

Preparing a group session for optimal learning

Learning in a group setting can be difficult for anyone. We all have some barriers that we face when we learn new information. For example, I may learn better by seeing or reading new information to myself, while you may learn better if you say something aloud or hear someone else say it out loud. We all have our own styles to learning. In order to help participants in your group session have a good learning experience, facilitators should consider the environment and structure of the information in order to help maximize everyone's experience.

Be inviting

It is important to give everyone an opportunity to put aside other concerns and be fully present in the session, and one way you can do this is by creating a safe atmosphere that is open, friendly and inviting. When a group first starts or someone joins an existing group, take the time to learn how he or she feels about the subject matter and what expectations he or she has.

Set the stage

The way a session is organized can help encourage learning. Follow these simple tips to draw participants into the lessons.

- **Small groups** - Six to 10 people is an ideal group size in order for everyone to participate.
- **Seating** - Circles or half-moon seating arrangements enhance the level of engagement.
- **Comfort** - Be sure the room and the chairs are comfortable.
- **Freedom** - Participation is ideal, but it is desirable to give people the option to "pass."
- **Variety** - Allow quiet people the opportunity to participate non-verbally, such as by writing on a chalkboard or passing out materials.

Action

It is easier to keep a group's attention and promote learning if participants are engaged in an active learning process. There are many ways to do this, but a few examples include the use of:

- **Pictures** - Provide multi-sensory learning aids to add visual dynamic.
- **Activities** - Use in-class activities to help reinforce teachings.
- **Rewards** - Give certificates of task completion to promote self efficacy, as well as offer a visual reminder of success.

By taking the time to prepare and organize sessions, facilitators can optimize the learning each participant receives. You can read more about treatment approaches in the *Enhancing Motivation and Engagement* section of the Implementation Guide, which can be found in the Team Solutions binder.

Next: Learn some tips for providing a good learning experience.

Reference:

Medalia, A. 2009. Enhancing Motivation and Engagement. *Team Solutions*.