



APPLYING ADULT LEARNING PRINCIPLES TO CPD PLANNING

What do we know about how professionals learn?

Adult education is a well-established and researched field. Surprisingly, there is little agreement as to theory of adult learning, mostly because of the breadth of the field. However, there is agreement about the principles and beliefs that, when implemented, contribute to effective learning

A principle is defined as: “a fundamental truth that serves as the foundation for a system of belief or behaviour” (Wikipedia).

Commonly held principles amongst adult educators include: adults learn best when...

- Learning is relevant to their practice
- Learning is focused on solving a problem
- Previous experience is valued
- They maintain responsibility for their learning
- They are actively engaged
- They have opportunities to interact with peers
- They are provided with opportunities to apply what is being learned

Why is this information relevant to you?

The majority of accreditation requirements are based on adult learning principles and help explain why certain aspects of program planning such as:

1. Assessing learning needs
2. Defining measurable outcomes
3. Incorporating active learning in all activities to a minimum of 25%
4. Designing evaluation based on stated outcomes

Questions? Comments? Suggestions? Contact one of our Educational Consultants at quicktips@utoronto.ca

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What can you do as a program planner or course director to implement these principles into your CPD events?

- Before the event find out more about the target audience by conducting a learning needs assessment
- Make sure the learning environment is comfortable both physically and psychologically
- During the activity make reference to the practice reality of your target audience
- Encourage active participation through real case studies, live patients, discussion groups etc.
- Acknowledge participants as colleagues and equals
- At the end of the event:
 - Ask for feedback
 - Provide feedback
 - Provide practice reminders

For more reading, references and general information on adult learning:

<http://infed.org/mobi/malcolm-knowles-informal-adult-education-self-direction-and-andragogy>

For practical assistance in incorporating these principles into your planning contact one of CPD's educational consultants: quicktips@utoronto.ca

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