

# **Module A:**

## **Adult Learning Theory and Participant Centered Education**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

<b>OVERVIEW</b> .....	1
Participant Centered Education.....	2
Participant Centered Practices.....	3
Learning Styles.....	5
Interactive Learning - Using What You Learn.....	6
Cross-Cultural Adult Learning.....	8
Engagement Cues.....	9
The 50/50 Rule.....	10
<b>PROGRESS CHECK</b> .....	11
<b>LEARNING ACTIVITIES</b> .....	13
1: Learning Your Way.....	14
2: Interactive Learning.....	17
3: Observation of Interactive Learning.....	19
4: Case Studies.....	21
<b>PROGRESS CHECK ANSWERS</b> .....	25

---

## OVERVIEW

---

### What is Participant Centered Education?

Participant centered education is an approach to learning where the Participant and the facilitator work together as partners. In participant centered education, the facilitator respects the participant as the decision maker of what she/he will learn and if or how she/he will change her/his behavior.

*(Previously seen in Task IV - Individual Education)*

---

### What is the role of the facilitator in Participant Centered Education?

Participant centered education can take place individually or in a group setting. In a participant centered class the facilitator has two roles.

1. Sharing important information to improve the participant's life choice.
  2. Provide participants time to share their thoughts about the topic, practice using the information, and explore how to use this information in their own lives.
- 

### R.I.S.E. Participant Centered Education Principles

There are many principles of participant centered education. Some core principles in group education are:

1. **Respect**
2. **Immediately useful** information
3. **Safe** learning environment
4. **Engaging** learning activities

We call these four principles "**RISE**". The chart on the next page gives more information about each principle.

