

How to Design Impactful Adult Learning Experiences

10 Evidence-Based Considerations

1

Co-Design

Do you want to ensure the curriculum hits the spot for the learner? Co-design with them. It's that simple. Surveys, committees, sharing draft agendas, having them test activities are all good ways to get feedback on your learning program.

2

Adult Learning Theories.

Consider and blend different methods, making sure to hit the 4 D's: Doing; Didactic, Discovery and Discourse.

7

Scarcity > Interest

Behavioral economics shows us that scarcity makes opportunities more valuable. Similarly, adult learners are likely to have more interest in learning if the opportunity is or feels scarce. An application process is a good screening for motivation. You can't force people to learn; you want them to want to learn for themselves.

8

Make it Real

Adults need learning experiences relevant to and reflective of their own lived experiences and acute problems. Pre-learning surveys can be a good way to understand and plan for this. They may also identify a participant as an instructor.

3

Un > Learn

"Unlearning is not about forgetting. It's about the ability to choose an alternative mental model or paradigm. When we learn, we add new skills or knowledge to what we already know. When we unlearn, we step outside the mental model in order to choose a different one." It's important to identify what the current mental model is before replacing it with a new one.

4

Better > Together

We learn better when we learn together. Research shows that social and emotional learning can change brain function and structure which allows for adaptive emotional and cognitive functioning. Build in opportunities for group work or projects. Behavioral science and research by Apolitical.co shows that peer-to-peer learning can be the most impactful because of its relevance.

5

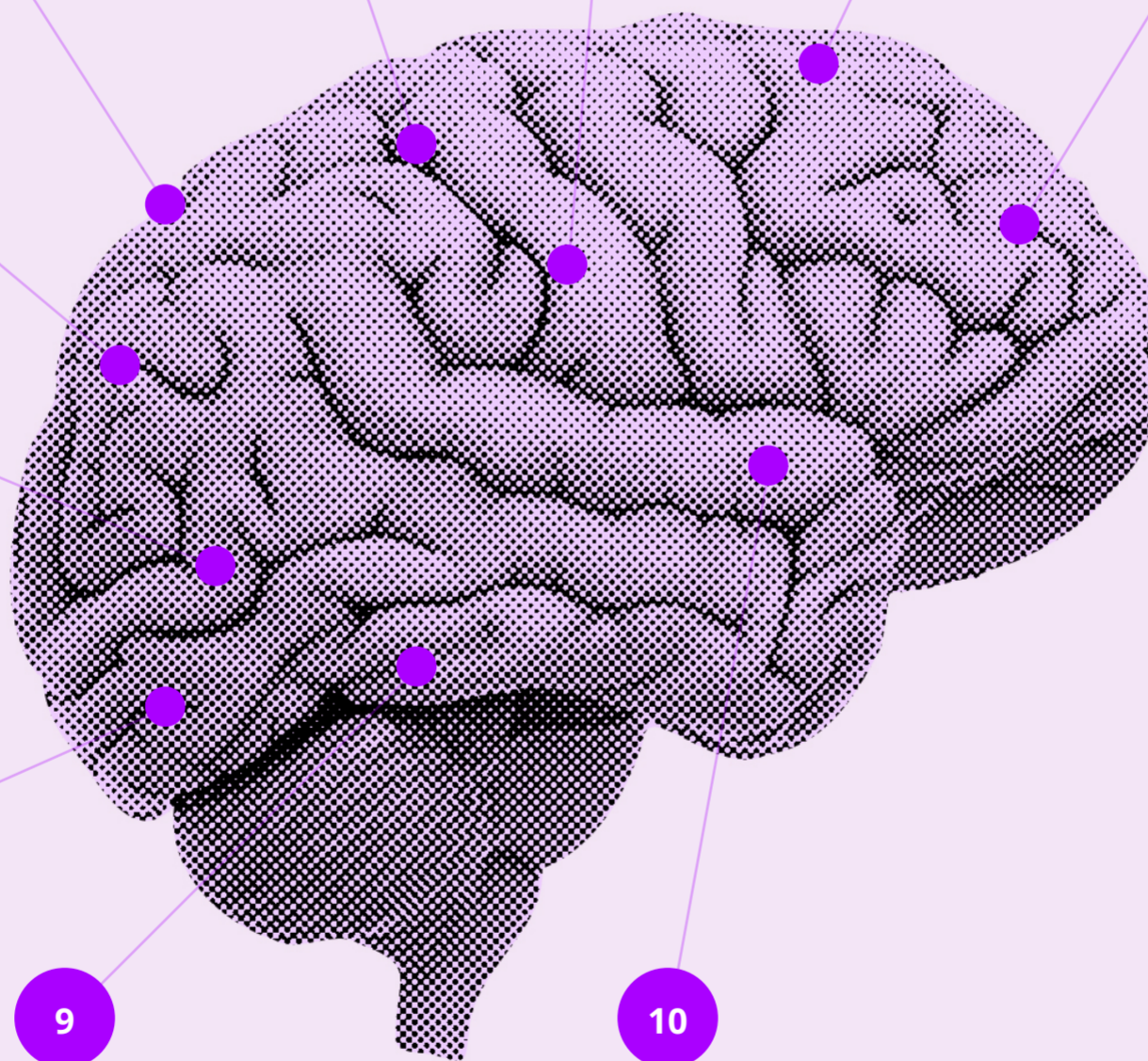
Intrinsic & Fun > More Attention

People generally have a longer attention span when they are doing something that they find enjoyable or intrinsically motivating. Design for delight. Learn and prime the learner's intrinsic motivations.

6

Emotions > The Whole Person

Some believe that emotions get in the way of learning. The contrary is true. Emotions, even negative ones, when harnessed properly can improve attention, motivation and memory. The stress hormone cortisol, however, can be harmful to your body, memory, and brain function if it spikes and for too long. Anxiety can be a significant hindrance for learning and memory.



Contact for source information:
info@apolitical.foundation



We're interested in partnering with organizations to co-design experiences that help advance public leadership.

Contact to explore:
lisa@apolitical.foundation

9

Different Learning Styles

Recognize and design for different learning styles in mind:
Visual (spatial)
Aural (auditory)
Verbal (linguistic)
Physical (kinesthetic)
Logical (mathematical)
Social (interpersonal)
Solitary (intrapersonal)
And don't forget to design for introverts and extroverts as well.

10

Blend It

A combination of 'classroom' (online or off) with self-paced learning often works best for adult learners. Why? Easier to fit into busy schedules, can be more personalized, provides for a more varied experience and takes advantage of tech (gaming, video content, VR, etc.). It can also be a cost and time saver (on space, food and travel time, for example).