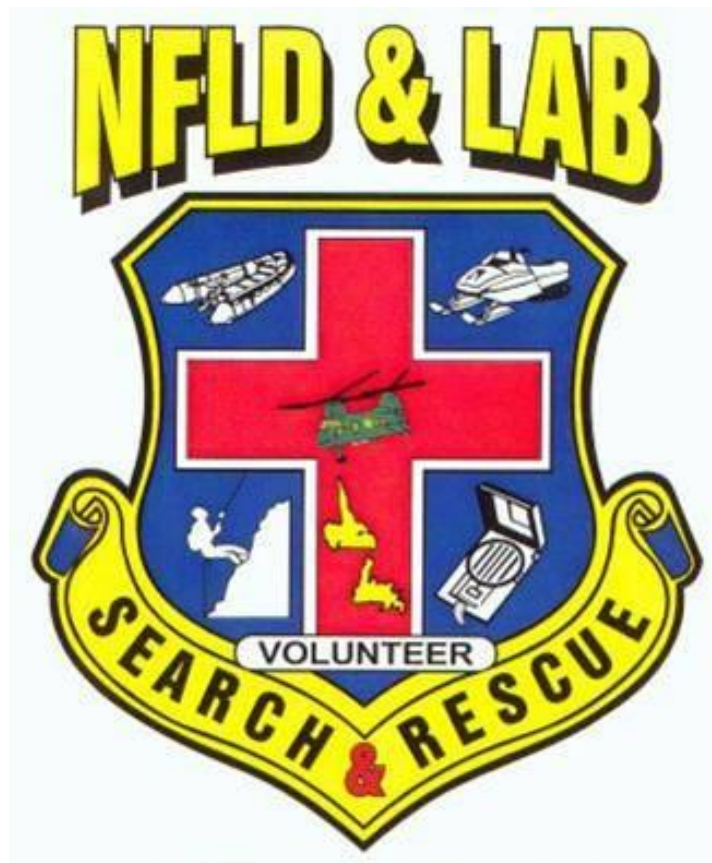


NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR SEARCH AND RESCUE ASSOCIATION



TRAIN THE TRAINER MANUAL *NIF NL1-04*

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1.0 CHARACTERISTICS OF ADULT LEARNERS

When you first meet a group of adults as learners, you have very little information to go on. You can ask them their names, observe which gender they belong to, and hazard a guess at their ages. Here are some observations on those characteristics.

1.1 Names

Adults can set great store by the use of their names. They have lived with them for a considerable number of years, may have adapted or changed them, and often see them as marking out their individuality. We can see this in the way some people react immediately if their names are mispronounced or misspelled.

By using an individual's names, you can:

- pay someone the compliment of recognizing his or her individuality within the group,
- encourage them to contribute,
- draw one member more actively into the group,
- acknowledge a person with a moment's attention,
- focus on an individual, and
- gain or regain a learner's attention.

Learning and using individuals' names indicates your interest in them. It helps establish a mutually respectful relationship between you and your group. And it helps the learners relate to each other.

To encourage the use of names some trainers issue name tags or place large name cards on the participants' tables or desks. Some trainers give over a substantial part of their first meeting to introductions around the class or to an exercise that will bring out information about the group members and enable people to meet each other.

Your first piece of homework as a trainer might be to go through the class list and put names to faces and try to memorize them.

1.2 Age

You will often have people of widely varying ages in your class. People differ because of age, and people change as they grow older. As they grow older they may become:

- wiser,
- slower,
- more acute,
- less patient,
- more tolerant,
- hard of hearing,
- less easily fooled,
- disillusioned,
- less anxious,
- more rigid, and
- freer.

There have been theorists who have argued that people grow less intelligent with age and find it increasingly difficult to learn. This thinking has now been discredited but it is still true to say that many older people *mistakenly believe* that they cannot learn as well as younger people and so may be easily discouraged or not really try.

Here are some effects of ageing upon which most theorists agree:

- Many people's hearing and sight decline as they grow older, particularly after the age of 40. To accommodate older members in a class you could:
 - ensure there is good lighting,
 - speak clearly and slowly,
 - reduce extraneous noise,
 - use large lettering on the board or screen,
 - position your class correctly for video or film, and
 - use audio and video resources with crisp sound.

Nobody, young or old, should have to strain in order to see or hear in the classroom.

- Short-term memory declines with age. This is the faculty that enables us to hold in mind, say, a telephone number for a short period of time. Some researchers say that our short-term memory can begin declining from our late 20's on. To allow for possible decline in the short-term memory of some of your participants, you could:
 - avoid requiring them to memorize facts and details needlessly,
 - use hand-outs,
 - allow learners to refer to text, diagrams and instructions, and
 - leave notes or the main points displayed on the board or on large sheets of paper around the walls.

When learning is dependent on memorizing, place the emphasis on memorizing by doing and reinforce what is memorized by practice.

- Older people slow up. They can learn as thoroughly as younger people but they may take longer to do it. Older learners begin to sacrifice speed for accuracy and many will move on to the next step only when they are sure that they have mastered the last.

To accommodate older learners, look for ways of managing the class so that they can work at their own pace. Try to remove any suggestion that learning is a race. Encourage class members to measure their progress against their own previous achievements rather than against the performance or pace of others around them.

1.3 Sex and Gender

People's attitudes to the opposite sex, to sexuality, and to the changing patterns of human relationships can affect their ability to learn in an adult class. Here are a number of observations about those attitudes:

- Adult classes are usually mixed. If there is an imbalance in the genders, those in the minority may feel inhibited or self-conscious and may need support and encouragement to participate fully in the class.
- In a group of people who have not met before, some people may adopt stereotypical roles according to their gender – perhaps seeking to manipulate or dominate the group or claiming some special right of place.
- There are likely to be of varying attitudes to the changes brought about by the feminist movement. Some people may feel threatened and defensive. Others may be eager to move those changes along.
- There will be people with differing attitudes to sexuality and sexual preference.
- Some people observe quite specific sexual taboos and are angered when these are questioned.
- Some people are embarrassed by the subject of sex and retreat from any consideration of it.
- Some people want single gender classes so that they can develop their own views, experience and learning without needing to meet real or imagined demands of the other gender.
- Many learners find it stimulating to work in a classroom with members of the opposite sex or people they find sexually attractive. The social and sexual mix in an adult class can provide a strong additional motive for learning.

1.4 Other Characteristics

You may also have people in the class from different cultures, races and backgrounds and you will need to be alert to this. Learners from ethnic groups that differ from the dominant culture in your class may feel inhibited, shy or at a disadvantage. Some may appreciate being given special attention but some may resist being singled out. Sometimes it may be worth asking particular learners if they feel at a disadvantage in the class and discussing with them any strategies you might adopt. There are, however, no ground rules in these kinds of situations beyond the continual exercise of tolerance, sensitivity and tact.

And some members of your class may have disabilities. Some disabilities are easily discernible but others, such as hearing impairment, are not. Again, you will need to exercise sensitivity and tact and to take particular care when offering help. Some people take great pride in overcoming a difficulty on their own and quite rightly resent anyone who unthinkingly steps in and helps them when there is no need. Let people know that you are ready to offer extra help but do not insist.