---

# PARTICIPANT CENTERED EDUCATION

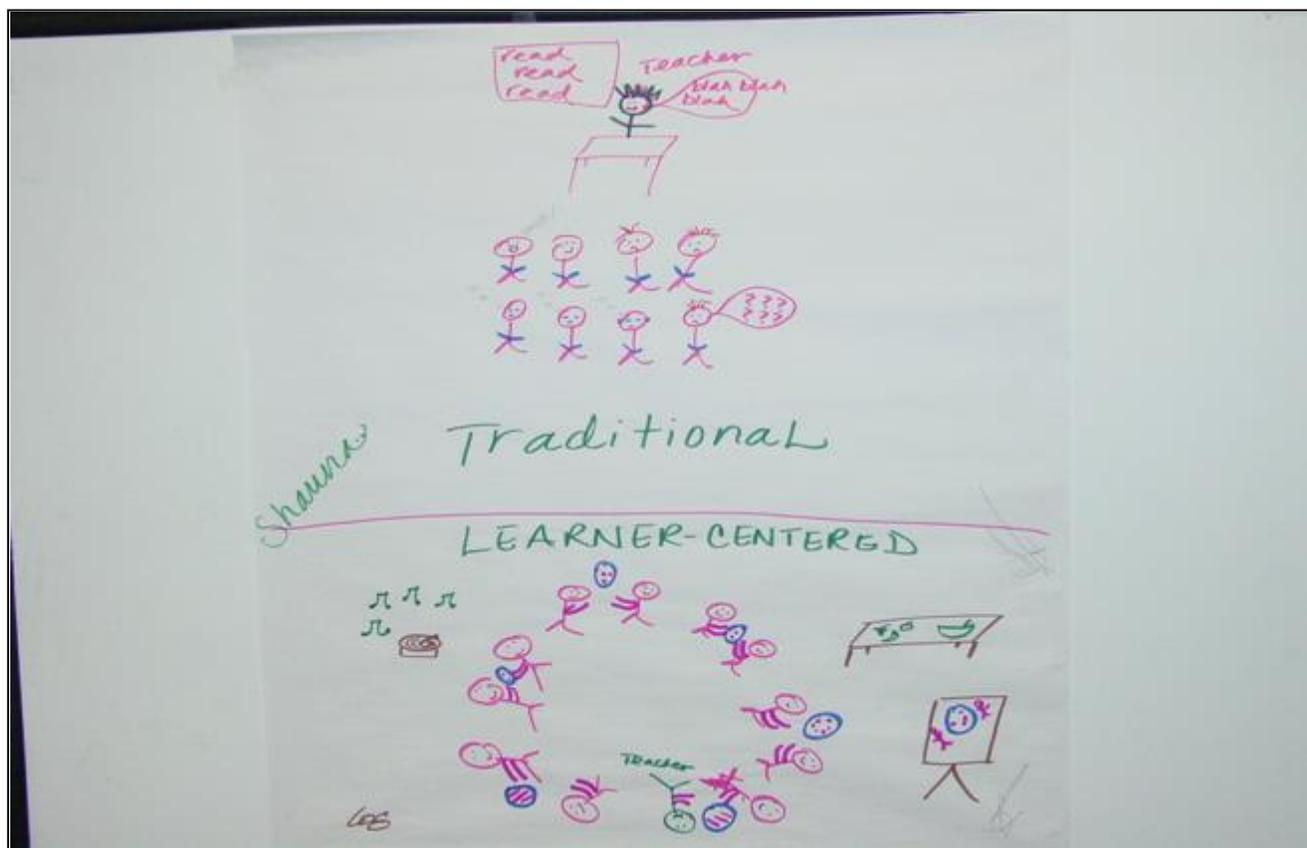
## Participant Centered Principles

Factor	Description
<b>Respect</b>	<p>Participants need to feel important and valued, respected for who they are, where they have been, and what they know “how to do”.</p> <p><b>Examples:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Using a friendly tone of voice.</li> <li>2. In a breastfeeding class, ask participants what experiences they have had or what they know about breastfeeding already.</li> <li>3. In a class about snacks, ask participants about their experiences getting their families to eat healthy snacks.</li> <li>4. Starting and ending a class on time.</li> </ol>
<b>Immediately Meaningful</b>	<p>Something participants feel is helpful in their own lives to use right away.</p> <p><b>Examples:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Asking participants how they might use the discussed information at home.</li> <li>2. For an infant feeding class, only scheduling participants with infants 0-5 months old.</li> </ol>
<b>Safety</b>	<p>Participants need to feel welcome and comfortable in their learning environment. This will help them be more confident and willing to interact with their peers.</p> <p><b>Examples:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Thanking participants for attending the class.</li> <li>2. Affirming individuals by thanking them for participating in discussions.</li> <li>3. Asking for volunteers instead of making someone participate (This is often called “voice by choice”).</li> <li>4. Having chairs arranged in a circle rather than “theater style”.</li> </ol>
<b>Engaging</b>	<p>Participants are involved and participate in their learning. We look for smiles, conversation, laughter, questions, and movements letting us know they are engaged.</p> <p><b>Examples:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Demonstrating breastfeeding positions and asking participants to practice with you.</li> <li>2. Asking participants to help you identify signs of a proper latch and hunger cues after watching a breastfeeding video together.</li> <li>3. Using pictures of WIC foods to practice shopping.</li> <li>4. Practice comparing the price per ounce of different food items.</li> <li>5. Asking participants to come up with solutions to a problem (“If your cousin asked you for help getting her/his child to try new vegetables, what would you suggest?”).</li> </ol>

## PARTICIPANT CENTERED PRACTICES

Participant-centered practices are techniques the educator uses to put the participant centered principles into action. They help learners feel respected, safe and engaged. They also make the information immediately meaningful.

Below is a WIC staff interpretation comparing traditional education and participant centered education.



Here are some examples of Participant Centered Practices:

- Open-ended questions
- Pause for answers
- Affirm
- Work in pairs (for Participants)

The chart on the following page provides a brief description of these practices.

