

TIPS FOR TRAINERS

(THE TRAINING TRIAD)

It is impossible to anticipate every conceivable scenario you may confront as a trainer. However, we can offer some tips that will help you in a variety of situations. As with all skills, you'll need to practice and expand your knowledge through repeated experience as a trainer. Also, one of the best ways to improve your skill is to co-train with a more experienced trainer. We encourage you to seek out this opportunity.

I. HAVE KNOWLEDGE OF PURPOSE:

To be a consistently effective trainer, we must always act with purpose. In this way, our energy can be efficiently focused upon the task at hand. First, we must KNOW the purpose before we can ACT with purpose. Hence, it is essential that we understand the reason for each element that is taught in the training workshop.

For example, the primary purpose of the PMT training course is to improve the safety of staff and client, using the most gentle means available. Every module in the schedule contributes to this goal. Likewise, each element of information is designed to enhance the module, and therefore, the main goal. By seeing the pieces fit together in the way (linked by purpose), a more holistic image is created and our understanding is deepened.

When we understand the purpose of what we attempt to teach and have made that purpose OUR purpose - when we really believe in the worth of what we are trying to teach - our words and actions remember what others have said, and instead, use examples and illustrations from our own everyday experience. By understanding WHY we are presenting certain information, we can be more effective in HOW we present it. If the trainer does not understand why she/he is teaching something, why would the workshop participants want to bother learning it?

Once we understand WHY we are teaching particular information and HOW it is related to the larger holistic goal, it is crucial that we convey this information to the participants. It is not always obvious to them. Practically speaking, we need to give the participants a good "reason" to learn the information (based on usefulness to their needs). Second, we need to "connect the pieces" by verbally stating the connection between modules (i.e., In moving from a module on "Escapes & Releases" to a module on "Assertiveness Training"), the trainer might say, "Just as we don't use force to execute the physical techniques, we don't use verbal force to command compliance from a patient. Hence, our interest in learning to behave verbally assertive rather than aggressive or non-aggressive.

When we teach in a purposeful manner, we are much less likely to "lose our place" during a presentation. Even if things get a bit off track (as they occasionally do), we can more easily re-orient ourselves, and even turn the detour into a valuable learning experience. Our successes help build confidence, and a relaxed, self-confident trainer helps create a more conducive learning environment for all.

II. KNOW THE MATERIAL:

There is no substitute for knowing the content of the course. This does not mean simply memorizing words. It means understanding the principals and concepts so well, that you are not only able to recognize examples of them in your own experiences. Therefore, when you explain something to the group, your explanation can be more in terms of their own experience.

One of the best ways to learn the workshop material is to teach it to someone else. Do several 'dry runs' at home, prior to teaching in the PMT workshop. This will help clarify areas requiring additional study. If you don't fully comprehend the information, training will become an anxiety producing event.

III. KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE:

This tip completes the trainer's triad. Ideally, we should know the class composition at least a few days in advance. In a pinch, one could review the sign-in sheet for information regarding job sites, job titles, etc. Ask yourself what you have in common with your group. What are the probable need of your group? How can you help satisfy these needs? And never ignore an opportunity to directly ask the group about their hopes/expectations for the training.

For the training to be effective, the participants must work hard and their motivation must come from within. While the trainer cannot actually provide motivation per se, she/he can help participants tap into their own. Knowledge of the participants' needs and resources can enable the trainer to better assist them.

The most important and most complex learning resources available to the participant is naturally, the participant him/herself. This needs to be communicate to the group. The workshop is an opportunity for the participants to improve their ability to be safe, in specific, (and to improve themselves as people in general!). The more relevant the training is perceived to be to the group's goals, the greater the motivation.

IN ADDITION TO THE TRAINER'S TRIAD, HERE ARE SOME SPECIFIC TRAINER GUIDELINES:

#1

ACT PROFESSIONALLY. Never allow your personal ego concerns to dictate how you behave toward participants. Always treat them with dignity and respect AND expect to be treated with dignity and respect as well.

