

TRAINING TRAINERS TO TRAIN

Our Training Task

For more than 70 years, the Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations has endeavored to help people replace attitudes of prejudice with respect and trust. The insecurity, inequity, and conflict that bias and fear produce are neither morally acceptable nor socially beneficial. In response, we work to inform, train, and mobilize people for inclusion, justice, and peace.

For many of us, our personal styles and patterns of interacting with others, along with our attitudes and prejudices, are largely subconscious. Commission staff members frequently are called on to lead training experiences that help people learn facts about our interactions, see the need for justice, adopt attitudes of mutual acceptance, and learn the art and science of collaborative relationship. We provide training in a wide variety of settings, including schools, community groups, businesses, and nonprofit organizations, as well as law enforcement and government agencies.

Training Trainers

Since our work is more expansive, efficient, and enduring when we emphasize teaching others how to do what can be done instead of doing it for them, we prioritize train-the-trainer approaches over direct service, to extend our reach. We engage in direct service as it contributes to the development of trainers we are seeking to train.

Training trainers requires that we not merely identify information, attitudes, and skills we want to foster, but also factors of the training experience that we believe are essential to effective training. In designing and delivering training experiences for trainers, then, we need to teach them not only what needs to be taught, but also how it is best taught. We need to both share essential content and shape effective instruction. If we only give them the content to be transferred without teaching them how best to teach the content, they may, unaware of important training principles and practices, deliver the content to their trainees using less-than-optimal approaches and methods.

Following, then, are some elements crucial to our training efforts, including information regarding characteristics of learners and features of training.

Important Characteristics of Learners that Trainers Need to Keep in Mind

Learners are Distinctly Motivated

Needs and Interests. Learners are motivated to learn based on their own needs and interests, not those of trainers. They learn because they want to, in order to acquire something they desire and/or avoid something they dislike. When learners prioritize the same needs and interests that trainers want to focus on, it can be much easier to engage the learners in training experiences. When learners prioritize different needs and interests from what trainers want to focus on, trainers need to appeal to the learners' priorities rather than expecting learners to adjust to trainers' priorities. An important part of planning training experiences is the identification of relevant needs and interests that trainees prioritize.

Clear Connections. The clearer and closer the connection of the training provided to practical applications valued by trainees, the more likely the trainees will be to engage enthusiastically in the planned training experiences. This frequently means that trainees will be most interested in what changes in behavior the training is intended to facilitate. So, it often is very helpful to express the intended results in terms of improvements in performance, even if the specific intention is to teach new information or attitudes.

Feedback. Appealing to and helping to maintain the trainees' motivation requires trainers to offer lots of feedback when trainees are attempting to understand or apply what is being taught. Trainers do well to consistently call attention to positive responses from trainees. A balance between challenge and support is important. Some trainers offer simple prizes at various times throughout the training experience.

Expectations. It is important to be precise so trainees can be clear about what to expect. And, descriptions of intended results are best received by trainees when they employ action words. In addition, trainees will appreciate descriptions of how they will demonstrate that the results have been accomplished. Learners may be skeptical of implicit agendas and intentions by trainers and training sponsors. Explicit presentation of intended training results when introducing the training experience can be a useful tool for allaying skepticism and cultivating trust and interest.

Learners Respect Respect

Confidence without Arrogance. Learners are most likely to be resistant to anything they perceive as dismissive or disrespectful. Trainers, then, need to demonstrate confident competence without appearing to flaunt or boast of

exclusive expertise. They do well to display advanced aptitude without conveying elite arrogance. It is important, therefore, to establish and maintain a collegial, informal, though controlled, training environment. Use of simple, easy-to-understand terminology is also important to avoid the perception of trainees that they are being discounted. When unfamiliar terms are introduced, they need to be defined clearly, using analogies relevant to the trainees. Sensitivity to those for whom English is not their first language requires the use of clear, precise language.

Listening. One of the elements of the training experience most important to demonstrating respect for trainees occurs when trainees are speaking. Trainers must listen and listen well to trainee comments. This does not mean that trainees must be allowed to move the training off-track or to use time needed for delivering the full training that has been promised. Such results can be made less likely when trainers include in the introductory section of the training how, when, and how much comments from trainees will be managed during the training.

Respect requires that, when trainers are listening to trainees, they genuinely listen. This means that they remain focused on what the trainee is communicating without begin distracted by what they want to communicate next. It means that they respond to the trainee in ways that communicate genuine interest. It means that they don't try to engage in some other activity while listening, and that they use affirming, inviting sounds and gestures. It means that they wait until the trainee has fully communicated what she or he wants to communicate before responding. It means that they avoid judging, that they offer appropriate, relevant feedback, and that they reflect the feelings the trainee is communicating as well as the message.