*Continued on next page*

**PARTICIPANT CENTERED PRACTICES** *(continued)*

Practice/Technique	Description
<p><b>Open-ended Questions</b></p>	<p>Open-ended questions are questions without set, “correct” answers. They ask what someone thinks, what their experience is, or what they would do in a situation.</p> <p>Open-ended questions invite participants to draw on their own life experiences and creativity. They invite dialogue and engage participants by requiring reflection and critical thinking.</p> <p>Some examples of open-ended questions are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “What do you think about...?”</li> <li>• “What are your questions?”</li> <li>• “Tell me your thoughts about...?”</li> <li>• “How do you feel...?”</li> </ul> <p><i>To learn more about open-ended questions, see Task IV.</i></p>
<p><b>Pause for Answers</b></p>	<p>When asking a group of learners an open-ended question, it helps to <i>wait at least five seconds</i> for a response. It may feel uncomfortable for the facilitator, but pausing often encourages them to speak. Learners may feel shy or need time to think about the question before answering.</p>
<p><b>Affirm</b></p>	<p>To affirm is to acknowledge or support someone. You can affirm people for their experiences, their ideas, their children or anything positive in their lives. When someone volunteers to talk, affirm them by thanking them for contributing. Even if you do not agree with what they say, you can thank them for speaking. This will help individuals feel respected and encourage others to participate.</p> <p><i>To learn more about affirming, see Task IV.</i></p>
<p><b>Work in Pairs for Participants</b></p>	<p>Many people feel more comfortable talking to another person than an entire group. Encouraging participants to work in pairs can feel safer and at the same time supports more involvement in the class. This technique takes a bit of practice but is worth learning.</p>

## LEARNING STYLES

### Different Types of Learners

Another part of participant centered education involves using different learning styles. For example, do you find it easier to learn by looking at a **photo or poster**? Perhaps you learn best by **reading** the information. You might prefer to **hear** someone explain the information, to **touch** or to **do** something.

We do not all learn in the same way.

There are three general learning styles:

1. Hear (Auditory)
2. See (Visual)
3. Do (Touching or Moving)

The following chart examples of the three learning styles.

Learning Style	Examples
<b>Seeing</b> (Visual)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Showing a video demonstrating proper nursing latch and signs of hunger for infants</li> <li>2. Photos of a child with baby-bottle tooth decay</li> </ol>
<b>Hearing</b> (Auditory)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Playing songs about the importance of breastfeeding</li> <li>2. Reading a poem about fruits and vegetables</li> </ol>
<b>Doing</b> (Touch/Move)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Circling all the foods the participant's family likes on a list of good calcium sources</li> <li>2. Participant holds a 4-ounce food model of meat to illustrate portion size</li> <li>3. Sampling 1% milk to taste the difference</li> </ol>

### Use a Variety of Techniques

The participants in your class will have different learning styles. The most effective classes **use a variety of learning techniques**.

## INTERACTIVE LEARNING - USING WHAT YOU LEARN

---

**Definition**

Interactive learning helps make the learning engaging.

---

**Essential for Learning**

Just telling someone information does not mean they will learn it. For learning to be effective, it helps when participants can interact and use the information they are receiving.

---

**Techniques**

There are several ways you can make learning fun and interactive:

- practice activities
  - case studies
  - games
  - demonstrations
- 

**Practice Activities**

To learn, adults need to practice using the knowledge or skills in a class.

**Examples:**

1. Participants can identify the amount of fat in a food after the facilitator has explained and demonstrated how to read a food label.
  2. After reading about sources of lead contamination, participants circle pictures of those items with a high lead content.
- 

**Case Studies**

A case study is an example of a situation similar to what the class is learning. You can use case studies to help the group review what they have learned.

Here are some **tips** to help you use case studies.

1. Give group members information about a fictitious participant who has a specific problem.
2. Have the group discuss what they would suggest for the fictitious participant.

**Example:**

An instructor shares a list of suggestions on how to encourage children to eat more fruits and vegetables. A case study might be about a mother who has a toddler refusing to eat fruits and vegetables. The group would discuss possible advice they can give the mother.

---

*Continued on next page*

## INTERACTIVE LEARNING - USING WHAT YOU LEARN *(continued)*

---

### Games

Activities such as game shows and contests help encourage participants to talk.

