Training Best Practices:
MOTIVATING LEARNERS

Introduction

Training health workers is widely valued as a way to improve individual and program performance and outcomes for patients. However, if learners are not motivated during the training or when they return to their workplace, the training will not have its intended effect.

During a training, a motivated learner will:
- Participate actively in the training
- Contribute to a sense of enthusiasm and energy
- Persist and learn material, even in the face of a weak instructional setting

In the workplace after the training, a motivated learner may:
- Change their behavior
- Apply new skills and knowledge
- Share what they learned with colleagues

Many factors that can affect the learner's motivation are out of the control of the trainer. Workload, personnel policies, management support, and cultural influences can all undermine the best intentions of the trainers and the learners. Understanding what motivates learners can help you keep health workers engaged and motivated during trainings and can help encourage them to apply the material when they return to their workplace.

Of course, this does not pertain only to the learners: the trainers must also believe in the practices they are teaching and be motivated to help learners understand, practice and apply what they learned.

In this document we will introduce Malcolm Knowles's theory of adult learning and provide practical tips to encourage motivation both in the classroom and at the workplace. We have also provided an annex with additional theories about adult learners, whose principles are reflected in the practical tips.

What Motivates Adults to Learn?

Imagine a training where participants are actively engaged in the material and activities, asking questions, participating in activities, and contributing to discussions. What are some of the factors that motivate learners in this setting? What keeps them engaged?

Malcom Knowles's theory of andragogy, or adult learning, describes how adults learn differently than children. As a result, different approaches may be needed when teaching adults. The diagram below summarizes Knowles's theory and the implications for trainers.

Knowles's Principle	What does it mean for learners?	What does it mean for trainers?
Relevance	• Want to know why they need to learn something. • Need to understand the value of material to them. • Need to see the learning as related to their current job and activities.	Trainings should have value to the audience and should incorporate ways to allow learners to discover and understand this value. Trainings should focus on content that is relevant to learners.
Learner experience	• Have a wealth of professional and life experience. • Want to be able to use and build on this experience.	Learning should build on and add to previous experience of learner, which is the basis for activities.
Self-concept	• Feel responsible for their own lives. • Want to be treated as capable and self-directed and have a say in the content and process of their learning.	Trainings should be designed to allow participants to have a say in the content and process of their learning.
Life-centered	• Are focused on tasks, challenges, and problems. • Want to learn about things that can be applied to real life.	Trainings should rely on problem-solving and task-oriented activities drawn from real-life situations, rather than passive and theoretical learning.
Motivation	• Respond more to internal motivation, such as self-esteem or desire to perform better at work. • May also respond to some external motivators.	Trainings should be designed to encourage internal motivation.

Start Planning with Motivation in Mind

Motivating learners begins before training even starts, by designing a training plan that follows principles of adult learning and motivation.

During the phase of planning for and designing a training:

- **Include motivation questions in your training needs assessment:**
  - Why do you want to attend this training?
  - What are you hoping to learn in the training?
  - What is your biggest challenge in implementing EPI?
  - What strengths do you have that will help you implement EPI?

- **Tailor training to your audience.** When designing trainings, make sure you understand your audience, who they are, their job responsibilities, their current level of knowledge and skills, and any barriers to implementing the skills and behavior you will be teaching. This helps ensure that your training is relevant and of value to them, which will increase motivation. Consider doing a needs assessment in advance to help develop training that is tailored to your audience. Refer to the Best Practices document on Needs Assessment for more guidance.

- **Ensure that your learners are members of the target audience.** You can use pre-requisites, like completing a previous training, having a certain number of years of experience, a specific job, or a statement from a supervisor supporting the learner's participation to help you get the right participants. Learners who are not members of your target audience may not be motivated and can be distracting to others.

- **Design training using adult learning and motivation principles.** You can learn more about designing training in the Best Practices documents on Choosing the Right Instructional Activities, Training on Problem Solving, and others.

Engaging and Motivating Learners During Training

You can use specific approaches during implementation to help encourage learner motivation and on-the-job application. Keep in mind that motivation is linked to perceived competence, control and relatedness, according to Carol Dweck. (See Annex 1 for more information.)

The table below uses the framework of John Keller's ARCS model to share specific approaches for motivating learners. (See Annex 1 for more on John Keller and ARCS.) In addition, approaches have been pulled from some of the other models and theories.

1. Get and keep attention of learners

- Start training with a bang by using a compelling story or an incongruity. For example, present an example or statement that conflicts with learner experience.

- Incorporate active participation through discussions, exercises, role plays, and problem-solving activities.

- Change techniques frequently (style of presentation, delivery, group versus individual activities, etc.).

- Select concrete examples to explain concepts being taught and use visuals to illustrate them.

- Incorporate real-life examples or stories to engage learners.

- Use humor, where appropriate.

- Allow opportunities for self-directed learning. For example, allow learners to select topics for discussion, which activities or case studies to use in class work, etc.

- Pay attention to learner expressions and body language to see how learners are feeling. Are they enthusiastic? Frustrated? Tired? Bored?

2. Connect the training experience with the jobs of learners

- Help learners recognize the value of the material you are presenting by demonstrating why it is important to them, how it will help them with their current jobs, and improve performance or outcomes. You can ask learners to share how they will use the knowledge and skills when they return to work. This can set the stage for behavior change back at work.

- Create an environment where learners can share and build their experiences.

- Ask learners about their interests and strengths and relate this to training content.

- Model behaviors that can be used by learners when they return to work.

- Explain and demonstrate how the content may help learners in the future.

- Use people in similar jobs who have expertise in the material, or who have taken the training previously, as facilitators, moderators, etc.

