

ADULT LEARNING PRINCIPLES *and* RECOMMENDED PRACTICES

UBC FAMILY PRACTICE RESIDENCY PROGRAM • *Faculty Development*

CHARACTERISTIC		GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS	SPECIFIC STRATEGIES
1	Learning involves change which can cause anxiety in adult learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create a safe climate for sharing ideas and taking risks ▪ Model all desired behaviours ▪ Inform learners early and often as to what will be occurring during the learning session ▪ Advise learners of any assessment expectations for the learning session 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Greet learners informally before learning session begins ▪ Inform learners of the purpose, learning objectives, and agenda for the learning session at beginning of session ▪ Facilitate a collaborative process to create group norms or community agreements ▪ Provide opportunities for learners to work in pairs or small groups for support ▪ Tell learners when, what, and how they will be expected to share with the group (and allow for people to forgo this expectation, if severely uncomfortable)
2	Adult learners come with a wide range of previous experiences, knowledge, interests, and abilities and they appreciate when their assets are recognized and utilized	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Leverage learner strengths and input to help achieve learning goals ▪ Design activities that accommodate diversities in needs, knowledge, learning preferences, and ability ▪ Be prepared to be challenged on suggested ideas or approaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ask learners what they most want to take away from the learning session ▪ Use questioning to draw session content from learners, whenever possible ▪ Employ learning approaches that target various learning preferences (ie. visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic learners) ▪ If challenged by a learner, decide whether to engage or ask to discuss privately at another time
3	Adult learners are self-directed and want to be actively involved in the learning process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide choices whenever possible ▪ Talk less and engage learners more ▪ Create opportunities for participant input and feedback ▪ Move towards increasing the participant's responsibility in directing their own learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Solicit learner input in determining session structure, learning topics, and learning activities, wherever possible ▪ Ask learners to volunteer for supporting roles such as note-taker, timekeeper, and discussion facilitator ▪ Solicit learner feedback via informal polls and surveys throughout learning session and at end of session ▪ Provide opportunities for learners to teach each other new content
SAFETY			
UTILIZATION			
CHOICE			

4 RELEVANCE	Adult learners appreciate programs that address relevant challenges in their lives and provide solutions that are immediately useful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assess learner needs before designing learning session ▪ Inspire internal motivation for learning by helping learners see the WIIFM? (What's in it for me?) ▪ Customize and individualize to learner input, whenever possible ▪ Facilitate opportunities for learners to relate learning to real-world situations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ask learners what they most want to take away from the learning session ▪ Tell learners explicitly how the learning session results will help make their lives easier or more rewarding (WIIFM?) ▪ Employ role plays and case studies that mimic real-world situations for learners ▪ Provide session time for learners to work on key deliverables ▪ Require learners to formally indicate how they plan to apply the learning in their own situations
5 SOCIAL LEARNING	Adult learners learn best in informal settings where they can interact socially	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide opportunities for learner sharing, interaction, and involvement ▪ Plan learning activities that require learner-to-learner interaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Have learners interview and introduce each other at beginning of session ▪ Use paired and small group activities ▪ Schedule unstructured time for learner conversation and bonding

A Few Other Points:

- Deep learning requires active learner participation – merely providing information does not ensure that learning occurs
- The key to adult learning is igniting internal motivation – motivation is inspired when learners can see how the newly-learned knowledge or skills will be of immediate and tangible benefit to them
- It is critical to build regular feedback loops throughout learning sessions to accurately assess what, if anything, the learners are taking away and to correct any misdirected learning that is occurring
- Most novice and untrained educators rely on lecturing as the primary (or only) mode of teaching, often due to the fact that:
 - » They don't know any alternate approaches or strategies to use
 - » Lecturing can present a lot of information in a short period of time (but doesn't necessarily lead to learning)
 - » It keeps control of the learning situation in the lecturer's hands, which reduces variability and uncertainty for the instructor

Quick Tips for More Effective Teaching:

1. Talk less and ask more questions.
2. Include paired and small group activities, whenever possible.
3. Use relevant case studies, role-plays, or other hands-on activities to get learners actively engaged.
4. Ask learners to describe how their newly-developed knowledge or skills will make their lives easier/better.