead to secure jobs, strong families with solid values, and happy, peaceful times with family and friends.

Most of all, respondents want something different for their children. They want to nurture them to have strong values and academic success so they don't repeat the patterns that have entrapped their own lives.

The deep desire to reinvent better futures for their themselves and their children was repeatedly expressed in all groups in multiple ways. Thus WIC behavior change messages that trigger reinvention are likely to be effective at garnering attention and leading to behavior change.



FOCUS GROUP RESPONDENT QUOTES: REINVENTION

“If my children ever ask why I have scars on my arms or my hands, or why I didn’t graduate, I’m not going to be ashamed to tell them why. I feel if they know who I was, they will want something better and they’ll be proud of me, which means they’ll try following in the footsteps in the parameters that I set for them.”



“My children are the world to me. I don’t ever want them to be worried about clothes like I was when I was little, or worry about going without a meal, or being underweight and drinking Pediasure until I was 17. Or having no place to sleep, you know sleeping under bridges.”

“My mother and father were not there for me. I have to teach my children how to be self-sufficient and to make better lifestyle choices. I was a wreck and I don’t want that for them. I don’t want them to be so dysfunctional. They deserve better than I got. I think that every mom’s dream is to have better than what you had.”

“I can go back and think of all the mistakes I’ve made and all the stuff that I went through and all the consequences, and apply that to how to bring up my child to make better decisions. And go a better way than what most people and I had to go through.”

“I just make sure they have everything that they need because my mom was a single mom and we didn’t get to have family meals. I lost my childhood because I had to take care of my sister and brother when my mom worked and I don’t want that for my kids. It’s very important to make sure they have their childhood.”

PRIMARY EMOTIONAL DRIVER: FAMILY VALUES

Family is the emotional heart of most mothers, and that is certainly true of focus group respondents. Their families may not look like the traditional two-parent families of yester-year but mothers still have the same desire to be a strong family unit. They want their children to develop values and character traits that lead to success, and they want to protect their children from people who expose them to values and behaviors that run counter to their values. Many invest numerous hours in church, hoping to pass on the faith of their parents. They aspire to provide emotionally, physically and mentally for their children so they can develop the character, ethics and values needed to live meaningful, successful lives.



FOCUS GROUP RESPONDENT QUOTES: FAMILY VALUES

“I want to instill the right morals and goals in my kids’ heads so they can just be on the right path and not make the mistakes that I did. I would know I was an excellent mother to them. There are some reckless kids and I would hate for my children to be like that because I wasn’t brought up that way and I’m not going to bring up my kids that way. So I want them to do everything legit so I won’t have to go through the troubles. I don’t want phone calls saying ‘this has happened, you’ve got to come get me.’ None of that.”



“We live in a crazy society and a lot of things are going on. A lot of things even between people-- and that’s horrible. You have got to teach your kids. And then just spend time with your kids. Like I do, no matter how late I work or whatever, I wake up in the morning and I give them hugs, I play with them, I make sure I’m involved in whatever they are involved in. And I educate them. I teach them, don’t do this, don’t do that, do it this way, the right way.”

“I won’t be satisfied unless I know that they’re getting what they need education-wise. I want them to have all of the tools. They’re sending kids out here who don’t even know the importance of education. They just don’t have that stability and structure at home. That’s important to me.”

“Family time is really important. I believe in sitting at a table and eating as opposed to kids and family all over the place, one here, one there, TVs on in every room. I don’t condone that. I don’t like it. You’re teaching them a number of different things--how to behave, how to sit, how to communicate with your family and your immediate social circle. That’s where you learn everything.”

PRIMARY EMOTIONAL DRIVER: NURTURE

Nurturing is about doing something for someone else. For mothers, nurturing is about giving care, support, comfort, and encouragement to their children.

Most mothers want to be heroes. They want to live their lives in a way that protects their children from harm and negative influences, and ensures their success.

Focus group respondents have a deep need to nurture their children. They work tirelessly to be heroes in their children's lives by providing basic essentials like food and clothing, but also by going beyond the fundamentals to make sure their children thrived. They have a deep desire to help their children be

successful, teach them about values and character, share their faith, and make memories—all within their desire to provide a firm foundation for future success.

The sacrificial way that respondents work to nurture their children suggests this is a powerful motivator and an unmet need, making nurturing an important Heart Button for WIC behavior change conversations.



FOCUS GROUP RESPONDENT QUOTES: NURTURE

“I like to see them happy. They’re happy when they learn something. I like to see the excitement when they are learning something new.”