Here are some **tips**:

1. Explain the rules of the game even if you think everyone knows how to play.
2. Be prepared to deal with participants who may not want to play.

#### **Examples:**

- Bingo based on colors of fruits and vegetables
  - Wheel of Misfortune to learn about food safety and sanitation
- 

### Demonstrations

A demonstration is a way of showing the group how something is done. Here are some examples:

1. Use WIC allowed foods to show what items can be purchased with food instruments.
2. Use food models to show the actual size of food portions for children.
3. Prepare a recipe using WIC foods.

#### **Example:**

Demonstrate making fresh fruit smoothies.

---

### Learning Activity 1

To learn to identify needs and strategies of adult learners, you may want to try **Learning Activity 1** found at the end of this module.

---

### Learning Activity 2

To help you identify the types of activities which aid the adult learner, you may want to try **Learning Activity 2** found at the end of this module.

---

### Learning Activity 3

To help you identify interactive techniques and cues of the engaged participant, you may want to try **Learning Activity 3** found at the end of this module.

---

### Learning Activity 4

To help you apply the principles of participant centered education using scenarios, you may want to try **Learning Activity 4** found at the end of this module.

---

## CROSS-CULTURAL ADULT LEARNING

---

### **Participants Differ by Culture**

Adult learners can differ depending on the culture or background of the participant.

Not all adult learners are comfortable with self-directed study. For example, the Hmong and Japanese look to their facilitator for direction and guidance. Self-direction for adults in these cultures may cause anxiety and discomfort.

---

### **What Cultures are Served by Your Agency?**

Check with your supervisor or mentor to see what various cultures are served by your agency and how it may affect their learning style.

---

### **Additional Information**

You may want to review Task I Module C: *Working with Diverse Staff and Participants*, for more information about cultural differences.

---

## ENGAGEMENT CUES

Body language can help you determine if participants are engaged. If you look carefully, you will see signs telling you how the class is going. Listed below are several cues illustrating how engaged your participants are in the class.

### Examples of Participant Body Cues\*\*

CUE	ENGAGED	
	Yes	No
Nodding	√	
Smiles	√	
“Interested” Look	√	
Asks Relevant Questions	√	
Leans Forward	√	
Shares Experiences	√	
Tries Things On Their Own	√	
Adds Relevant Information To Topic	√	
Makes Eye Contact**	√	
Looks Occupied		√
Drums Fingers		√
Shrugs		√
Closes Eyes		√
Looks Away		√
Stares		√
Crosses Arms And Legs**		√
Rests Head In Palm Of Hand		√
Yawns		√
Easily Distracted		√

\*\*Note: ***These may be true for many cultures but may NOT be true for the cultures your agency serves. Make sure you understand the cultures your agency serves.*** (For example, people of some cultures will NOT make eye contact with the instructor.)

## THE 50/50 RULE

---

### **How Successful is Your Class?**

Another way to judge the success of your class is by paying attention to how much of the time learners are participating, talking, and doing activities. In a successful participant centered class the learners spend at least 50% of the time talking and doing activities.

---

### **Participants Share What They Learned and How They Will Use It**

Many classes close by providing participants a chance to share something they learned and/or how they will apply the information.

Sharing in this way is an excellent gauge to recognize what the participants have learned.

---

## PROGRESS CHECK

1. Place a check mark ✓ next to the TRUE statements about adult Participants and the learning environment.

- Interactive learning can help keep learners engaged.
- Not everyone learns in the same way.
- A participant, who prefers learning by seeing, will find using slides, photos or pictures beneficial in the session.
- People usually need to interact and be involved to learn.
- A participant who prefers “doing” when learning should sit and listen to a peers experience with breastfeeding.
- Participants should remain quiet throughout the class, only speaking when called on or after raising their hand.
- Knowledge will be more meaningful when participants practice using the new information and apply it to their own lives.
- There is no need to thank participants for attending a mandatory class.
- One sign of a successful class is the participants spend at least half of the time talking or doing activities.