2.0 STATES OF MIND

Adults can feel anxious and they can be preoccupied, and you will need to develop ways of counteracting both these states of mind.

2.1 Anxiety

Adult learners can be anxious about:

- not understanding,
- not being as 'clever' as the rest of the group,
- failing,
- being judged, and
- making a fool of themselves.

Why should grown men and women who manage to live their own lives in the world outside the classroom feel these self-doubts when they return to learning?

Perhaps we should recognize that for many of us, our adult confidence is a fragile state of being. We develop it by building our lives around a number of routines which we learn to manage well. Joining a class may be a break in that routine.

Then there is all that talk about learning and teaching being very different now from the days 'when we were at school'. Adults often return to learning fearful of *'the new math, 'new curricula', 'new technology'* and belief that anything they can remember from earlier educational experience will be obsolete.

And simply enrolling in an adult education class can create a conflict within the learner. Many people still seem to believe that once we have reached the state of adulthood we should be 'complete'. By enrolling in a class an adult is recognizing that she or he lacks certain knowledge or skills, or could do with more. Some people, therefore, are attracted to the idea of joining a class but also see that attraction as an admission of inadequacy. This conflict can produce anxiety.

Anxiety is not always easy to detect. Adults can give the impression of being confident and at ease. Of course some are precisely that, but you need to be aware that for others that appearance of confidence is a façade. Allow learners some 'space'. Let them settle in. Try not to force the pace. Avoid testing them early in the course. Find time for the group member who wants to talk to you after class to tell you why they are 'special' or different. Devise an early activity in which each learner can see that she or he is making progress. At all costs, avoid irony and sarcasm or any method that could isolate a learner from you or the rest of the group. ***Fear of looking foolish is one of the most crippling blocks to adult learning.***

Even the most confident of learners will appreciate being introduced gently and carefully into a subject in which they are unfamiliar.

2.2 Preoccupation

When an adult attends a class, it is only one activity amongst many that make up a crowded adult life.

Adults have:

- relationships,
- occupations,
- interests,
- hopes and desires,
- pleasures, and
- worries.

During a class, these other parts of their lives vie for the learners' attention. Learners can become preoccupied. They look at you, nod in the right places and apparently comply with your directions. But they can actually be seeing and hearing very little – and learning nothing.

Adults need to be occupied by their learning. As the trainer you will need to provide variety, shifts in pace and changes in activities and method. You need to see yourself as continually competing for each person's attention.

3.0 STATUS AND IMAGE

Many adults derive identity or status from the activities they perform. Adults engage in lots of activities and so will have a number of statuses or identities, depending on who they are with or through whose eyes they are being seen.

Most adults, however, have one dominant activity or interest and it is through this that they derive their central identity or '*key status*'. Very often a person's key status is linked with their occupation or profession. This is borne out by the way we introduce people.

Key status is not always linked to a person's occupation. For example, you may see someone as an electrician but he may see himself first and foremost as a trade unionist. Where there is this kind of mismatch in the perception of a person's key status, there can be subtle failures in communication, misunderstandings, *faux pas*, and hurt feelings – all of which can get in the way of learning.

A further problem can occur when a person is dissatisfied with the key status accorded to her or him. A woman may be a mother and housewife but may be unhappy at being presented to the world as that. If a trainer called upon her to give a representative view of that group within a society, the woman might resent it and withdraw from the class activity.

As you get to know your learners and before you begin drawing in detail upon their experience, you need to get to know how they are seen by others, how they see themselves and how they would like to be seen.

4.0 ADULT EXPERIENCE

Adults come to your class with a wealth of experience. They live their lives as free agents having to manage, make do, earn a living, form relationships, develop their own opinions and attitudes and deal with problems. Much of this experience is active experience, in that each person has lived it or actually done it themselves. Adults come to classes bringing with them a range of achievements of which they are often very proud.

Some of these achievements are common ones and you may be able to use them as basis upon which to build cooperative activities, discussion and other group work.

Some of these achievements will be individual and unique. You may be able to draw these out, allowing the rest of the class to catch a glimpse of another world or set up situations in which the owner of that unique experience can pass on what she or he has learnt.

The active experience of adults is a resource to be tapped. People will have skills, knowledge and ideas to share. Their experience will provide examples to back up your own points, yardsticks by which to judge what you offer, and source material upon which to build new ideas. Those with certain skills may be able to teach sub-groups in the class. Some will be able to teach you.

Adults also have passive experience made up of events that have happened to them or overtaken them. Some of this experience will have been welcome but some will have been unpleasant or counterproductive.

A major passive experience for many adults will have been their schooling. This was a long period of attendance at an institution where, often, the learner had little choice as to what was done or learnt. For some adults the memory of school is unpleasant. You will need to approach this experience carefully, perhaps by adopting styles and methods different from traditional school ones, perhaps avoiding reference to schooldays or maybe offering to take up where school may have abruptly left off.

Other passive experience may include accidents, illness, fortune and misfortune. Some experiences will have had a liberating effect, others a damaging one. You need to treat people's pasts as their own, encouraging but never insisting that they share them.

5.0 ADULT DEMANDS

Adults usually attend classes voluntarily, but this does not mean that they will be easygoing in their expectations. Many of your learners will want your course to be:

- effective,
- immediate,
- efficient, and
- topical.

5.1 Effective

Many adults engage in learning in order to deal with a specific situation or to solve a specific problem. They want to build a house; are going to have a child; are thinking of changing jobs; are experiencing a lot of stress; have money to invest; want to stand for election in their town – and so on. Often adult learners are not so concerned with studying a subject as with gaining information, ideas or a skill that will help them get on with a particular aspect of their lives. They want results.

5.2 Immediate

Adults often want results now. Life is short and time is precious. They are no longer concerned with preparing for some vague future but want to learn something that can be used or enjoyed immediately.

5.3 Efficient

Adults often want results quickly, cheaply and with the minimum of effort. They will prefer short courses covering a definite subject or leading to the acquisition of specific skills. They will often be dissatisfied with expansive, broad topic courses with ill-defined aims and objectives.

5.4 Topical

Many learners will want the course to relate to the place in which they live and the conditions they know. Learning needs to be linked to their real lives through reference, comparison, and examples starting from and returning to the here and now.

Of course there are apparent exceptions to the kinds of learner depicted above. There is the perennial learner, who attends the same class over and over again, and there is the learner who does nothing but attend as many part-time courses as he or she can – but these are exceptions and most learners will want their time in class well and usefully spent.

6.0 MOTIVATION

Adults have intrinsic and extrinsic motives for attending classes.

6.1 Intrinsic Motives

These are motives related to the subject being taught and learnt. A researcher once asked learners in a number of non-credit French classes why they attended. The first time she asked she received these kinds of reply:

“To learn French”,

“I would like to have French as a second language”, and

“I want to speak French fluently”.

These are obvious answers. Having pressed the learners further, the researcher was told:

“I would like to continue my education in France”,
 “I am extremely interested in French culture”,
 “Mainly for travel, reading French literature and seeing films”, and
 “To understand international phone calls I receive at work”.