“Then they can apply it to their life and become successful in their own way. It’s not me saying ‘this is what you have to be, this is what you will be,’ but letting them find their way with what I’ve given them.”

“You want your child to achieve, exceed, success, everything. You want them to make it. You want them to graduate, knowing that you did the right thing behind them.”



“My mom didn’t give me the guidance that was necessary for me to actually be successful. There’s a major difference between somebody that actually basically cares for you and your well-being versus somebody that’s just drilling information in your head and expects you to catch on and do the right thing instead of helping you through it.”

SECONDARY EMOTIONAL DRIVER: CONTROL

Many respondents feel their lives are out of control. They continually face uncertain futures because they lack money to meet even basic needs, live in unstable relationships, survive on low-paying jobs, lack education to get higher paying jobs, and are challenged by family illnesses. They desperately want to change their lives to gain more control over their future.

It is important to note the difference between the two heart buttons, “power and influence” and “control.” Power is the ability to influence others and their behaviors, while control is about preventing negative things from happening. Although respondents are interested in influencing their children, they are far more concerned about gaining control over the many forces that affect them every day, especially finances, which threaten their success and sometimes their very existence.

WIC educators will be more effective with meeting their clients' unmet need for control if they take the time to establish trusting relationships and suggest ways for clients to take control of their lives and their families' futures.



FOCUS GROUP RESPONDENT QUOTES: CONTROL

Respondents expressed the need for greater control in their lives. Their greatest control needs are for basic biological and physiological needs such as food, housing, clothing and sleep rather than power or influence. A few also expressed the desire to feel in control of their daily balancing act of juggling jobs and unstable relationships.

“If you lose your state of mind a lot of stuff bad can happen. Like some mothers just can’t control it--some can. I don’t want to get to the point where I’m screaming and yelling and frustrated at the same time. Chastising my kids when I’m frustrated or just yelling at them for no reason.”

“I want to be able to accomplish everything I said and not have to worry about it. Oh man, am I going to have enough money? How am I going to be able to get this, how am I going to be able to get food on the table? I don’t like the stress and I don’t like the worry. It bothers me.”



“I don’t always want to work for someone. I want my own business to fend for my family. A family business would even be better, not always being controlled by corporate America.”



*Heart Button
implications for WIC
promotions, messages
and counseling*

HOW CAN HEART BUTTONS BE USED TO PROMOTE WIC?



WIC promotions seek to capture the attention of potential WIC clients and motivate them to become WIC clients. Promotions that trigger Heart Buttons may be more effective than those that feature the logical benefits of WIC participation. This list of questions may be useful in guiding promotional development.

- ☐ Does the promotion directly state or suggest WIC participation can help families reinvent better futures and lead to increased family values and/or nurturing?
- ☐ Does the promotion feature emotional benefits first before mentioning rational benefits?
- ☐ Does the promotion allow potential clients to feel WIC as a way to meet unmet emotional needs rather than more logical needs like nutritious advice and specific foods?
- ☐ Does the promotion help mothers feel more in control of their lives rather than simply reinforcing that they need help?

HOW CAN HEART BUTTONS BE USED TO PROMOTE BEHAVIOR CHANGE IN WIC BEHAVIOR CHANGE CONVERSATIONS?



WIC is a behavior change program that strives to be client centered. Because Heart Buttons represent the deepest desires of a mother's heart, it is a very client-centered behavior change program. No need to take time to assess what the client wants to discuss as this research reveals what's most important to them: Reinvention, family values and nurturing their children.

Consider these guidelines when planning Heart Button conversations.

- ☐ Start with emotion rather than logic. It is easier to move from emotion to logic but challenging to go from logic to emotion.
- ☐ Use pictures, props or words to trigger the targeted Heart Buttons. (Reinvention, family values and nurturing.)
- ☐ Frame desired behaviors as a way to reach the clients' unmet needs. Clients unmet needs are to reinvent a better life for herself and family, provide a firm foundation for family values to flourish and nurture her family in a loving and protective way.
- ☐ Provide a brief dose of facts, logic and rational support for desired behaviors after discussing the emotional value of taking action.
- ☐ Ask clients to visualize how their lives will be better or different if they are able to make the change. This cements the emotional and logical value of taking action for them.
- ☐ Ask clients to share what steps they plan to make related to the behavior change so they can frame the action according to what is valuable to them.

HOW CAN HEART BUTTONS BE USED IN BEHAVIOR CHANGE MESSAGES?

