Principles of adult learning and their application to orientation and immunization skills assessment for public health nurses

Principle	Application	Orientation and Skills Assessment Application
Need to know Adults need to know *why* they need to learn something before investing time in learning it.	Explain the relevance and benefits of what you're teaching. Answer the questions: "Why is this important?" "How will this help me?"	Before doing the skills assessment explain *"We work together to review your ability to do X because it's a key part of understanding Y <for example, Immunization Program Standards Manual (IPSM) > that supports Z outcome."* Invite any questions the learner may have.
Self-concept Adults are self-directed learners and prefer to have control of their own learning process.	Invite participation in the learning process. Act as a facilitator and not just a supplier of facts as orientation is a shared responsibility.	Provide self-directed learning opportunities such as self-assessments, time to independently review IPSM, opportunity for choice of learning experiences.
	Limit lecturing, and provide opportunities for sharing experiences, questions and exercises that require self-reflection, practice of a skill or application of knowledge.	Incorporate time to access training modules and IPSM reading. Designate PHNs to be available throughout orientation for new learners to seek guidance, as needed.
Prior Experience Adults bring a wealth of life experience, which serves as a rich resource for the learning process.	Connect life experiences and prior learning to new information.	Build on foundation of nursing knowledge, principles, and skills. Ask the new learner about their previous experiences, strengths and opportunities for growth.
	Acknowledge the experiences that adult learners bring, allowing for opinions to be expressed freely.	Ensure feedback is ongoing and timely. Discuss feedback from the observation of nursing practice and self-assessments after each client interaction.
Readiness to learn Adults become ready to learn things that they feel they need to know to cope effectively with real-life situations.	Provide experiences that are organized with clear connections to orientation and training goals.	Clearly identify connections to IPSM and clinic process. Ask the learner to identify their gaps in knowledge and provide opportunities to support learning.
Orientation to learning Adults are more problem-centered than content-centered. They prefer learning that is relevant to their current life or work.	Help learners see a reason for learning something by making it applicable to their work/other responsibilities of value to them.	Use skills checklists that outline competencies and processes. Link observations back to IPSM and skills.
	Accommodate different learning styles by offering a variety of training methods such as group discussion, role-playing, storytelling, case studies and use visual, auditory, and kinesthetic techniques.	Ask the learner if they have a preferred learning style, including a variety of learning methods such as links to relevant websites, online modules, videos, real-time observation, application of learning with coaching and immediate feedback.

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Motivation to Learn	Show learners how learning will benefit them.	Provide orientation that considers previous knowledge, skills and length of absence from clinical practice.
As a person matures, the motivation to learn is internal. Self-esteem and job satisfaction are often more powerful than external motivators such as promotions and rewards.	Create a comfortable and appropriately challenging environment.	Ask the learner to identify their learning goals for each shift.
	Provide opportunities for self-reflection and feedback from the nurse observer, peers and other team members.	Build self-assessment and feedback into the orientation process. Provide formal assessments at designated intervals, with discussion and scenario assessments included.

References

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