These reasons are still associated with the subject of French but contain other elements related to work, leisure and personal interests.

6.2 Extrinsic Motives

The researcher pressed the learners further and they began giving reasons for attending that were no longer related directly to the subject of French:

- Some learners attend for intellectual stimulation:
 - “To widen my interests”
 - “To be extended mentally”
 - “I find it interesting to hear the viewpoints of others”.
- Some attend for social stimulation:
 - “I expect friendship”
 - “The pleasure of meeting people of different backgrounds and interest”
 - “I derive great pleasure from the social contact”
- Some attend for relaxation:
 - “I expect to relax, laugh a little, and get to know the people I meet every week”
 - “I expect fun”
 - “I enjoy studying something wholly unconnected with my work”.
- And some came to escape. One learner put it starkly, like this:
 - “...because I want to forget about the terrible day at the office today and that I’ll have to get up tomorrow morning”.

You may need to be humble about your subject. While it obviously acts as a focal point for a group of learners, it may not be the only, or indeed the major, reason for them being there.

7.0 ADULT NEEDS

Adult learners, like people everywhere, have a range of needs. Some of these needs will have to be met in order to enable them to learn effectively.

7.1 Physical Needs

People need food, drink, sleep and rest and to be neither too hot nor too cold. These are basic human needs and they translate into the classroom as well. Adult learners need an opportunity to eat, drink and relax before a class starts. There need to be periods of comparative ease during the class. Some people need regular coffee breaks. Chairs need to be suitable. The room should be the right temperature and properly ventilated. The learning environment should be comfortable.

7.2 Security

People need to feel safe. We do not function smoothly in the face of danger or when we are exposed to threat. Learning can be a challenge and this challenge can motivate learners; but you must be careful not to create a situation in which the class members feel threatened.

7.3 Belonging

People need to belong, to feel part of a group. We need affection. In an adult education class you will need to spend some time allowing the group to form a sense of cohesion, helping individuals find their place in the group and encouraging the group to support one another.

7.4 Recognition

Alongside the need to belong comes the need to be treated as an individual. Adults need to be seen as independent and self-reliant. They need recognition, and in the course of your teaching, you will have to give them this by showing respect for what they have done and who they are. Your relationship with your class will be a dual one – a relationship with the group and a set of relationships with the individual people in that group.

7.5 Learning

Adults need to grow, to develop and to have new experiences. Some psychologists describe this as the need for self-actualization. Educationalists talk of the human need for knowledge and understanding. Some adult educators talk quite simply of the human need to learn.

By ranking these needs you may be able to plan your course and class meetings more effectively. We might describe the physical needs and the needs for security as personal needs, the needs for belonging and recognition as social needs and the growth needs as intellectual needs. Some theorists place these needs in a hierarchy, arguing that a person's personal and social needs must be met before we can hope to cater properly for their intellectual needs. With this in mind you might therefore choose methods of teaching and learning that cater for the class members' social as well as intellectual needs, or alternate methods with different needs in mind.

And by recognizing these various needs in your group members, you may be able to understand their behaviour better. A difficult group member may simply need a little more recognition. A reluctant learner may feel threatened by a method you are using or by the environment. Another may need more affection. Most, if not all, will want to make progress and to see that they are making progress. They will need to feel that they are growing, developing, seeing things differently – that they are, in fact, learning.

8.0 LEARNING

We can usually see when people are learning. They are content, satisfied, and come back for more. And we can observe or test their progress. But it seems to be much more difficult when we try to describe what learning actually is or how it takes place. Here are a number of ideas about learning to test against your own experience. Learning:

- involves a change in behaviour,
- is concerned with acquiring new habits, knowledge and attitudes,
- occurs as a response to stimuli,
- can result in a change in cognitive structure, a change in motivation, a change in fundamental belief, or the acquisition of a bodily skill,
- takes place to satisfy needs,
- involves a transformation of perspectives in which our frame of reference for making and understanding meanings is restructured, and
- takes place when we become familiar and bored with present gratification and see a new step as more satisfying.

9.0 THE ADULT TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Adult education classes come in different shapes and sizes. They happen in various environments. Some can be formal and some can be very informal. Some can be intense and some can be wonderfully easygoing and relaxed.

10.0 THE ROLE OF THE TRAINER

You will be helping others learn. This may involve teaching in a traditional manner but it will involve a number of other activities as well. To help adults learn you will have to:

- inform,
- facilitate, and
- collaborate.

Even if you have not taught before you will probably find that you have had some experience with many of the activities below.

10.1 Inform

As the trainer you will have a range of knowledge, skills and ideas to pass on to the learners. In order to do this you are likely to do some or all of the following:

- talk,
- instruct,
- demonstrate,
- direct,

- guide learners through a series of actions,
- take learners through texts and manuals,
- prepare and give out notes,
- set reading,
- use charts, diagrams and handouts,
- organize visits, and
- show films, slides and videos.

10.2 Facilitate

Your learners will have their own information, skills and ideas to pool and exchange as well. To help them do this you are likely to do some or all of the following:

- ask questions,
- set up discussions,
- encourage learners to interact,
- set problems to solve,
- get learners working in pairs or groups,
- ask learners to demonstrate what they know or can do,
- set up projects, and
- let particular learners run parts of the course.

10.3 Collaborate

And there may be skills and knowledge that neither you nor the participants have but which the group or individuals decide to acquire. Here you and the learners may do some or all of the following:

- share a program of reading,
- engage in research,
- interpret instructions together,
- perform tasks together,
- join in seminar work,
- consult outside experts,
- invite guest speakers and craftspeople,
- ask each other questions,
- discuss,
- debate,
- negotiate,
- establish learning goals and criteria, and
- arrive at joint decisions and conclusions.

As the trainer you will most likely remain responsible for the direction of the class; but you may find yourself performing the roles of encourager, inspirer, adviser, questioner, facilitator and member of the group as well. Teaching adults can be a challenge but, it can also be exciting.

11.0 TYPES OF LEARNERS

Members of your group will differ in many ways, including:

- age,
- manner of speaking,
- gender,
- educational background,
- appearance,
- class,
- ethnic background,
- interests,
- marital status,
- level of confidence,
- occupation,
- preoccupations and anxieties,
- ability,
- levels and kinds of skills,
- attitudes,
- readiness to learn, and
- affiliations.

Adults live their lives as free agents, going their different ways, and when they assemble in a class, you can make no assumptions about their having similar experience, similar views or similar levels of achievement. Some will have grasped life with both hands, taken risks, and have a rich and colourful experience to draw upon. Some will have had bad luck. Some will have chosen a clearly defined goal and will be pursuing it single-mindedly. Some will be broad-minded. Some will be straight-laced. Some will only accept propositions based on empirical evidence and logical argument, while others will be ready to take an intellectual ‘leap in the dark’. Some will have succeeded in some chosen field. Some will have given up. And some will have chosen other paths altogether.

This richness and diversity in adult classes is a resource.