Learners Expect Competence

Relevant Expertise. Though trainees are likely to resist the appearance of elitism from trainers, they, nevertheless, are far more likely to take seriously training they receive from trainers they take seriously. So some description of reasons trainers are valuable guides for the particular training experiences being provided is necessary. This can be done in a variety of ways, including brief printed bios, introductions by persons whose opinion trainees respect, and sharing of relevant experiences by trainers.

Thorough Preparation. Taking trainers seriously is an attitude needed from trainees throughout the training experience. So, trainers need to be well-prepared and well-rehearsed in what they deliver. They need to identify pace in advance, and stick to the schedule. Apologies or excuses for insufficient time, lack of preparation, poor images, or equipment failure may foster sympathy from trainees, but likely not their respect or confidence in the trainers.

Mistakes and breakdowns do occur. When they occur, trainers need to maintain composure and confidence, briefly acknowledge what has occurred, and move on with the training. Apologies are useful only when all three of the following conditions are met: a) trainees are aware that something has gone wrong, b) the trainer is responsible, and c) statement of apology is undistractingly brief.

Learners Respond to Effective Training

Active Engagement. People learn best when they are actively engaged, emotionally, mentally, and physically. So, for example, as much as possible, trainers need to lead trainees to discover rather than merely passively receive information and knowledge. Likewise, it is important for trainers to use relevant, interesting, impactful examples.

Relating the New to Current. People most often process new information by filtering it through current experience and beliefs. So, they are likely to grasp content more easily and more quickly when explicit relationships are described between the new information and what they already know. Use of examples and analogies already familiar to the trainees is particularly useful for this reason. It is also useful to frequently relate training content to specific work and or life tasks familiar to the trainees. Trainees grasp new information more easily and quickly when it is explicitly related to concepts and patterns with which they are already familiar.

Energy and Variety. One of the results of the increasingly crowded stimulus fields in which we live is that attention spans are shrinking. It is crucial, therefore, to start well and to maintain energetic enthusiasm in mannerism, voice, and delivery. Trainers need to keep the training experience moving and varied. They need to practice in advance, practice again, and practice again. They can blend mini-lectures, activities, discussions, completion of printed exercises, images, videos, role plays, and other training experiences to gain and hold trainees' attention. Use of lots of supportive, reinforcing, relevant images throughout the training serves this purpose as well.

Important Features of Training that Trainers Need to Keep in Mind

Training is a Means, not the End

The task of training is to facilitate learning rather than merely disseminate information. Preparation for training is the planning for accomplishment of this task. That preparation begins with careful identification of the needs to be addressed with the training experiences. An important question in the planning of training is: what,

and how wide, is the gap between what trainees know, believe, and are able to do and what they need to know, believe, and be able to do?

When needs have been identified, they can be used to craft statements of specific results to be accomplished with the training. When these statements of results are sufficiently specific, they readily suggest methods by which accomplishment of the results can be measured. These statements of specific results to be accomplished with the training are called learning objectives (some call them goals).

Objectives are Essential

Learning objectives are essential to the design and delivery of effective training. They guide the details of the training, inform trainees what they will gain and how they will know they have been successful with the training, and direct evaluation of the training experiences. It is important that learning objectives focus on problems, needs, and/or issues that can be adequately addressed with training, as opposed to needs for changes in policies or procedures, for example.

Learning objectives identify information, attitudes/values, and/or skills trainees can expect to take away from the training experiences. Learning objectives describe:

- what trainees will gain regarding stated topic/subject,
- the action(s) by which learner will demonstrate the gain(s),
- to what degree,
- under what conditions.

Different Objectives Call for Different Approaches

Those who study the science of education and learning have identified three major categories of learning outcomes: helping learners acquire information, helping learners change attitudes/values, and helping learners master skills. Each of these three kinds of education experiences include specific levels of learning with accompanying educational approaches that have been found to be most effective. The levels build on one another with the more advanced levels including levels that have come before. Following are summaries of what current research has concluded regarding these three types of learning, their respective levels, and related training methods.

Training to Help Learners Acquire Information

The Levels of Information Learning are: Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation.

Knowledge. At this level, trainees are able to locate and/or recall from memory information they have acquired in training. Most often, much more is required from the training than to merely state or deliver the information. It is very helpful to actually engage learners in providing active responses to questions about the information in order to help them begin to store it for later use. In other words, trainers do well at this level to ask trainees to do something. Learners, for example, could be asked to recognize information they are learning, when they see it. Effective approaches for helping trainees come to know information involve leading them to write, recite, choose from a list, rearrange a list, work a puzzle, or match phrases that reflect the information they are learning.

It has been found that trainees are greatly helped when trainers use more than one of the trainees' senses at the same time. In addition to listening, trainees can be asked to view the information, assemble and disassemble items, display and distribute items, arrange items, explain a visual, or view or participate in drama.

