Principles of Adult Learning

The elements within are largely covered in the resource "Staff training best practices," but this is a different format for *some* of that information, which people may find helpful.

Keep the KAB framework in mind
- ❖ Knowledge
- ❖ Attitude
- ❖ Behavior

Excellent trainings are usually time consuming both to prepare and deliver, but the results often justify the means. In the reality of the camp environment, trying to incorporate as many of these things as possible will only improve the outcome. Short presentations and conference sessions are rarely able to utilize many of these ideals.

ADULT LEARNING THEORY

Adults   bring prior experience and knowledge with them. Validate where people are. Create allies, not pupils.

Adults   want to know what's in it for them (WIFM).

Adults   enjoy speaking to one another, not just listening to the sound of your voice.

Adults   have preferences and prejudices that may not be overcome in a one-shot training.

Adults   like to assist you and feel like an active part of the learning process.

Adults   expect to be respected.

Adults   enjoy active learning, small group exercises and moving around the room. Vary training activities.

Adults   expect to be able to use what they learn immediately. Make information applicable.

Adults   learn at different speeds and through different methods. Be flexible.

Adults   need feedback and constructive criticism.
The emphasis is on building the person not tearing them down.

Adults   like to laugh.

Principles of Adult Learning Work Sheet

What are some strategies and techniques for achieving the conditions under which adults learn best?

1.   To Create a Supportive Environment

2.   To Emphasize Personal Benefits of Training

3.   To Use Training Methods that Require Active Participation

4.   To Use a Variety of Teaching Methods

5.   To Provide Structured Learning Opportunities

6.   To Provide Immediate Feedback on Practice

7.   To Meet Trainee's Individual Learning Needs

8.   To Make Course Content Relevant and Coherent

Strategies and Techniques

Maximize Training Effectiveness with Adult Learners

Create a Supportive Environment
1.   Convey respect for individuals and the belief and value in the learning process. Draw on previous experiences of participants.

2.   Techniques:
   a.   call each trainee by name throughout training
   b.   listen to each person's questions and viewpoints
   c.   never belittle an individual
   d.   always be courteous and patient
   e.   assure individuals that mistakes are part of the learning process
   f.   look for opportunities to validate each person
   g.   encourage trainees to support one another in learning endeavors
   h.   ensure that the physical space is as comfortable as possible.

Emphasize Personal Benefits of Training
1.   Adult learners need to know how the course relates to their immediate work and will help them reach personal and professional goals--what's in it for them (WIFM).

2.   Techniques:
   a.   have each participant develop their own personal goals for this training
   b.   encourage participants to write down specific actions they will take in response to this training.

Use Training Methods that Require Active Participation
1.   Active participation engages trainees in the learning process and enhances retention of new concepts.

2.   Active Learning Techniques:
   a.   design curriculum that allows training to be student-centered
   b.   limit lecturing to trainees
   c.   encourage participation and sharing of experiences
   d.   use question techniques
   e.   weave discussion sections with exercises that require trainees to practice a skill or apply knowledge.

Use a Variety of Teaching Methods

1 . Not all people learn the same way. In fact, research shows there are many different learning styles -- characteristic ways that adults prefer to learn. Individual learning styles are influenced by: personality, intelligence, education, experiences, culture, and sensory and cognitive preferences.

2. To engage all learners, it is best to vary the methods in which information is communicated.

3. Training methods:
    a. group discussion (small and large)
    b. skill practice (role-play)
    c. lecture
    d. case study
    e. laboratory
    f. panel/guest expert
    g. games
    h. structured note-taking ("accelerated learning")
    i. individual coaching
    j. question/answer
    k. demonstration
    1. technology (media, video, computer, interactive)

Provide Structured Learning Opportunities

1. Empower trainees to be self-directed learners as they strive to fulfill objectives of the training, by teaching them how to master the content and to become aware of their own learning process.

2. Techniques:
    a. teach trainees how to learn by implementing learning tools into the curriculum
        (1) structured note-taking
        (2) problem-solving exercises
        (3) brainstorming
        (4) progress logs
        (5) evaluating own work and the work of others

    b. identify learning styles and assist trainees in becoming aware of their own preferred style, e.g.,
        (1) have them analyze the way they went about doing a learning project
        (2) encourage participants to support/train one another

Provide Immediate Feedback on Practice
1.   Providing timely corrective feedback leads to successful learning and mastery of content and skills

2.   Sensitive feedback helps trainees correct errors and reinforces good behaviors. Adult learners want gentle, constructive criticism.

3.   Techniques
      a.   self feedback
      b.   peer feedback
      c.   trainer feedback

Meet Trainee's Individual Learning Needs
1.   Effective trainers never forget they have a group of individual learners with varying abilities, experiences, and motivation.

2.   Techniques
      a.   get to know trainees
      b.   consider each trainee's capabilities and interests
      c.   encourage individual creativity and initiative
      d.   pay attention to individual communication
      e.   acknowledge cultural differences

Make Course Content Relevant and Coherent
1.   Begin with the basic and build on each part in sequential order when presenting course content.

2.   Be sure that exercises and content can be applied to real-life situations of the trainee (WIFM).

3.   Techniques:
      a.   provide overview of course with objectives
      b.   relate each new component to previous component
      c.   when presenting new material, present overall concept first
      d.   utilize an Experiential Learning Model
      e.   provide examples of concept that are relevant to trainees' work.

Name three techniques that enhance your own learning...
1
2
3

Adults learn best when they:

- Are in a supportive environment

- Learners are allowed to define their own needs

- See personal growth opportunities in the training

- Material presented is relevant to perceived needs

- Participate actively in cooperative and individual exercises

- Educator respects the life experience of the learner

- Material can be immediately related to learner's life experience

- Direction of learning made explicit at the outset

- Instructions for learning activities are clear

- Experience a variety of training methods and media

- Are empowered with learning skills

- Receive timely feedback on practice activities

- Learners receive positive reinforcement for accomplishments

- Have their individual needs met

- Are taught course content that is relevant and in integrated patterns

- Learners feel free to question and challenge

- Learner's self-esteem and ego are respected