12.0 BENEFITS OF TRAINING FOR THE LEARNER

Learners attend classes in order to learn more about the subject offered but they will often give other reasons for attending as well. “I come to the class because I want to...”

- relax,
- have fun,
- meet people,
- find myself,
- learn something entirely new,
- keep my mind active,
- keep on learning,

- be a better parent,
- make up for what I missed at school,
- do well in my job,
- escape.

More formally, we might describe adults as taking part in adult education activities in order to:

- fill a gap in their education,
- help them solve problems and make choices,
- develop themselves,
- engage in social or community activity, and
- perform certain roles better.

12.1 Filling Gaps

Some adults come into an adult education class to have another go at learning. These are often people who hated school or who were judged failures by the educational system. Some come to classes because they did not complete a particular field of study when they were at school, college or university. This may have come about because they left school early or abandoned a particular subject or specialized in other areas for vocational reasons. And some come to classes in order to update their knowledge or skills in a particular subject where there have been developments since they last studied it.

12.2 Problems and Choices

Some adults come to classes to equip themselves with information, ideas and skills that will help them solve problems or make choices more effectively. These problems and choices may be relatively minor ones such as deciding which region or country to visit for a holiday, or they may be major ones relating to a learner's professional career, lifestyle or beliefs.

12.3 Personal Development

Some adults come to classes to extend themselves creatively, to develop their physical skills, to stimulate themselves intellectually, to seek opportunities for growth and self-discovery.

12.4 Social and Community Activity

Some learners seek the experience of learning in the company of others. They attend in order to meet and mix with people. Some attend to combat loneliness. Others see adult education as a way of promoting a sense of common purpose among people with similar interests or from the same neighbourhood. Some see adult education as a way of promoting community.

12.5 Role Education

Some learners attend classes to equip themselves to perform certain roles more effectively. They may want to gain ideas, information and skills in order to be better parents, committee members, trade unionists, public speakers, managers, voluntary social workers, political activists and the like. And although adult education is said to be 'non-vocational' – that is, unrelated to the formal preparation for a career – learners often attend classes in order to be better at their jobs or to improve their means of earning a living.

Some people know exactly what they want from a class; others do not. Their motives are mixed and their expectations are unclear. Generally speaking, the more the trainer can help these learners understand why they are there and what they hope to achieve, the better they will learn.

13.0 BENEFITS OF TRAINING FOR THE TRAINER

Just as learners come into adult education for a number of reasons, so do trainers. If you ask other trainers why they are teaching adults you get a variety of answers:

- “Someone asked me to take on the job.”
- “I had a skill I wanted to share.”
- “It’s a change from my routine activities.”
- “I wanted to canvass a number of options for action.”
- “I need the money.”
- “I’ve always been attracted to the idea of teaching and I thought teaching adults might be a way into the profession.”
- “I like the idea of helping others.”
- “I’m thinking of writing a book and I thought that by giving a course I might get the subject matter into a publishable form.”
- “I love my subject.”
- “It seemed like a good idea at the time.”

Whatever their motives for taking on an adult education class, many trainers quickly get hooked.

- Teaching adults is a rewarding activity in itself. It is a challenge. It occupies you. And it brings you into the company of others.
- Teaching adults gives you the satisfaction of using and sharing your expertise. Learning is growing and there is a real pleasure in helping others grow.
- Teaching adults reinforces and extends your command of your subject. It requires you to continually review and revise, fill any gaps in your knowledge and keep up-to-date. In the classroom you are continually testing your ideas and approach against the ideas, experience and reactions of other adults.
- And teaching adults helps you develop a number of new skills. Adult education is becoming a profession in itself. Distinctions are made between teaching children and helping adults learn, and those techniques thought to be particularly suitable for adults are being applied in the growing fields of adult education and training. Adult education is on the increase of late and in the industrial, commercial and professional worlds, experienced educators of adults are being sought to help people and organizations adapt to accelerating change. By gaining experience in adult teaching you will be developing skills that are increasingly in demand.

Most trainers get paid for their work although some do it as volunteers. Rates of pay vary considerably. An increasing number of trainers teach as part of their means to a living; however most of them cite the sorts of challenge and satisfaction listed above as their main reasons for working in adult education.

14.0 TRAINER SUPPORT

You are not alone. You will be able to get ideas, advice and support from:

- This training booklet,
- Training Manuals
- Reference books,
- Internet sources
- Association Executive Members
- Provincial Training Officers,
- Team Coordinators and colleagues, and
- Local educators and Instructors.

15.0 EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS OF TRAINERS

Lack of a paper qualification does not disqualify a person from teaching other adults. Adult education has never put a premium on formal credentials or teacher qualifications. Trainers come from all walks of life and all parts of the community. One writer categorizes the diversity of trainers in the following way:

1. ***The horse's mouth.*** These are people who teach from their experience rather than an academic discipline they may have studied. These might include an Italian who teaches 'Italian for beginners' or a woman who gives a course on the Chinese agrarian system because she has lived and worked in a rural area of China.
2. ***The professional.*** These are people who teach skills and knowledge they use in their full-time jobs. These might include a builder who teaches carpentry or an accountant who teaches a course on bookkeeping for community groups.
3. ***The passionate amateur.*** These are people who teach their hobby or leisure-time interest. These might include a train driver who teaches gardening or a bank teller who teaches a course on science fiction.
4. ***The teacher.*** These are people who teach an extension of what they teach at school or college or university. These might include a home science teacher who teaches an evening course on biology or a math teacher who takes an adult basic numeracy class.

To these four categories we need to add:

5. *The adult educator*. These are people who, in increasing numbers, are making the teaching of adults their profession. These might include a potter who starts teaching adults part-time, likes it, and after a couple of years finds herself teaching a full-time quota of classes, or the high school teacher who finds teaching adults more congenial and shifts over to teaching adult basic education on a full-time basis.

Adult education has always made use of trainers without formal teaching qualifications. If we look back to the last century we can see groups of people who lacked access to education because of isolation, class or poverty gathering together in order to share information and learn. These people made use of whatever ‘experts’ they could co-opt or find from within their own number. As the concept of adult education developed and as centres were established, this practice of using skilled or knowledgeable people as trainers irrespective of whether they were formally qualified continued as is maintained today.

There are now many trainers who have tertiary qualifications and quite a number are qualified teachers as well. But for a number of these, their qualifications may be incidental to what they are teaching. And working alongside these ‘qualified’ teachers will be others who do not have any paper qualifications at all.

16.0 FOUR TYPES OF LEARNING

An adult practicing cutting glass in a leadlighting class and someone debating the merits of Blake’s poetry in a literature class are both engaged in the act of learning. But it could be argued that the kinds of learning they are engaged in are different. In the leadlighting case, while both the mind and the body are involved, the person is concentrating on developing bodily or motor skills. The individual in the literature class is developing and refining intellectual abilities with very little reference to motor skills.

If we accept that learning involves change, then it may help if we look at learning as the process of bringing about change in:

- knowledge, □
- skills,
- attitudes, and/or
- behaviour.

Learning is a complex and subtle process and it is unlikely that any one kind of learning could take place in isolation from the others. However by dividing learning up like this we may be able to identify some of the strategies needed to help adults change in a number of ways.

