

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

**TRAINING OF TRAINERS**

**FOR USE BY FRONT-LINE TRAINERS IN LEBANON**

**Principles of Adult Learning**

**Three Learning Domains**

As an instructor, you should have a basic understanding of how adults learn. Adult learners bring experiences and self-awareness to learning that younger learners do. To understand adult learning, you should understand learning domains, learning styles, and how and why adults learn.

Educators have determined that most adults, adolescents, and children learn best by experiencing a blend of activities that promote the three learning domains: **cognitive, affective, and behavioral**. **Cognitive** refers to knowledge or a body of subject matter, **affective** refers to attitudes and beliefs, and **behavioral** refers to practical application.

**Three Learning Styles**

**The three primary learning styles are: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic.**

* **Visual learners** tend to learn by looking, seeing, viewing, and watching. Visual learners need to see an instructor’s facial expressions and body language to fully understand the content of a session. They tend to sit at the front of the classroom to avoid visual distractions. They tend to think in pictures and learn best from visual displays. During a lecture or discussion, they tend to take detailed notes to absorb information.
* **Auditory learners** tend to learn by listening, hearing, and speaking. Auditory learners learn best through lectures, discussions, and brainstorming. They interpret the underlying meaning of speech by listening to voice tone, pitch, and speed and other speech distinctions. Written information has little meaning to them until they hear it. They benefit best by reading text out loud and using a tape recorder.
* **Kinesthetic learners** tend to learn by experiencing, moving, and doing. Kinesthetic learners learn best through a hands-on approach and actively exploring the physical world around them. They have difficulty sitting still for long periods of time, and easily become distracted by their need for activity and exploration.

We retain approximately:

* 10% of what we see;
* 30% to 40% of what we see and hear;
* and 90% of what we see, hear, and do.

We all have the capability to learn via all three styles, but are usually dominated by one of the styles. The table below shows some of the methods that appeal to visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners. Training should take into account all three styles.

**Principles of Adult Learning**

Part of being an effective instructor involves understanding how adults learn. Malcom Knowles, a pioneer in adult learning, identified the following characteristics of adult learners:

* ***Adults are autonomous and self-directed:***  trainers must actively involve them in the learning process and serve as facilitators rather than fact generators. Trainers must get participants’ perspectives on the topics to cover and let them work on projects that reflect their interests. They should also allow participants responsibility for presentations and group leadership and show participants how the training will help them reach their goals.
* ***Adults have accumulated a foundation of life experiences and knowledge:*** trainers need to connect learning to that knowledge/experience base by encouraging participants to share relevant experience/knowledge.
* ***Adults are goal-oriented:*** They appreciate an educational program that is organized and has clearly defined elements. Trainers must show adult learners how the training relates to their goals early.
* ***Adults are relevancy-oriented:*** Learning has to be applicable to their work or other responsibilities to be of value to them. Trainers must identify objectives before the course begins and relate theories and concepts to a setting familiar to participants.
* ***Adults are practical:*** They may not be interested in knowledge for knowledge’s sake but rather focus on what is most useful to them.
* ***Adults, as with all learners, must be shown respect:*** Trainers should acknowledge the abundance of experiences and knowledge participants bring to the classroom.

**Motivating the Adult Learner**

There are at least six sources of motivation for adult learning:

1. ***Social relationships:*** to make new friends, to meet a need for associations and friendships
2. ***External expectations:***to comply with instructions from another; to fulfill the expectations or recommendations of someone with formal authority
3. ***Social welfare:*** to improve ability to serve mankind, prepare for service to the community, and improve ability to participate in community work
4. ***Personal advancement:***to achieve a higher job status, secure professional advancement and stay abreast of competitors
5. ***Escape/Stimulation:***to provide a break in routine, and provide a contrast to other exacting details of life
6. ***Cognitive interest:***to learn for the sake of learning, and to satisfy an inquiring mind.

**Six Essential Skills of an Effective Facilitator**

A facilitator’s responsibility is to make a process easier or facilitate a process through adequate planning. A facilitator acts like a guide to help people move through a process. They guide the participants towards an exploratory journey of learning by helping them to delve into their inner self to realize their strengths and weaknesses, helping them to share their experiences and learning from the experiences of others.

