



# PRINCIPLES OF ADULT LEARNING

## ADULTS PREFER LEARNING SITUATIONS WHICH:

1. **Are Practical and Problem-Centered, So ...**
  - Give overviews, summaries, examples, and use stories
  - Plan for direct application of the new information
  - Design in collaborative, problem-solving activities
  - Anticipate problems applying new ideas, offer suggested uses
  - **CAUTION** – Guard against becoming too theoretical
  
2. **Promote Their Positive Self-Esteem, So ...**
  - Take into consideration the diversity of culture, values and attitude
  - Provide low-risk activities in small group settings
  - Plan for building success incrementally
  - Help them become more effective and competent
  - **CAUTION** – Readiness to learn depends on self-esteem
  
3. **Integrate New Ideas With Existing Knowledge, So ...**
  - Help them recall what they already know that relates to the new ideas
  - Share your agenda and assumptions and ask for input on them
  - Ask what they know about the topic
  - Ask what they would like to know about the topic
  - Build in options within your plan so you can easily shift if needed
  - Suggest follow up ideas and next steps for after the session
  - **CAUTION** – Match the degree of choice to their level of development
  
4. **Show Respect for the Individual Learner, So ...**
  - Provide for their needs through breaks, snacks, coffee, comfort
  - Provide a quality, well organized experience that uses time effectively
  - Avoid jargon and don't "talk down" to participants
  - Validate and affirm their knowledge, contributions and successes
  - Ask for feedback on your work, ideas, provide input opportunities
  - **CAUTION** – Watch your choice of words to avoid negative perceptions

**5. Capitalize on Their Experience, So ...**

- Don't ignore what they know, it is a resource for you
- Plan alternate activities so you can adjust to fit their experience level
- Create activities that use their experience and knowledge
- Listen before, during and after the event
- **CAUTION** – Provide for the possibility of a need to unlearn old habits

**6. Allow Choice and Self Direction, So ...**

- Build your plans around their needs, compare goals and expectations
- Share your agenda and assumptions and ask for input on them
- Ask what they know about the topic
- Ask what they would like to know about the topic
- Build in options within your plan so you can easily shift if needed
- Suggest follow up ideas and next steps for after the session
- **CAUTION** – Match the degree of choice to their level of development

*Adapted from: Best Practice Resources, John Goodlad*