16.1 Knowledge

Bringing about a change in people's knowledge involves:

- presenting them with new or additional information,
- helping them compare this with existing information,
- helping them integrate it into their existing bodies of knowledge, and
- helping them store it.

Information needs to be 'unfolded'. It needs to be presented in a way that not only demonstrates the order of the subject but that *suits the logic of the learners*. You need to pace your presentation and to offer up the information in what one adult educator graphically describes as 'digestible chunks'.

You need to encourage the group members to compare, correlate and integrate this new information through question and answer, discussion, reflection, reference and research.

And you need to help them store this information. This may involve setting them exercises that require them to use the information; reinforcing the information by encouraging feedback, repetition and reading, and assessing their level of understanding through observation, questioning and testing.

Extending one's knowledge is a cognitive or intellectual activity. As the trainer you are helping people acquire information, absorb it and understand it.

16.2 Skills

Bringing about change in people's skills involves:

- instruction,
- demonstration,
- practice, and
- repetition.

As a trainer you will need to develop a range of strategies that enable you to describe and demonstrate particular skills. This may involve breaking down each skill into a number of sub-skills and ensuring that individuals learn each sub-skill before attempting the next. Again you will need to pace the instruction, demonstration and practice not only in relation to the skill itself but also in relation to the abilities of the learners. And you will have to provide opportunities for the learners to practice and repeat what they have learned.

A skill is the ability to perform a number of actions with repeated success, so helping people develop skills means, in effect, helping them acquire a range of effective habits.

16.3 Attitudes

Bringing about changes in people's attitudes is a complex process. An individual's attitudes are made up of:

- values,
- feelings,
- tastes,
- interests,
- likes, and
- dislikes

all of which are tied up with an adult's personality and most of which have been years in the forming. As a first step, therefore, you will need to create a climate of trust in which people feel able to express themselves freely and openly.

To help people change, refine or develop their attitudes you may need to:

- present them with new ideas or information,
- help them absorb and understand what you have presented,
- let them react,
- offer a number of possible alternative attitudes, and
- give them ample opportunity to reflect.

You may choose teaching and learning methods that make use of discussion, research and structured interaction between participants. In some cases you might use experimental learning methods such as simulation and role-play. The process will probably involve a number of well-separated meetings, perhaps weeks or even months apart. And you cannot expect rapid or clearly discernible results. Attitudes take time to form and time to change. They affect the way we live our lives, and learners need to be given time to take any suggested change in attitude away with them, to test it within the context of their normal daily lives, then to come back and share and reflect on this experience.

Perhaps we should note here that there are methods of changing people's attitudes that involve assaulting the 'learners' with new ideas and information over a short and intensive period. Participants in some of these methods attend week-long or weekend 'courses' expecting to be transformed in some way. But these intensive methods rarely offer the opportunity for reflection or the opportunity to test these new attitudes over a period of time within a number of ordinary contexts. As a result, they can begin to resemble brainwashing or indoctrination rather than education.

Attitude learning concerns the affective or emotional parts of our lives. Changes in attitude can bring about new enthusiasms and calls for action. The processes we provide to help people learn new attitudes should involve periods of tranquility as well as activity so that any unjustified enthusiasms are given time to wane and any rash or unreasonable calls for action can be reconsidered.

16.4 Behaviour

Bringing about changes in people's behaviour can be more difficult still. A person's attitude may change but his or her behaviour may continue to be governed by old patterns, procedures and habits. To encourage people to learn new behaviour, you may need to:

- introduce them to new knowledge, ideas or skills,
- encourage them to change their attitudes and behaviour,
- provide them with an opportunity to make a decision to behave in a different way, and/or
- encourage them to put those decisions into practice.

You will need to employ many of the strategies already mentioned, but the key methods for encouraging people to learn new kinds of behaviour are those that help them come to a decision and act on it. These will include structured discussions, research and writing, role-play and simulation, reflection and problem-solving exercises.

Behaviour learning can be regarded as dependent on one or all of the other three kinds of learning. A person may decide to change his or her behaviour because of new or better knowledge, because she or he has acquired new skills, or because she or he has changed attitudes and wants to behave differently.

Of course in some contexts, in the police or the army, for example, behaviour can be changed by issuing an order: "Treat men and woman recruits equally or you will be on charge". But in education the aim is to get the learners to change their behaviour as a result of a number of considered decisions, so that they say, in effect: "I have come to the conclusion that this is a better way of doing things".

17.0 RECEIVING INFORMATION

Learning involves receiving information, and if we are going to choose efficient methods to help people learn then we need to consider how this process of receiving information occurs.

We take information in through our senses. Research suggests that sight accounts for up to three-quarters of the information we receive, that hearing accounts for about an eighth, and the other three senses account for the rest. Sight comes first with hearing trailing way behind and yet, in many contexts, the favoured methods of teaching are the lecture, talks, instruction and discussion, all of which are based on the spoken word and appeal to the faculty of hearing.

To counteract this emphasis on the faculty of hearing you should look for every opportunity to back up, reinforce or even replace the spoken word with a visual image. Think about using gestures when speaking. Move about the room, sit down during a discussion, and stand up to emphasize a point. Think of ways of varying the image you present to the class. Look for opportunities to use charts, diagrams and handouts. Write key words and catchphrases on the board. Try using a projector, showing slides, and running films and videos. Think of ways of making group members *see* what you are *saying*.

Research also seems to suggest that we have a limited attention span – that is, that we can only take in information efficiently for a short period of time. Some research suggests that we can only pay attention for about 20 minutes. Other research suggests that we are rarely able to concentrate fully in any artificial or formal teaching setting and that our minds wander all the time. Again this casts doubt on teaching methods such as the lecture and the talk. It is not uncommon, for example, for a lecture to last up to an hour, when the above suggests that no lecture should run for longer than 20 minutes without some kind of break or a complete change of style.

To allow for this limited attention span you will need to employ a continuing variety of teaching and learning methods. Alternate information-giving with group activities. Plan each class with a number of shifts in style. Have a number of small breaks or breathing spaces. Use a number of different kinds of teaching aids. See each shift or new teaching aid as an exercise in attracting the group's attention all over again

And people take in information in different ways and at different speeds. Some can listen efficiently, some cannot. Some can analyze what they see and are used to visual symbols, others are not. Some have emotional blocks or sets of values that hamper the reception of information or filter it. But yet again, a lot of educational practice ignores all this and a class is often presented with information on the assumption that everyone will absorb it in roughly the same way and at roughly the same speed.

To allow for individual differences in the group you will need to choose methods that permit them to take in information in their own ways and at their own pace. Allow times for revision or catching up. Provide copies of visual aids for people to look at again at their leisure. Use repetition and reinforce what you have said through the use of different methods. Pace and vary your teaching.

Keep the following aphorism in your mind:

I hear and I forget
I see and I remember
I do and I understand

This aphorism sums up much of what has been outlined so far. The spoken word on its own is not enough. It needs to be backed up by visual images and those images need to be reinforced by practice and experience. Whenever possible get the learners to do it.