2. Put a check mark ✓ next to the cues showing the participant is engaged in learning.

- Leans Forward in Chair, Nods, and Smiles
- Stares Out into Space
- Asks Relevant Questions
- Fidgets with Pen
- Comes to Class on Time
- Adds Relevant Information to the Topic
- Describes Positive Changes They are Willing to Make

## PROGRESS CHECK *(continued)*

3. Put a check mark ✓ next to the items prompting group interaction in a class on “Eating Healthy during Pregnancy.”

\_\_\_\_\_ Use an activity to show the more nutritious foods for expectant mothers.

\_\_\_\_\_ Participants view a videotape on eating for pregnancy.

\_\_\_\_\_ Give a lecture on the importance of healthy eating for pregnancy.

\_\_\_\_\_ Participants work in teams to solve a word search puzzle of healthy foods.

\_\_\_\_\_ Discuss a pregnant teen case study.

4. Briefly describe how you would use participant centered principles and practices to conduct a class on any nutrition topic.

---

---

---

## **LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

The following activities are included and are recommended for interactive learning:

- **Learning Activity 1:** Learning Your Way
- **Learning Activity 2:** Interactive Learning
- **Learning Activity 3:** Observation of Interactive Learning
- **Learning Activity 4:** Case Studies

## Activity 1: Learning Your Way

<b>Learning Objectives</b>	After completing this activity the Trainee will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identify some needs of adult Participants.</li><li>• Identify some strategies to assess the needs of adult Participants.</li></ul>
<b>Instructions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Think back to a time when you were a student taking a class.</li><li>2. Try to remember how the class was set up.</li><li>3. Using your experiences from this class, or a combination of classes, complete the forms on the next pages.</li></ol>

## Activity 1: Learning Your Way

1. Why did you go to this class? Did you attend this class by choice or obligation? How did this affect your motivation to learn in this class?

2. What worries did you have about attending the class?

3. What information provided during the class was important to you?

4. Was the class taught using lecture, group activities or discussion? What did you enjoy most?

*Continued on next page*

## Activity 1: Learning Your Way

5. How was the classroom set up? Did everyone face the instructor (theater style), or did they sit in a circle or in a half-circle? Did the instructor sit with the class?

6. Who did most of the talking? The instructor, the students, or both equally?

7. List the successes and challenges for you as an adult learner.

Successes

Challenges

**Activity 2: Interactive Learning**

<b>Learning Objectives</b>	After completing this activity the Trainee will be able to identify what types of activities are more likely to help participants learn.
<b>Instructions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Arrange to observe a group nutrition education class.</li><li>2. Using the form on the next page, record the methods of learning used and mark with a “√” whether the learner was “S” for seeing, “H” for hearing, or “D” for doing.</li><li>3. After the session, discuss your observations with your supervisor or mentor.</li></ol>

## Activity 2: Interactive Learning

Activity	S	H	D
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reading text</li> <li>• reading handouts</li> <li>• reading flip chart or blackboard notes</li> </ul>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• listening to a lecture</li> </ul>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• looking at pictures</li> <li>• looking at diagrams, charts, etc.</li> </ul>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• watching a video</li> <li>• watching a slide show</li> <li>• watching a demonstration</li> </ul>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• participating in a discussion</li> <li>• explaining to a partner</li> <li>• responding to an open-ended question from the instructor</li> </ul>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mock-ups</li> <li>• role playing</li> </ul>			

### Activity 3: Observation of Interactive Learning

<b>Learning Objectives</b>	<p>After completing this activity the Trainee will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identify interactive learning techniques</li> <li>• identify the use of participant centered principles and practices</li> <li>• identify cues indicating Participant engagement</li> </ul>
<b>Background</b>	<p><b>Interactive learning</b> involves the learner in the learning experience. Some techniques include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• practice activities</li> <li>• demonstrations</li> <li>• case studies</li> <li>• games</li> <li>• group discussion</li> </ul>
<b>Instructions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Observe a group nutrition education class.</li> <li>2. What types of interactive learning techniques, principles and practices were used? Complete the form on the following page to describe each of the technique(s) used.</li> </ol>

### Activity 3: Observation of Interactive Learning

Class Topic:

Types of Activities:

- Case study
- Demonstration
- Game (Title: \_\_\_\_\_)
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
- Group discussion

Equipment/Materials Used:

Description of Activity:

In which part of the class did the participants learn more? Why? Could you make the class more interactive? How?

