# ADULT LEARNING PRINCIPLES and RECOMMENDED PRACTICES

**UBC FAMILY PRACTICE RESIDENCY PROGRAM • Faculty Development**

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| 1 Learning involves change which can cause anxiety in adult learners | • 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 | • 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) |
| **UTILIZATION** |                         |                     |
| 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 | • 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 | • 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 |
| **CHOICE**      |                         |                     |
| 3 Adult learners are self-directed and want to be actively involved in the learning process | • 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 | • 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 |
### 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.