

The Essential Dimensions of Effective Adult Learning (eDEAL)

As we look for ways to improve ourselves, our families, and our organizations, learning something new often plays a big role in our growth and development. If we desire to have what we learn stay with us, we must ask more than *what are we learning?*; *why?* and *how?* are among other equally important questions to ask and answer. When we know *why* we are learning something, *what* we are learning has significance. *Learning Leaders* (i.e., those who teach or facilitate) who use what they know about how people learn are able to design and facilitate courses, workshops, and sessions that are impactful. *The Essential Dimensions of Effective Adult Learning* (eDEAL) blend what we know about children and learning (i.e., pedagogy) with research into adult learning (i.e., andragogy). Dr. Malcolm S. Knowles, an adult learning trailblazer, identified key traits of adult learners:

- Adults are autonomous and self-directed.
- Adults have accumulated a foundation of life experiences and knowledge.
- Adults are goal-oriented.
- Adults are relevancy-oriented.
- Adults are practical.
- Adults must be shown respect.

When planning and experiencing courses, workshops, and sessions, *Learning Leaders* and adult learners thoughtfully ask themselves three central questions about learning: *Where am I now (my current state)? Where do I want to be (my desired state)? How will I get there (my learning)?* The four dimensions of eDEAL—and its accompanying self-assessment—support deeper learning for all:

- First Dimension - Communication
- Second Dimension - Demonstration
- Third Dimension - Connection
- Fourth Dimension - Application

FIRST DIMENSION - COMMUNICATION: *The Learning Leader begins with the end in mind, gets clear about the learning (i.e., why, what, when, where, how) before designing modules, and effectively communicates this when facilitating.*

Adult learners in my courses, workshops, and sessions:

- explain what they are learning and why they are learning it.
- explain how their learning connects to personal and professional short- and long-term goals.
- know their results and use them to chart progress and celebrate successes.
- use their results to reveal areas for growth and determine next steps.

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SECOND DIMENSION - DEMONSTRATION: *The Learning Leader designs and facilitates learning that offers multiple opportunities for demonstrations, exchanges, and actionable feedback.*

Adult learners in my courses, workshops, and sessions:

- feel safe asking questions.
- take risks and make mistakes.
- use many chances to learn and then show what they know.
- receive just-in-time feedback about their learning and performance.

THIRD DIMENSION - CONNECTION: *The Learning Leader creates multiple opportunities for exploration, voice and choice, collaboration, and connection using a diverse collection of learning tools and resources.*

Adult learners in my courses, workshops, and sessions:

- see themselves and others reflected in the content they learn and in the materials they use.
- make meaningful decisions about the content they learn, processes they use, and products they create.
- make sense and meaning of what they are learning in many ways.
- engage in ongoing opportunities to collaborate and connect as they build and deepen relationships with me and other adult learners.

FOURTH DIMENSION - APPLICATION: *The Learning Leader designs and facilitates modules that require ongoing reproduction and production, learning and unlearning, and innovation and application.*

Adult learners in my courses, workshops, and sessions:

- learn how to learn, unlearn, and relearn to be personally and professionally nimble and flexible.
- explore new learning when they understand; if they don't, they get help from me and other adult learners.
- experience, process, and discuss complex content with me and other adult learners.
- apply what they have learned in authentic, real life situations with positive outcomes consistent with their short- and long-term goals.

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