Traditionally, WIC messages aim to *inform* people. Messages are considered effective if they are clear, concise and accurate, and if the reader understands their key concepts.

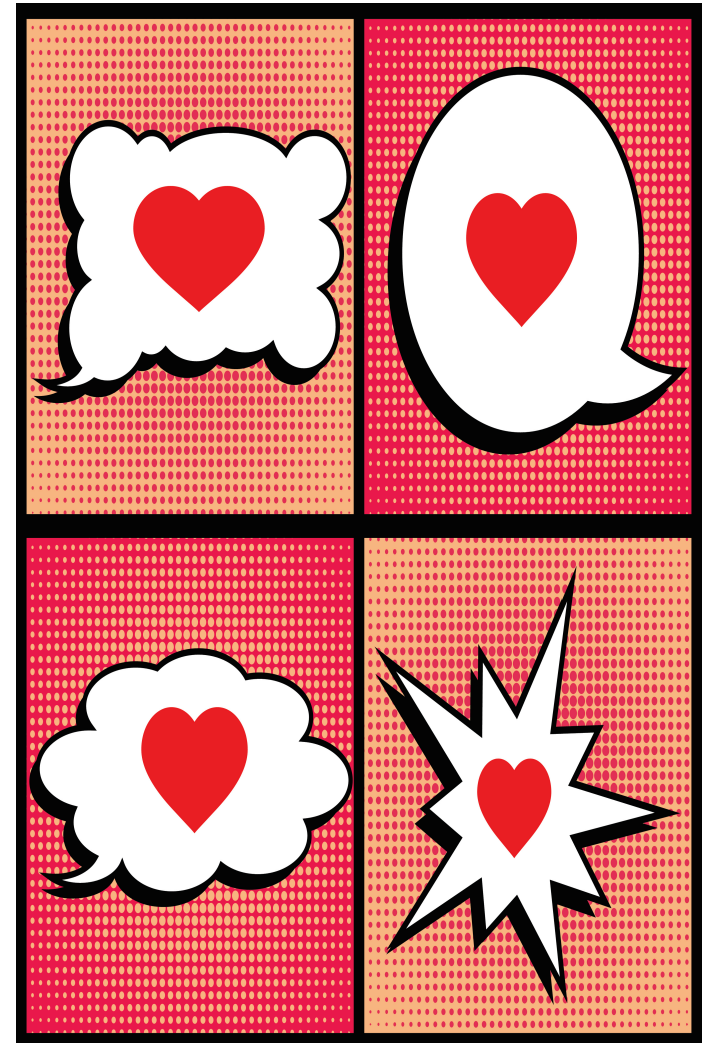
Heart Button messages seek to *transform* people. The goal of Heart Buttons messages is to move people to action. They trigger emotional drivers of behaviors—Heart Buttons—through images and words.

