Measuring Impact with Certain Challenging Audiences

For Extension to claim credit for its educational and motivational influence in getting people to change their management practices or behavior, Extension educators need to know at least, what the participants were doing before the program. Typically, a question with answer categories is used both before and after the program.   The more precise and specific the question and answer categories, the more valid the data are likely to be.

Some audiences however, lack the information to give a precise answer about what they did before the program. These audiences find the question so laborious to recollect with any accuracy, they avoid the question. This problem has been found in nutrition programs among the elderly, with participants with low reading levels and, with some teenagers.

Potential Solution
To measure the intention to change some behaviors, especially those that typically reoccur for the target audience such as:

- pruning trees
- managing manure
- soil testing
- eating nutritious food
- using safety devices in the barn
- maintaining a child care facility

Consider adapting the question below for your own evaluation.

Note that the pre and post answer categories are slightly different. The answer categories in the pre question center on whether the person has used the management practice or behavior either "often" or "not often," two general categories. "Not Often" would include never having done the behavior.

This question has its obvious limitations compared to typical evaluation questions. The most obvious limitation of this question is its lack of specificity and preciseness in the answer categories. Thus, this question would likely be inappropriate in a food safety program where the standards for safety are very precise.

However, this question is *not meant for typical audiences* in extension programs. It is meant for audiences where a given approximation of what they had been doing in the past, and the direction of their behavior in future, are the best type of evidence that is possible, given the constraints of obtaining data from this audience.

Example Question:

Listed below are foods discussed today. For each food, circle on the left, whether you had that food OFTEN, or NOT OFTEN in the last year. On the right, circle what you will do in the next 3 months: keep the amount of that food the SAME, INCREASE IT, or DECREASE IT.

In the last year   In the next 3 Months

OFTEN	NOT OFTEN	*Soft Margarines*	SAME	INCREASE	DECREASE
OFTEN	NOT OFTEN	*Whole Grain Bread, Cereals*	SAME	INCREASE	DECREASE
OFTEN	NOT OFTEN	*Fruit*	SAME	INCREASE	DECREASE
OFTEN	NOT OFTEN	*Vegetables*	SAME	INCREASE	DECREASE
OFTEN	NOT OFTEN	*Etc.*	SAME	INCREASE	DECREASE