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

Alice Curtis, PENT Summits 2003
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*