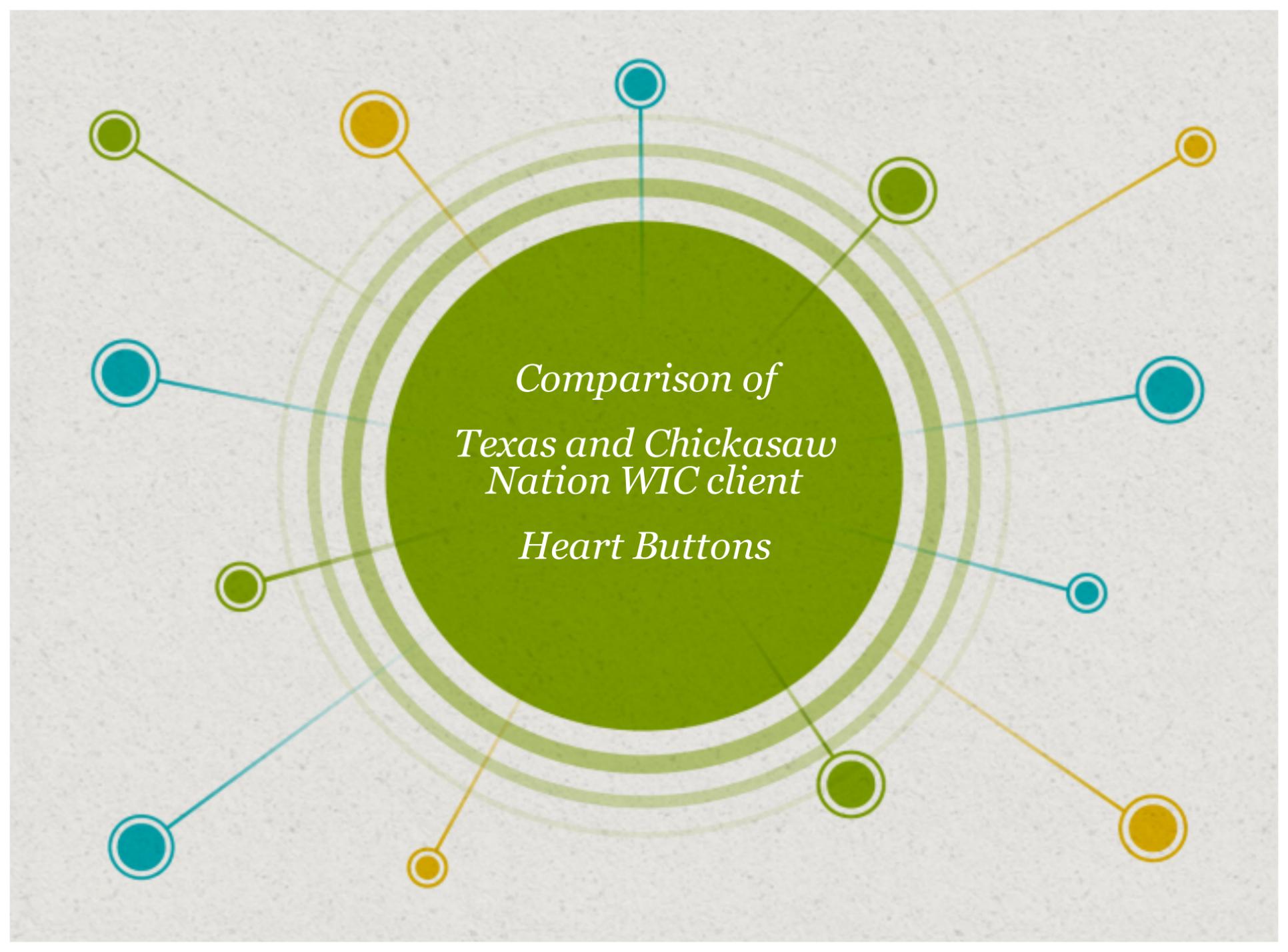
Consider the following word and phrase suggestions when crafting Heart Button messages for WIC clients:

Reinvention: New beginnings, imagine, the future starts today, recreate a better tomorrow, fresh start, rewrite history, the future is in your hands, launch a better tomorrow

Family values: Foundation for success, character building, powerful life lessons, fundamental respect, responsibility, “do right by your child”, decent, respectability, beliefs and integrity, moral foundation, honor, decent human beings, guiding principle, solid upbringing

Nurture: You offer love, #heromom, caring, helping children feel loved, ensuring success, pure love, giving comfort, mentor to success, enriching hearts and minds, protection, insurance, encouraging growth and success, helping hopes and dreams come true





*Comparison of
Texas and Chickasaw
Nation WIC client
Heart Buttons*

SUMMARY

Heart Button approaches targeting key emotional drivers identified in this research study have the potential to transform WIC and the people they serve.



COMPARISON OF CHICKASAW NATION AND TEXAS WIC MOTHER EMOTIONAL DRIVERS

No single emotional driver is the deciding factor between action or no action. People are complex and decisions are layered. This research project looked for the tipping points—the emotional drivers with the most intensity and passion.

In addition, this research sought to identify if the Heart Button “tipping points” were consistent between Chickasaw Nation and Texas WIC moms. The research suggests there is considerable overlap.

Pam McCarthy conducted 12 focus groups in Chickasaw Nation in 2013. The groups were segmented in the same way as the Texas WIC project, with mothers grouped by pregnancy and age of child. The discussion guide and protocols were also the same.

The Chickasaw Nation Heart Button research revealed three primary emotional drivers: Reinvention, Nurture, and Family Values. The Texas WIC Heart Button research revealed four emotional drivers: Reinvention, Nurture, Family values and Control.

While there is considerable overlap between the two groups’ emotional drivers, control was a much stronger driver in Texas than in Chickasaw Nation. Texas mothers want more control over their basic survival needs such as food, clothing and housing. It may be that living in a larger city is more of a challenge than living in rural Oklahoma. It could also be that Chickasaw Nation residents have a tribal “safety net” that prevents feelings of desperation. (However not all Chickasaw Nation focus group respondents were tribal members.)