Helping trainees attain the Knowledge Level of information calls for the use of many, varied activities for each objective. They can be asked to fill in missing parts, list in a designated sequence, complete a crossword puzzle, compete in a spelling bee, draw, illustrate, or change the form of the information. Trainees will be greatly aided when these trainers use fresh, novel, original presentations of information, such as unusual fonts, ribbon or yarn to display connections, experiments, the creation of skits or visual illustrations, field trips, interviews, newspaper articles, and simulated "news" reports.

Comprehension. At this level, trainees have begun to understand the information they have acquired as knowledge. A tool that has been found to be very helpful at this level is what is called Advance Organizers. Advance Organizers are techniques for previewing with trainees what they will be learning. Sometimes this is accomplished by asking for learners' attention to listen or watch for certain words, concepts, and/or features in advance of presentation of information. Another useful approach is to show the organizational structure of the entire content to be presented in advance of detailed presentation. For example, content can be introduced with an overview and/or an outline. Trainees can be asked to review contents pages, or to review summaries in advance.

Helping trainees comprehend what they are learning may involve helping them recognize new forms of the information. Training for comprehension can be accomplished by and demonstrated by leading trainees to paraphrase or summarize what they are learning, or to identify main points or central themes. Some trainers working at this level lead trainees to list synonyms and antonyms, engage in word associations, or compare and contrast terms. Trainees can be guided to explain, interpret, define, or label representations of the information. They can be

challenged to create a relevant, clarifying acrostic from letters in a word related to the information. Giving examples, depicting, representing, or illustrating the information also aids trainees to comprehend it. If possible, comprehension can be facilitated by leading trainees to translate the information into another language.

Application. When trainees comprehend the information, they can begin to apply it to various situations. An important aspect of helping trainees reach this level of Information Learning is to provide feedback to their attempts and responses as quickly as possible. Providing quick feedback can be as simple as an affirmative nod or phrase when they offer a comment or observation, or using flash cards, and can be as involved as providing a list of correct answers immediately following the completion of a test.

Trainees who have reached this level of Information Learning are able to use, or describe the use of, information in situations or in response to challenges different from those on which earlier training has focused. They can recognize examples of, or opportunities for, application or the misapplication of the knowledge. They can demonstrate what they have learned. They are able to use the knowledge they have acquired to explain something that has occurred or predict something that might occur under certain conditions.

Analysis. At this level, trainees are able to divide what they have learned into component parts. They can identify its organizational structure or the specific steps in a process. Trainees are helped to reach this level, and able to demonstrate they have, when they are able to outline or diagram the information, or create a concept map of it.

Synthesis. After learning to separate the component parts of what they have learned, at this level they come to be able to combine those parts in new ways. Reaching this level can be aided and demonstrated by leading trainees to write a plan that includes all the information's component steps or parts, or to craft a narrative that illustrates the information. At this level they can use the knowledge they have acquired to advise response to a new challenge. They are able to identify implications of the knowledge for questions not previously considered.

Evaluation. Evaluation is the highest level of Information Learning. At this level trainees are able to judge value or quality of various possibilities according to their fit to criteria based on the knowledge they have acquired. They can rank alternatives and choose a best alternative, based on the criteria. At this level they are able to determine the accuracy, veracity, and/or relevance of statements based on the knowledge they have acquired. They can use the knowledge to prove or disprove statements, and to complete and/or judge the value of actions in a case study or scenario. Trainees who have reached this level can use the knowledge they

have acquired in systematic problem-solving that: defines problem using new knowledge, obtains relevant data, identifies relationships among the data, determines possible solutions, and chooses and implements best solution(s).

Training to Help Learners Change Attitudes/Values

Our Attitudes/Values are comprised of our beliefs, feelings, assumptions, conclusions regarding what "should" or "ought to be. The Levels of Attitudes/Values Learning are: Awareness, Attraction, Admiration, Adoption, and Adaptation.

Awareness. Perhaps the greatest portion of our attitudes and values, for most of us, is subconscious. So, the first level of changing them is merely to become aware, aware of what our current attitudes and values are, and aware of alternative attitudes and values. At this level, trainees become conscious, perhaps for the first time, that a particular attitude/value exists. They choose to give it at least some attention, specifically identify it, and assign it an initial label and corresponding definition.

Attraction. When trainees reflect on a particular attitude/value and decide to invest some effort in learning more about it, they have reached this level. Trainers have a variety of tools available for helping trainees to do so. Trainers can refer to, expose trainees to, and/or arrange for trainees to interview or consult, sources whom trainees consider authoritative, such as research, "experts", and/or ideological source material. Trainers can provide opportunity for trainees to observe influencers and peers that exemplify a particular attitude/value. They can provide exposure to examples of when the attitude/value is specifically not being displayed.