In practical subjects, demonstration and instruction should be accompanied by 'hands-on' experience. Participants should be encouraged to touch, hold, examine, take apart and put back together, collate, build and create.

In theoretical subjects, learners should be encouraged to engage in research, visit, meet experts, ask questions, discuss, form their own impressions, arrive at their own explanations, formulate their own theories, make their own decisions, and take action.

18.0 IDENTIFYING LEARNING STYLES

The three predominant learning styles are:

- Visual
- Auditory
- Kinesthetic-Tactile

18.1 The Visual Learner (Mentally-Centred)

These learners possess the following characteristics:

- Enjoys looking at or reading books
- Often learns better by demonstration
- Is sometimes a good “detail” person
- Is not particularly talkative in class; uses words sparingly.
- Often has some degree of artistic ability
- May have difficulty in learning and speaking other languages
- Often likes to work puzzles

18.2 The Auditory Learner (Relationally-Centred)

These learners possess the following characteristics:

- is often a “talker”
- likes to tell jokes and long, involved stories
- remembers spoken material better than visual material
- likes music; often knows the words to many songs
- may have poor spatial perception; may get “turned around” in unfamiliar surroundings
- is not the world’s best writer or artist; handwriting may be “chicken-scratches”
- is sometimes physically awkward

18.3 The Kinesthetic-Tactile Learner (Physically-Centred)

These learners possess the following characteristics:

- doesn’t like sitting still; gets fidgety during lectures
- likes to touch people and things
- often learns best by doing
- may enjoy taking notes
- quite likely is well-coordinated; may be an athletic type.
- likes to disassemble things and try to put them back together.

18.4 Learning Style Checklist

Place the number 1, 2, or 3 in the space after each statement that best indicates your preference.
(Please use 3 – often, 2 – sometimes, 1 – seldom)

1. I can remember something best if I say it aloud. _____
2. I prefer to follow written instructions rather than oral ones. _____
3. When studying, I like to chew gum, snack and/or play with something. _____
4. I remember things best when I see them written out. _____
5. I prefer to learn through simulations, games and/or role playing. _____
6. I enjoy learning by having someone explain things to me. _____
7. I learn best from pictures, diagrams and charts. _____
8. I enjoy working with my hands. _____
9. I enjoy reading and I read quickly _____
10. I prefer to listen to the news on the radio rather than read it in the newspaper. _____
11. I enjoy being near others. (I enjoy handshakes and touches) _____
12. I listen to the radio, tapes and recordings. _____
13. When asked to spell a word, I simply see the word in my mind's eye. _____
14. When learning new material, I find myself sketching, drawing and doodling. _____
15. When I read silently, I say every word to myself. _____

In order to get an indication of your learning preference, please add the numbers in the blanks together for the following statements:

Visual Preference Score 2 _____ 4 _____ 7 _____ 9 _____ 13 _____ = Total _____

Auditory Preference Score 1 _____ 6 _____ 10 _____ 12 _____ 15 _____ = Total _____

K/T Preference Score 3 _____ 5 _____ 8 _____ 11 _____ 14 _____ = Total _____

The highest score indicates that my learning preference is _____

19.0 INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

When choosing instructional methods to use you need to bear in mind that:

- there are different kinds of teaching,
- our attention span is short,
- we take in information through a number of senses,
- we learn best when actively involved, and
- different people learn in different ways.

What follows is a list of instructional methods. Some are accompanied by a short description or comment. They are divided into two groups:

- trainer-centred methods and □
- learner-centred methods.

Neither list is meant to be exhaustive.

19.1 Trainer-Centred Methods

The following are methods where the trainer, for the most part, maintains control of the activity.

1. **Talk:** In almost all teaching, the trainer will be required to present information by giving short talks. Every one of these talks should be thought out beforehand and given a structure.
2. **Lecture:** This is a formal talk usually without interruption from the listeners. A lecture should be clearly structured, to the point, and shorter than most lecturers believe.
3. **Lecture-discussion:** Here the lecture is followed by questions, answers and discussion.
4. **Presentation:** This is a lecture with visual aids, exhibits and possibly demonstration.
5. **An interactive session:** This is a lecture or talk or presentation in which the trainer encourages reaction and discussion as he or she goes along through the use of questions, teaching aids and exhibits. The aim is to stimulate the group into interacting with each other and the trainer.
6. **Demonstration:** Here the trainer shows the learners a specific procedure, either in front of the class or with the group looking over the trainer's shoulder.
7. **Guided discussion:** This is similar to an interactive session. The trainer encourages the discussion but controls it by asking questions designed to break the discussion into a number of ordered steps.
8. **Tutorial:** Here the trainer works with an individual, or with a small number of people, setting the work, supervising the work, and discussing and evaluating the work once it is completed.

19.2 Learner-Centred Methods

In adult education we talk a great deal about building teaching and learning around the learners' needs and preferences. The following are methods where the trainer hands over some or all of the control to the learners.

1. **Large group discussion:** The trainer may instigate the discussion by setting a theme, but the outcome is left to the learners. The trainer may reassert control by summing up or commenting at the conclusion.
2. **Small group discussion:** Here the trainer may break the class into small groups and encourage each group to reflect on a theme or address a problem or question. The groups are unsupervised but may report back when the full class reassembles. Small group discussions enable learners to reflect on ideas and information and arrive at tentative conclusions and decisions.
Discussions will work only when the topic is of interest to all members of the group; when the group has sufficient information about the topic; when there are a number of possible alternative points of view; and when the subject, theme or problem to be addressed is clearly understood.
3. **Debate:** This is a formalized discussion in which particular learners or small groups are asked to prepare a case and then to argue it out against other members of the class.
4. **Forum:** Here the group members are encouraged to pursue a range of viewpoints in a plenary session. Some may be asked to prepare short presentations.
5. **Panel:** Here a number of group members or specialist guests hold a formal discussion in front of the rest of the class. Each panelist might deliver a short address, then discuss the subject with other members of the panel, then receive questions and comment from the audience.
6. **Interview:** In this method, a specialist guest is present and answers questions prepared by a learner or the group as a whole. This allows the group to get the information they want from the guest rather than listen to what the guest believes he or she should tell them.
7. **Buzz groups:** These are short discussions held during a lesson in which learners in groups of two or three discuss a particular item or share immediate reactions to some point that has been made. Often buzz groups are used to emphasize or reinforce a particular item. They may last only a few minutes and normally a trainer would not require a report back from each group.
8. **Brainstorming:** The trainer calls for an 'inventory' or list of ideas or suggestions. Normally a fixed time will be set during which group members may call out any ideas that occur to them in relation to a particular topic or question. All ideas are recorded and during the time limit no discussion or evaluation of any suggestion is permitted. The aim is to compile as comprehensive a list as possible upon which, after the brainstorming is over, the class may reflect.
9. **Projects:** These are tasks undertaken by the class. They may work in groups, researching a topic and putting their findings together in a written report. In certain subjects, projects may involve field trips, practical work and the gathering of case studies.
10. **Visits and tours:** The group may visit sites, resource centres or other places where what they are studying takes place or is practiced or where there is source material.

