

Suggested Resources for Background Knowledge

Resource: Knowles, M. S., E. F. Holton III, and R. A. Swanson. *The Adult Learner*. Burlington, MA: Routledge, 2011.

Summary of Key Information: Adult learning theory

Malcolm Knowles introduced the concept of andragogy—which he defined as “the art and science of helping adults learn”—into American adult education literature (Knowles, Holton, and Swanson 2011). Asserting that adults require certain conditions to learn, Knowles contrasted andragogy with pedagogy—defined as the art and science of teaching children—which had been the traditional teaching method for all learners, regardless of age, prior experience, or developmental level. In his work, Knowles identified five primary assumptions about characteristics of the adult learner, and these assumptions are now widely accepted and implemented by practitioners in this field. The five primary assumptions are that, in general, adults:

- tend to be self-directed;
- have rich reservoirs of experience;
- are goal oriented;
- have a problem-centered orientation to learning; and
- want practical, how-to information.

Resource: Biech, E. (Ed.). *ASTD Handbook: The Definitive Reference for Training & Development*. Alexandria, VA: ASTD Press, 2014.

Summary of Key Information: Adult experiences

It is imperative to respect and draw on adults’ experience when their experiences match the training goals. According to Knowles et al. (2011) and Biech (2014), adults process new information by contrasting it with their own experiences. Oftentimes, adults value their own experiences as much as or more than a trainer’s expertise or a research article’s empirical quality. This may be good news or bad news for the trainer. If the adult learner is reflective and his or her experiences inform the new learning in a supportive way, this is ideal. On the other hand, if the new learning directly opposes the adult learner’s experience, meeting new goals will be more challenging. Ask participants to make connections between the new learning and their past experiences. These connections can be made through individual writing or through discussions with partners. Honoring experiences is especially important for families and builds respect and trust between the facilitator and participants.

Resource: Garmston, R. J. (2005). (2nd ed.) *The Presenter’s Fieldbook: A Practical Guide*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers.

Summary of Key Information: Strategies for adult learning

Garmston uses adult learning theory to describe best practices for designing, delivering, and debriefing the presentation experience. Strategies are valuable for experienced and novice presenters and facilitators.

Building Trust

Trust is difficult to achieve. People must engage in consistent hard work to obtain it, for trust grows slowly. Because of the complex dynamics surrounding trust, it cannot be built in a short period of time and have lasting value. It takes time, physical presence, and human energy. However, as trust between people grows, behaviors change, and interpersonal dynamics are transformed. As trust grows, the barriers that prevent candor and openness lessen. People become more expressive, impulsive, frank and spontaneous. Their communication is efficient and clear. They risk conflict and confrontation, opening doors to deeper communication, involvement, and commitment. – Chartier (1991)

What is building trust? **Building trust is on-going attention to professional and personal skills of sincerity, reliability, and competence.**

Why is building trust significant in training? **Trainers must cultivate an environment that fuels participants' ongoing best practices. None of this is possible if the trainer lacks basic affinity for trust and rapport.**

What are the steps to building trust as a trainer (Bloom, 2005)?

- Demonstrate sincerity in the following ways:
 - **Demonstrate basic personal regard**
 - **Be truthful**
 - **Ask for permission**
 - **Admit mistakes**
 - **Maintain confidentiality**
- Demonstrate reliability in the following ways:
 - **Clarify expectations**
 - **Keep commitments**
 - **Behave consistently**
 - **Be available before, during, and after training**
- Demonstrate competence in the following ways:
 - **Let the participant know about your expertise and experience.**
 - **Find outside expertise in cases where you don't possess it.**
 - **Have high expectations of yourself and of the training process.**

Listening

Listening is an art that when done well delivers tremendous benefits. The goal of listening well is to achieve win-win communication.

Listening is a skill, and like any skill it can be practiced and improved...But it also needs to be looked at another way, as an outgrowth of an attitude of caring and concern for other people...showing that you care, suspending your own interests, and making yourself available to others takes some effort. It means devoting alertness to another's words.

Listening well is often silent but never passive. – Nichols (1995)

What is listening? **Listening is an active activity that involves receiving, deciphering, and perceiving a message with intent to respond. Planning well ahead for training improves a trainer's ability to listen.**

Why is listening important as a trainer? **Listening carefully helps the trainer determine where the participants are in terms of the change process, the implementation of a new practice, and/or the attitude hindering implementation.**

Ask yourself the following questions as you listen:

- **What are the facts and details embedded in the speaker's words?**
- **Are the spoken messages free of generalizations, bias, blame and finger pointing?**

*You hear universal quantifiers: **All, everyone, never, forever, always***

- You might respond:
 - Was there a time when that wasn't true?
 - Not a single person?
 - Every time?

*You hear modal operators: **Should, must, necessary, can't, have to, ought***

- You might respond:
 - What is the barrier?
 - Who do we talk to about that?
 - What do you think might happen if you did that?

*You hear unspecified verbs: **Prepare, make, think, do, feel, know, learn***

- You might respond:
 - What does that look like to you?
 - How will you do that?
 - Tell me what 'know' looks like in your classroom?

*You hear unspecified nouns: **Students, clients, women, they, parents***

- You might respond:
 - Which parents?
 - What administrator or director?
 - How many students is that?

*You hear comparators: **Better, larger, more effective, less useful***

- You might respond:
 - More effective than what?
 - How is that less powerful?