Did the instructor apply and use participant centered principles and/or practices? How?

List some cues displayed by the learners showing they were engaged?

**Activity 4: Case Studies**

<b>Learning Objectives</b>	After completing this activity the Trainee will be able to apply the principles of participant centered education through discussion of one or more case studies.
<b>Background</b>	It is important to incorporate participant centered principles and practices when teaching adults.
<b>Instructions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Read each of the case studies on the following pages.</li><li>2. With <i>Adult Learning Principles</i> in mind, describe the mistakes and provide suggestions to improve the situation.</li><li>3. Write your ideas on the following forms.</li><li>4. When you are finished, discuss your thoughts with your supervisor or mentor.</li></ol>

## Activity 4: Case Studies

### Case Study 1:

Maria is leading a class on breastfeeding. She begins the class by explaining how hard it was for her to nurse her first-born. This seems to get the group interested in the topic. However, she continues to talk for at least 20 minutes non-stop and notices some of the participants becoming restless, but continues talking.

### Mistakes?

### Suggestions to improve the class?

*Continued on next page*

## Activity 4: Case Studies

### Case Study 2:

Michael is leading a class on parenting. He really likes a video on this topic and begins the class by sharing his excitement about it. Five of the fifteen participants say they have already seen it. Michael asks them for feedback on the video and all say they learned a lot. Michael then plays the video for the entire group.

### Mistakes?

### Suggestions to improve the class?

*Continued on next page*

## Activity 4: Case Studies

### Case Study 3:

Mei Ling is leading a class on prenatal nutrition. She knows many of the participants already have children but does not want to assume they know everything. She decides to give the participants as much information as possible so they will “know it all”. She begins to tell participants what they will cover in the class. A participant angrily shouts out “We’ve heard all this before!” Mei Ling ignores the comment and continues talking to the group.

### Mistakes?

### Suggestions to improve the class?

## PROGRESS CHECK ANSWERS

1. Place a check mark ✓ next to the TRUE statements about adult learners and the learning environment.

- Interactive learning can help keep learners engaged.
- Not everyone learns in the same way.
- A participant, who prefers learning by seeing, will find using slides, photos or pictures beneficial in the session.
- People usually need to interact and be involved to learn.
- A participant who prefers “doing” when learning should sit and listen to a peer’s experience with breastfeeding.
- Participants should remain quiet throughout the class, only speaking when called on or after raising their hand.
- Knowledge will be more meaningful when participants practice using the new information and apply it to their own lives.
- There is no need to thank participants for attending a mandatory class.
- One sign of a successful class is the learners spend at least half of the time talking or doing activities.

2. Put a check mark ✓ next to the cues showing the participant is engaged in learning.

- Leans Forward in Chair, Nods, and Smiles
- Stares Out into Space
- Asks Relevant Questions
- Fidgets with Pen
- Comes to Class on Time
- Adds Relevant Information to the Topic
- Describes Positive Changes They are Willing to Make

## PROGRESS CHECK ANSWERS *(continued)*

3. Put a check mark ✓ next to the items prompting group interaction in a class on “Eating Healthy during Pregnancy.”

Use an activity to show the more nutritious foods for expectant mothers.

Participants view a videotape on eating for pregnancy.

Give a lecture on the importance of healthy eating for pregnancy.

Participants work in teams to solve a word search puzzle of healthy foods.

Discuss a pregnant teen case study.

4. Briefly describe how you would use learner-centered principles and practices to conduct a class on any nutrition topic.

### **ANSWER SHOULD INCLUDE:**

- *Activities involving participants in learning and demonstrate application of Participant-centered principles and practices.*
- *Some possible activities include: discussion, demonstrations, case studies and/or games.*