11. **Seminar:** Members of the group are asked to prepare presentations on different topics within the subject being studied and to each lead a session.
12. **Workshops:** The principle behind workshops is that learners should be encouraged to practice what they have been learning.
13. **Role-play and simulation:** In these two related methods, learners assume roles within a simulated situation and then deal with that situation. In this way they can gain some 'practical' experience in using the skills they have learned or in handling situations they have studied. Thus people studying counseling skills might be given roles of counselor and client. The 'client' might be given a number of 'problems' to seek help with; the 'counselor' would have to counsel the client. In role plays learners might be asked to assume hypothetical roles within artificial situations. In simulations, the attempt is to simulate certain situations that the learners will actually have to deal with outside the course. In both cases the object is to give the learners 'experience' and in both cases the exercise must be followed by a detailed debriefing in which participants are encouraged to analyze the experience and draw out what they have learned.
14. **Assignments:** Finally, group members may need to do some work between meetings. And in the adult education context such work needs to be learner-centred in that each participant must see the work as relevant not only to the course but to his or her reasons for attending it.

20.0 INSTRUCTIONAL AIDS

What follows is a list of instructional aids. Most you will already know. All, from the common chalkboard to the computer, require practice in order to be effectively used. In a well-equipped adult education centre you will have access to most of these aids, and there may also be a technician there to advise and help you. Check what is available where you teach. Familiarize yourself with any you have not used before.

| | | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| books | articles | handouts | games |
| role-play exercises | simulation exercises | work books | study sheets |
| films | videos | audio cassettes | compact discs |
| diagrams | tables | charts | graphs |
| drawings | photos | slides | models |
| exhibits | chalkboard | whiteboard | computer |
| overhead projector | slide projector | film projector | data projector |

Instructional aids need to be used imaginatively. They are aids and do not replace the trainer. Rather, they add to, emphasize or reinforce what the trainer is helping the learner learn. They need to be tied into the teaching and learning.

For example, try not to use a film – even a good and comprehensive one – to give the lesson for you. Use it as an aid, a starting point, a reinforcement or a 'trigger'. Prepare the class for the film, covering the main points before showing it. Introduce the film, giving the class an idea of what they are going to see. Ask particular people or groups to watch for particular points. Give

the class questions to bear in mind while they are watching the film. At the end of the film call for answers or discussion of the questions. Use buzz groups or small group discussion to test reactions. Have a report-back and evaluation. Then, perhaps, show the film again.

21.0 ATTITUDES AND ATTRIBUTES OF A TRAINER

Good adult trainers should:

- know their subject,
- care,
- understand adults as learners, and
- be willing to learn.

21.1 Knowing Your Subject

Obviously you need to know the subject you are teaching but you do not have to be a world authority in it. One adult educator suggests you need a 'basic competence' in the subject. Perhaps we might say that you should have reached that level of competence that allows you to understand your own strengths and weaknesses in the subject and to know where to go to get any information you may lack. You may not know the subject thoroughly but you should know the 'geography' of the subject thoroughly. There is no harm in admitting to a class that you cannot answer a particular question but the learners might lose confidence in you if you cannot quickly guide them to the answer.

21.2 Caring About Your Subject

You need to be an enthusiast. Adults appreciate a trainer who enjoys her or his subject and who wants to share it. But enthusiasm is not enough. Your pleasure in the subject should be tempered with a serious concern for the way it is put across and for the people who are taking possession of it. Good trainers should care.

This caring is important. Adult learners respond to it. It is a force that can carry you through the first few months of teaching when you are still learning how to work with an adult class. The tolerance of adults is high if they feel that the trainer cares.

21.3 Understanding Adults as Learners

Adult education is learner-centred. You will need to develop a pattern of behaviour based on considering the learners and their learning needs before the demands of the discipline or the subject. This is easier said than done since it is tempting for teachers to construct a mystique around their knowledge of the subject and to make the learners dependent on them by imparting the subject little by little. A good trainer, however, encourages his or her learners to develop independence and to come to grips with the subject according to their own needs and their own particular ways of seeing the world. One adult educator argues that the elements of a course should be applied 'not to the logical organization of the subject matter but the psychological organization of the learner'.

Your aim should be to encourage autonomy in your learners so that they are finally freed not only from the trainer but also from the constraints of the subject and are able to use the knowledge, ideas and skills that they have learned in a personal and creative way.

21.4 Being Willing To Learn

If you continually demonstrate a willingness to learn, your class can see that they are being guided by someone with an open and enquiring mind. You will never master your subject completely. Let the learners know that you are aware of this and join in the learning with them. There will be very few adult classes in which there will not be a number of people with imaginative ideas, knowledge and skills to contribute. Welcome their contributions and share with the rest of the class your pleasure in learning from them.

21.5 A Code of Ethics for Trainers

The following is a code of ethics that should guide all trainers:

- Seek and share truth.
- Govern behaviour by ethically sound principles.
- Maintain high standards of professional integrity.
- Recognize unique human personalities and help each learner reach full potential.
- Deal impartially with all learners.
- Strive to broaden understandings and knowledge to become a better trainer and leader.
- Contribute to and loyally support the organization and its missions and standards.
- Be conscious of the privilege and responsibility to preserve and strengthen the integrity of the organization.

21.7 Principles for Effective Adult Instruction

The following is the ten principles for instructing adults effectively:

- Act as a leader, helper, guide, change agent, coordinator and facilitator of learning.
- Promote active participation and three-way communication.
- Develop a collaborative climate.
- Recognize the individuality of the learner.
- Assist your learners to set and understand goals.
- Use effective questioning.
- Be experience-centred.
- Promote mutual problem solving.
- Be a group member.
- Reinforce learning through self-evaluation.

22.0 TEACHING STYLES

Often when we start teaching we fall back on a kind of stereotypical teaching style. This style may be based on our memories of school, what we believe the institution we have just joined expects of us or simply on what we ‘feel’ a teacher should be like. It is surprising how many of us ‘feel’ that a teacher should stand up in the front of the class, should talk a lot and should be fairly formal and serious.

Of course if we stop for a moment and consider what kind of trainer we would like to have if we were the learners, then we will probably build up a picture that is the complete opposite of this formal stereotype. Most of us would want a trainer who:

- is lively, humorous and relaxed,
- listens to us,
- gives lots of examples,
- tells the occasional anecdote,
- gets us talking and doing things, and
- treats us as equals.

Bearing all this in mind, let us look at three teaching styles – didactic, socratic and facilitative. Some trainers combine all three styles in varying ways. Each style has its place but each also has its weaknesses.

22.1 Didactic Style of Teaching

A trainer using the didactic style selects a body of knowledge or set of ideas or skills and transmits that body to the group using a number of teacher-centred techniques. The assumption is that the learners are empty vessels waiting to be filled. They are expected to absorb what is transmitted and then to be able to reproduce it.

The didactic style is the traditional or formal style. Some people will argue that this style is out of place in adult education but there are times when you will need to transmit bodies of information and the didactic style might be the right one to adopt. This does not mean that you cannot be humorous, give examples, tell anecdotes and involve the learners by asking questions and inviting them to react.