#2

SMILE, and view your audience as a group of friends with whom you are sharing important and interesting information. Develop a genuine interest in the participants. Your audience will not be interested in learning from someone they don't like or feel they can't relate to.

#3

ADDRESS PARTICIPANTS BY THEIR NAME (purpose of name tags). We all like to be individually acknowledged. Refer positively to something a participant might have said earlier. It shows that you were interested in what they had to say.

#4

INVITE RESPONSES from other participants in response to a question or comment from a participant. This helps reinforce the notion that the participants are a valuable resource for learning. It can also buy you some extra time to formulate you own response.

#5

USE HUMOR, but only when appropriate. Never make a participant the butt of a joke. Avoid sarcasm which is a one-up-one-man-ship tactic. Humor can help relax a group and when the trainer pokes fun at him/herself, it shows we are all human. Sexual and vulgar jokes have no place in a training workshop and can only serve to place you in an unprofessional stance. Sometimes an appropriate joke can nicely illustrate a point which will be remembered long after a dry presentation is forgotten. And finally, and interesting joke/story just after lunch can provide a nice transition, as well as reward those participants who returned on time.

#6

COLLECT A SUPPLY OF GOOD ILLUSTRATIONS, ANECDOTES, METAPHORS, AND EXAMPLES for use when presenting didactic information. Vary your examples. Trade with other trainers. Try to use your own experiences, but don't pass up an especially useful story just because it happened to someone else. Don't be afraid to embellish a story to underscore a particular teaching point. Never put down/make fun of other participants in previous workshops. Participants will identify with other participants, even if they are not in the same room, and as a result, feel alienated and mistrustful of you as a trainer.

#7

MINGLE WITH PARTICIPANTS DURING BREAKS/LUNCH. Sometimes "fear" will cause trainers to keep their distance from the participants. Behaviors which create and "US-THEM" atmosphere are to be avoided if learning is to be an open, fun experience. During breaks/lunch, follow up on a point made earlier by one of the students. Find out a little more about your audience. Get some feedback. use your Active Listening skills to draw out responses from the participants about the training.

#8

REMEMBER, GROUPS HAVE A PERSONALITY ALL THEIR OWN! Every group is different and hence, every group requires a slightly different teaching approach and or handling. Never hesitate to make alterations in the basic schedule/program to accommodate the group's needs. For example, if the group is particularly active and hyper, cut the lectures to bare bones, allow more discussion, invent role plays, rearrange the schedule so that more physical activities occur when the group seems restless and move the verbal stuff to later than originally planned, etc. If the group is particularly introverted and hesitant to talk in the large group, arrange for more learning to occur in dyads or very small groups, have participants write down their personal learning (versus talking about them in the group), share your own fear of talking to groups, etc. In short, tailor the training experience to fit the group.

#9

DON'T FAKE IT WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW AN ANSWER. The leader doesn't have to be all knowing (no such leader exists as far as we know)! You will demonstrate much more competence by acknowledging the limits to your information AND demonstrating an interest in finding our answers to questions which have stumped you. True knowledge grows out of a curiosity to understand those things which we have not yet grasped.

Never hesitate to draw on the participants' knowledge. By developing good group facilitation skills, you can encourage group discussions which may generate answers/solutions to questions/problems you were unable to solve yourself. The group will feel good about its' ability to problem solve and will value your role as facilitator.

#10

DON'T RUSH WRAP UP. Make sure you leave sufficient time at the end of the workshop training, to avoid rushing through the ceremony of handing our certificates. Each trainer should say a little something to the group at the end. It doesn't have to be a speech. Students want/appreciate feedback and reinforcement for their efforts. A relationship has developed between the participants and the trainers over the course of the workshop, and the formal act of disengaging, releases energy (to a greater or lesser degree, depending upon the particular group). Trainers should remind the participants at this time that PMT is a continuing resource for them and invite them to share any successes and /or problems with PMT after the course has ended.

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