TALKING IT UP WITHOUT DUMBING IT DOWN
Icebreaker: Mirror Image

• Find a partner
• Be a mirror image of the person next to you
Why do we need to learn to communicate our research?

• Academic context – talking to alumni, donors, students, media

• Non-academic context – convincing management why your work is important
Know your Context

• Questions to Ask:
  – Who is your audience?
  – What is the environment?
  – What is the message?
Activity: Think, Pair, Share

• Frame your research as a question for 3 audiences:
  • Researcher in your field at a conference
  • Your aunt at a family gathering
  • A potential employer in a non-academic interview
Keep it Simple

• Biggest problem: Overestimating your audience’s knowledge.
• Biggest fear: Not looking smart

Suggestions:
• Ask yourself ‘what is really important?’
• Avoid jargon
• Use concrete examples
Activity: Loosing Track...

There is increasing evidence that parents' diet or environmental exposures not only affects their own health but may predispose their offspring to different diseases. The goal of this research project is to identify how parental exposures may adversely affect their offspring's epigenetic marks which control the expression of different genes in the body. High dose folic acid is commonly used in men presenting with infertility. However, it has never been tested whether or not folic acid supplements can affect the epigenome of parents and their offspring. Our data from human and mouse models for the first time shows that supplementation with high dose folic acid alters the global methylation status of sperm DNA. Such alterations, detected by state-of-the-art next generation sequencing methods, may predispose the offspring of folic acid recipients to diseases such as cancer and developmental disorders.

CIHR Abstract

http://webapps.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/funding/detail_e?pResearchId=5782823&p_version=CIHR&p_language=E&p_session_id=2283007
Have a hook

- Ask a question
- Give a contemporary example
- Tell a story

Struggling to find the hook? Answer the ‘so what?’ question.
Activity: Snowball

• Write a hook for your research on a piece of paper.
• Crumble it up and throw it around the room!
• Find one ‘snowball’
• Read it out loud
• Give feedback on each hook: how convincing was it?
In Short...

- Know your context
- Keep it simple
- Have a hook