Didactic styles of teaching can be effective particularly if we adopt methods that encourage learners to analyze and evaluate what they receive.

22.2 Socratic Teaching

The Socratic style is based upon questioning. The assumption is that learners have knowledge but that it needs to be brought to the surface, ordered and reflected upon. The trainer helps people go through the process by careful and ordered questioning. The trainer is the guide but stimulates the learners to provide the answers.

Adult education is a process of sharing and this can often be best achieved through getting the learners to interact. This interaction can usually be most effectively triggered by asking questions.

22.3 Facilitative Teaching

Trainers adopting this style set up situations in which the group members can establish what they already know, identify what they need to learn and go about learning it. The trainers see themselves as enablers or managers of the learning situation and make use of learner-centred methods. They set problems for the group to work on and often collaborate with them in seeking the solutions. This style of teaching and learning often involves cooperation, group work, research, and reflection upon experience.

No two trainers have exactly the same style. You will establish your own style over time. Your style will be dependent on your personality. Not everyone, for example, is a natural stand-up comedian. Some may be able to weave humour into their teaching style quite naturally but others may not. As long as you can say to yourself that you have genuinely tried out a range of methods and teaching styles, then the style that is best for you will be the style you feel most comfortable with.

23.0 THREE BASIC INSTRUCTIONAL SKILLS

In order to help adults learn we need to develop and refine three basic skills. These are speaking, listening, and asking questions.

23.1 Speaking

As a trainer you are continually presenting information and to do this you need to become an effective speaker. This does not mean that you need develop a new voice or a new vocabulary. Most effective speakers simply adopt a slightly more fluent and careful version of their everyday conversational manner of speaking.

To speak easily and effectively you need to develop the habit of organizing what you say before you say it. Even the shortest presentation should have a beginning, middle and an end.

In the beginning section, or introduction, you should state the topic or subject, indicate how you intend covering it, and tell your class how long this will take. If you are new to the group you may also want to indicate the authority with which you speak on the subject: you could be drawing on a particular book or expert, speaking from experience, talking as an interested layperson or from a study you have made of the topic.

Do not write down word-for-word what you intend to say, as it never sounds natural if you read it. But you may want to make reasonably detailed notes.

How you approach the middle, or main part of your talk, will depend on the subject of the course and the topic of the particular talk. Whatever the content, however, your main part needs to be broken up into sections and arranged in a logical order. When you make your notes you will

probably use headings for each of the sections, and it will help if you announce these headings during your talk:

And it will help if you signal to your listeners that you have completed each section of your talk.

Think about the structure of the main part of your talk. Does it follow the logical order of an argument or case, or is it arranged in chronological order? Does it move from the simple to the complex or from the general to the specific? However it is ordered, let your listeners know as you move through that order:

The end section of your talk should contain the conclusion to your argument, or a brief summary of what you have covered. You should probably also indicate where you are heading to next:

Effective speaking can be summed up in this advice often given to fledgling politicians:

*“Tell them what you’re going to tell them.
Then tell them.
Then tell them what you’ve told them.”*

Finally, base your speaking style on your natural manner, but speak slowly, speak clearly, and look at your listeners.

23.2 Listening

As a trainer you need to listen hard to your group members. Listening is a skill and you can train yourself to listen actively. When learners are speaking:

- look at them,
- encourage them to go on,
- hear them out without interruption,
- concentrate on what they are actually saying,
- avoid jumping to conclusions or making assumptions before they have finished, and
- go over any points you may have not understood with them before replying.

When someone is speaking, maintain eye contact to indicate that you are listening. This often helps a speaker speak more confidently.

Listen to what the learner is saying. It seems to be generally agreed that we think at a far greater speed than we talk, so that we have spare time when we are listening and in this spare time our thoughts can wander. Train yourself to give over all that time to the speaker and what is being said. Again, concentrate on what the speaker is saying and do not let his or her appearance, mannerisms, gender or status prejudice you one way or the other.

Let the speaker finish. As the trainer you will do a lot of talking and you will hold a privileged position in the class. It may require an effort to hold yourself back when others are speaking. Try also to prevent yourself formulating a response while the learner is speaking since this will prevent you from hearing what they still have to say.

Listen to the words, and resist reading implications into what is being said. Keep your emotions in check, and do not be over-sensitive. Do not assume, for example, that a learner saying “I don’t agree with you” really means “I don’t like you”!

And when a speaker has finished, go over the main points to check that you have understood. It is only when you have established that you have heard the speaker accurately that you can begin formulating your response.

23.3 Asking Questions

And you will need to develop the skill of asking questions. Questions can be used in the classroom to:

- remind the group of previous points,
- pool information,
- establish facts,
- seek opinions,
- promote thought,
- promote discussion,
- encourage participation,
- focus attention,
- check a learner’s understanding, and
- encourage feedback.

Some questions elicit information. Some explore values. And some encourage people to think creatively and take their knowledge and understanding of a subject further.

Here are some examples of questions asked in adult education classes:

Avoid the question that can be answered by a single ‘yes’ or ‘no’. Avoid the question to which there is a right or wrong answer. Phrase your question so that group members are encouraged to elaborate and develop ideas.

And having asked the questions, welcome the reply. Ask another question and build on the reply so that your class becomes an interactive activity in which you and your learners go on learning together through a continuing process of enquiry.

24.0 HANDLING DIFFICULT LEARNERS

There are several kinds of difficult learners. The following will describe those most frequently encountered, with suggestions for dealing with them.

24.1 The Know-It-All

Do not publicly embarrass this learner, but disagree agreeably. Assign the know-it-all a leadership role, or – if this learner is truly competent- let then teach a small portion of the class. If the person continues to hinder class progress, discuss the matter privately.

24.2 The Talkative Individual

To focus this learner, ask the person to justify any statements with facts or evidence. Another useful technique is to redirect discussion to the rest of the group, using a referred question.

24.3 The Silent Individual

Try to get this person involved in the lesson. Ask this learner to respond to a direct, easy and straightforward question. Provide reassurance if, and as, needed. Do not sit the silent individual next to a talker.

24.4 The Griper

Try to determine the basis of the griper's complaints. If the complaint is about something that cannot be changed, tell the person the truth. If something can be changed for the better, allow the griper to research the resolution of the specific complaint.

24.5 The Rescuer

Redirect attention to the right person; do not allow the rescuer to protect someone.

24.6 The Wanderer

Keep this person on track by glancing at your watch, politely interrupting, and making the person stop. Be courteous but firm, as you try to redirect the person's attention.

If you encounter clashing personalities, play referee. Do not allow a contentious situation to last for too long; emphasize points of agreement. If necessary, call for a break and talk to the participants directly.

25.0 CONCLUSION

In this training package we have tried to identify some of the information you might need, some of the techniques you might use and some of the skills you might develop in order to help adults learn. But at the end of the day, helping adults learn is a human activity and difficult to reduce to a set of information, skills and techniques. When a group of adults gather together and really begin learning, something happens. There is a 'hum'. There is a 'glow'. There is a very special kind of pleasure. Watch for it. And when it happens, try to make it happen again.

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