

OVERVIEW OF ADULT LEARNING PRINCIPLES

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The following are some issues to keep in mind in designing and facilitating learning activities for adults:

1. Common motivational issues for adult learners
 - a) Learning is a means to an end, not an end in itself
 - b) Seek out how to cope with life-change situations and events
 - c) The more dramatic the change options, the more motivated the learner
 - d) Maintaining and increasing self-esteem and pleasure are important motivators during learning

2. Learners' needs during workshops
 - a) Seeing how the material presented applies directly to them
 - b) Will have preconceived ideas and so will need longer (and perhaps more application exercises) to integrate new material if it conflicts sharply with what they already hold to be true; it can help to have some kind of fun assessment that highlights erroneous beliefs
 - c) Need to fit what is presented into what they already know
 - d) Will look for immediate payoffs ... how to apply the concepts today

3. Adult learning principles can be applied by:
 - a) Facilitated interaction and discussion
 - b) Accommodating individual learning styles by a combination of large group, small group, and individual exercises
 - c) Relying on simple acronyms
 - d) Repeating key concepts extensively
 - e) Writing key concepts on flip charts
 - f) Having writing (wall) space for learners to make comments or raise questions

4. Agenda design issues include:
 - a) Have a written agenda, with times, and keep to it. Learners need to know when they can plan to contact home or office.
 - b) Build in an introductory exercise where learners talk or interact within the first seven minutes of the first session.
 - c) Organize learning segments into periods of no more than 1.5 to 2 hours.
 - d) Allow for rest breaks of at least 15 minutes mid-morning and mid-afternoon.
 - e) Give a short summary of key points at the end of each session. If the training goes for more than one day, start subsequent days with a recapitulation of the key points from the day before.

5. Establish House Rules at the beginning of the first session, such as:

- a) All learners have something to learn and teach
- b) Each learner needs to take individual ownership of their own learning
- c) The purpose of the training is understanding, not necessarily agreement
- d) There are no dumb questions
- e) Silence is ok
- f) Respect others