Trainees can benefit from opportunities to hear or read from or about person(s) exemplifying a particular attitude/value. This is particularly useful when the person(s) demonstrates attitude/value change. A common training method for cultivating attraction in trainees for certain attitudes/values is to engage them with dramatic portrayals, either viewing or actually acting in them. Trainers frequently follow such experiences by leading trainees in reflective dialogue to identify less desirable attitudes/values and more positive counterparts.

Admiration. At this level, trainees conclude that a particular attitude/value is preferable, appropriate, right, or best. Consequently, the trainee is willing to experiment with its personal relevance, and to promote its significance. Helping trainees at this level can involve leading them to assess their own attitudes/values in light of what they received from authoritative source(s). Trainers can lead them to reflect on and dialogue (in non-judgmental settings) about personal experiences in which they displayed or failed to display a particular attitude/value. Another

useful tool is to lead trainees to imagine others have treated them in ways that are opposite a particular attitude/value.

Admiration is not merely a cerebral response. It also is emotional. So, helping trainees reach this level includes providing them opportunity to have personally significant emotional experiences with a particular attitude/value. Tools for accomplishing this include viewing moving images, reading moving accounts, and participating in impactful interactions with people affected by expressions of the attitude/value or its opposite.

Many trainers working at this level engage trainees in role plays in which they are challenged to express a particular attitude/value. Again, it is essential that trainers be led to reflect on and dialogue (in non-judgmental setting) about these experiences. The dialogue includes guiding trainees to assess ways that an example exemplifies, or fails to exemplify, the attitude/value.

Adoption. At this level, trainees prioritize attitudes/values they have come to admire, and attempt to make personal applications of them to their own lives. To assist them, trainers can engage them in action that expresses the particular attitude/value. It also it helpful to lead them in using the particular attitude/value to think about and anticipate ethical choices they likely will need to make.

Adaptation. This is the highest level of Values/Attitudes Learning. At this level, the trainee's perspectives, actions, and responses consistently reflect, manifest, and incorporate the adopted attitude/value. Trainers can assist trainees at this level by leading them to express the adopted attitude/value in the form of personal guidelines they want to follow in making choices and deciding actions. It also is very helpful to lead trainees to record for themselves their decisions to adapt to a particular attitude/value, and to share their decisions with a trusted accountability partner.

Training to Help Learners Master Skills

The Levels of Skill Learning are: Recognition, Familiarity, Guided Performance, Meticulous Competence, and Mastery. The primary method for training at the Recognition and Familiarity levels is Demonstration. The primary method for training at the higher three levels is Practice.

Recognition. As with Attitudes/Values, many of our actions are expressions of subconscious habits. So the first level of Skill Learning to merely to recognize the Skill. At this level, trainees gain initial awareness of a skill and its potential uses. Often, at this level, trainers show trainees the entire process of performing the skill,

as a preview, using charts, illustrations, videos, or a finished product produced with the skill.

Familiarity. Having been introduced to the skill, trainees can now be assisted to reach the Familiarity level. At this level, trainees know the skill when they see it, and know the elements of competent performance of the skill. Trainers assist trainees to reach this level by providing step-by-step demonstration, with accompanying explanations, of the skill being performed. The learning can be reinforced by leading trainees to write or state instructions for performing the skill. It is even possible at this level to lead trainees to guide others in performing the skill.

Guided Performance. Beginning at this level, the most valuable training tool is repeated practice. Initially, the trainee is guided in early attempts to perform the skill, with the trainer correcting mistakes and praising accuracy. The trainee gains the greatest benefit when these initial experiences in performing various actions that are elements of the skill receive in-the-moment feedback from trainer(s).

Meticulous Competence. At this level, the trainee knows what is involved in performing the skill, knows how to perform the skill, and is able to perform the skill. But, still, performing the skill requires, for the trainee, considerable concentration and effort. In other words, the trainee is fully capable of careful, deliberate, quality performance of the skill. Trainers assist trainees at this level by providing them ample opportunity to practice the skill repeatedly under conditions as similar as possible to “real-life” settings.

Mastery. At this level, trainees perform the skill well, consistently, with habitual excellence, without needing to be so meticulously, laboriously focused throughout the performance. More and more of the skill is performed very well, while at the same time becoming increasingly instinctive, subconscious. In fact, trainees may be challenged at this level to maintain conscious, detailed awareness of the elements of excellent performance. Yet, doing so is essential to their ability to train others.

Conclusion

The ability to train others is a highly valued capacity given our agency’s vast field of endeavor and immense field of operation. And, the ability to train others to train others is more valued still. Our success in developing and employing this ability in the fulfillment of our mission requires that we pursue the task deliberately and well. We need to know what we intend to train, how we can best do so, and why. The aim of this document is to serve that endeavor.

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