Facilitators achieve this by helping the group to analyze what they wish to accomplish. Good facilitators understand their group and adopt a customized approach while working in the group. They plan, manage and guide a group event effectively ensuring that objectives are met. A good facilitator keeps away from the real content and maintains a neutral stance.

The question is what does it take to be an effective facilitator? What are the competencies you need to build in order to effectively drive a group towards their objective?

Six competencies given below are the ones I thought are "non-negotiable". Of-course there are many more. In fact, every facilitator has a unique style that corresponds to a unique competency. Take and look and see.

1. **Communication Skills:** A good facilitator encourages open communication. He ensures inclusion whereby each member can participate and scans nonverbal cues through behavioral observations of the group. He ensures conclusion at the end of meetings and paraphrases for clarification. He also ensures that the group is focused and not deviating from the topic.
2. **Active Listening:** Comprehension of the message that the speaker is conveying requires active listening. Statistics reveal that most of us listen to just 25-50% of what we hear and forget almost 46% of what we have heard. The totality of the message being conveyed should not get lost and so effective listening is extremely important. There might be some natural barriers to listening like noises and other barriers could be talking more and listening less, boredom, being engrossed in personal issues, preconceived ideas and assumptions. A facilitator should develop the skill of active listening. They should maintain a body language that makes the group feel assured about his physical presence by facing them squarely, making eye contact, nodding , keeping an open posture and so on. He also should be able to attend to the speaker at a psychological level by understanding what is not being conveyed explicitly and he should be able to pick up from nonverbal cues. Paraphrasing and repeating back what was said and asking questions reflects that he is actively listening.
3. **Rapport Building:** A facilitator should be able to connect with the group. Trust and empathy are essential for building a relationship with the group. Building a relationship with a new group requires finding some common goals and interests, shared values and outlook.
4. **Structuring and recording facts and feelings:** A facilitator should be able to record precisely the information gathered during the course of the discussion. He can do it himself or assign a note gatherer for it. He could do it using a flip chart for this purpose. Noting key words and accuracy is extremely important.
5. **Developing Synergy:** Teamwork is an essential in any workshop or session. A skilled facilitator knows how to bring the participants together based on shared interests and goals. The facilitators should facilitate synergy in the group by removing distractions, by making them sit face to face, in arena type arrangement for open discussions. He should encourage sharing of views, respecting each other’s views, reaching consensus and through brainstorming sessions.
6. **Effective Techniques of Questioning:** The purpose of questioning is to seek clarification and to check for comprehension. Facilitators ask questions primarily to probe the understanding of the participants and to help them in critical thinking and for evaluating information. Socratic questioning method is a very effective questioning method whereby one just does not raise questions but finds out the answers himself. It helps in developing critical thinking skills. Facilitators often use this technique to unravel the basic issues, identify the problem areas, and develop accuracy, increase creativity and logical thinking. Facilitators should possess good probing skills through open ended and closed ended questions. The manner of questioning in terms of timing and accurate delivery is extremely important. The APPLE technique is often applied.

The acronym for ***APPLE*** is the following:

***A: Asking the question.***

***P: Pausing for allowing participants to comprehend the question and think of an answer.***

***P: Picking a member to provide the answer***

***L: Listening to the answer.***

***E: Elaborating on the answers obtained.***

Apart from the above mentioned skills, a good facilitator should be receptive and should be able to develop new skills as and when required depending on the participating group and should be open to ideas.

**List of the top characteristics of an effective facilitator:**

1. Stimulates the interaction and the free sharing of thoughts and ideas.
2. Creates the safe environment in order for the group to open up and become actively engaged in the discussion.
3. Are masterful and engaging listeners.
4. Provides the structure for the discussion. Sets the parameters, the intention and guides the conversation.
5. Supports the well-being of each participant as well as the group.
6. Acknowledges the participants and makes them right (and never makes anyone wrong.)
7. Utilizes the art of the question to create and cultivate new possibilities that stimulate new thinking.
8. Taps into the wisdom of each person, as the value derived in each discussion is a result of the co-creation and wisdom of the group (vs. dominates the discussion.)
9. Is charge neutral and responsive rather than reactive.
10. Is fluid and flexible vs. rigid. (Is light and dances gracefully within the conversation.)
11. Connects with the group.
12. Plans effectively yet is fluid based on the atmosphere and needs of the audience.
13. Is authentic and shares themselves with others/is fully self-expressed
14. Has fun and is passionate about the transformational process that occurs – if done successfully.