

ANCC - Principles of Adult Learning Theory

1. Adults need to know why they need to learn something before undertaking to learn it.
2. Adults have a self-concept of being responsible for their own decisions. Thus, self-directed learning is much more effective than “dependent” learning.
3. Adults have a large amount of diverse experiences. To an adult, experience is not something that happens to him, it is him. To ignore or devalue the adult’s experiences is perceived by the adult as ignoring or devalue the person of the adult. The experiences of the adult provide great learning resources for that adult. These resources can best be utilized by individualizing the teaching and learning strategies used. Experiential learning is especially effective with adults.
4. Adults become ready to learn when the subject includes those things they need to know and be able to do to cope effectively with their real-life situations. Some ways to develop this readiness to learn are exposure to models of superior performance, career counseling, simulation exercises, etc.
5. Somewhat related to the above: adults learn new knowledge, understandings, skills, values, and attitudes most effectively when they are presented in the context of application to real-life situations.
6. The normal adult motivation to keep growing and developing is frequently blocked by such barriers as negative self-concept as a student, inaccessibility of opportunities or resources, time constraints, and programs that violate principles of adult learning. The most potent motivators for adults are internal pressures. Some examples are desire for increased job satisfaction, self-esteem, quality of like, etc. Some examples of external motivators are promotions, higher salaries, better jobs, etc.