3. Instill confidence and self-efficacy in learners during training. They should believe that they can succeed both during training and in applying what they learned in the work setting

- Use clearly stated learning goals and explain criteria for evaluation; have learners use self-evaluation tools so they can see progress.

- Emphasize that goals are attainable and provide encouragement and assistance as needed.

- Create a safe, encouraging learning environment.

- Value learner contributions; make learners feel valued and appreciated.

- Design activities that bolster confidence in learner skills, rather than eroding it. Organize materials in increasing level of difficulty and make sure all information needed to complete tasks is included.

- Create low-risk conditions when students are learning new skills.

- Structure learning so students become increasingly independent when learning and practicing skills; allow learners some control over their experiences.

- Use feedback to foster a growth mindset, which will help learners to stay positive, motivated, and resilient when faced with challenges or difficulties in learning.

4. Build satisfaction in learners. They should be proud and satisfied with what they have learned

- Provide positive feedback and praise, which leads to a sense of achievement in learners.

- Provide frequent reinforcement while students are learning new tasks; this can become more intermittent as learners master the skill or task.

- Allow learners to use newly acquired skills under realistic conditions promptly for well-learned tasks.

- When external performance evaluations are used, ensure that facilitators or other students have received guidance on providing feedback to avoid undermining learner confidence.

- Incorporate a review of skills learned during the program; consider making it interactive by asking participants to share what they have learned in a review discussion at the end of each day.

TIP: When you create an environment that is as close to intrinsically motivating as possible, it helps motivate learners.

Following adult learning principles is one way to do this. When learners see the value and relevance of training, they feel more engaged and passionate, which helps move them toward intrinsic motivation.

Using rewards during training is an example of extrinsic motivation, and though it may work in the short term to keep people engaged and motivated, in the long term, rewards can change the focus from learning to receiving the reward.

Delivery Techniques & Activities That Motivate

Approach	👍 Benefits	Considerations
During introductions, ask learners to share what they hope to learn and their biggest challenges related to the training topic.	Allows you to use illustrations and examples that are relevant to learners, which increases relevance and demonstrates value. Allow learners to develop a sense of community and benefit from experiences of others.	Requires flexibility on the part of the facilitator and faculty to incorporate these into the training. You can also ask these questions during the registration process, to help tailor the training in advance.
Give learners an option to develop personal goals for the training at the beginning of the course.	Allows for some self-direction and control.	Could be helpful to review or discuss individual goals, to ensure that these goals are compatible with training and can be achieved. You can ask learners to assess whether goals have been achieved at the end of training.
Be attentive to learners' attitudes, body language, tone, etc.	Allows you to identify problems that can affect motivation, such as frustration, lack of confidence, or a feeling that information is not relevant or of value.	Once you identify a problem that could demotivate learners, it is important to try to address it. This requires some flexibility and skill. For example, if it seems like learners are struggling with an activity, you may need to pause and provide additional guidance, or acknowledge the challenge at the end of the activity and provide positive feedback on their efforts.
Incorporate quick "check- in" times at various points in the training where facilitator asks learners how everything is going.	Allows you to assess motivation (including confidence and satisfaction) and gauge whether learners are having any challenges or difficulties that may impact motivation.	Some learners may not want to speak up in front of the group. You can leave a box or basket in the training room, where learners can leave notes with questions or concerns that will be reviewed and addressed later.
Organize content (and skill-building activities) by increasing level of difficulty.	This allows learners to develop confidence as they succeed in easier activities, which keeps them motivated as they learn more complex concepts and skills.	When learners are first practicing new skills, ensure they can do so in a safe environment, with enough assistance and support. After skills are well learned, they can be practiced in more realistic settings, and with increasing independence.

Vary method and format of training regularly (e.g. lecture, activities, videos, games, worksheets, discussion, etc.).	Helps keeps attention of learners.	Select an instruction method based on what will help learners understand and learn the content, rather than simply choosing an approach that adds variety.
Use problem solving and case-based examples that are realistic and connected to tasks of learners.	Helps show value and relevance and keeps attention of learners.	Be sure to clearly show the relationship between examples and activities, and the tasks of learners. You can ask if the scenario feels familiar to anyone, or if learners have faced situations like this.
Let learners suggest problems or situations from their own experience during discussions and exercises, using standardized steps or questions.	Builds on experience of learners, ensures relevance, and demonstrates value; allows learners to have some control over the learning experience.	For group activities, ask the group to identify problems or challenges they would like to focus on within a topic. You should also offer some standard topics to choose from. For small group exercises, they can separate into groups based on learner preference, and share results during the review. For individual and small group activities the review may take longer; you can have only a small number of individual or groups present if needed.
Utilize games, when appropriate.	Can help keep attention of learners.	Should be tied to material or skills being taught and used only if they will contribute to learning.
Use unexpected rewards that are not contingent on performance.	Can help build satisfaction in learners.	Should be used sparingly, in a way that motivates learners. Rewards can change the focus from learning to receiving the reward, and rewards tied to performance can demotivate others.
Provide positive feedback.	Builds confidence and satisfaction in learners. Creating an encouraging and supportive environment helps learners feel like they can succeed.	Be sure to let learners know that they are not expected to achieve perfection; praise effort and emphasize lessons learned and accomplishment.
Incorporate a review of skills learned during the program.	Can help build confidence and satisfaction of learners and reinforce the value and relevance of training.	This can be an interactive discussion at specific points in the course (like the end of each day) where you ask participants to share what they have learned. You can also ask learners to make a list during the course and have them review either individually or as a large group activity at the end of the course.

Examples of Motivational Training Activities

Less Effective	More Effective	What Makes it Better for Motivating Learners?
At the end of a lesson, break into teams and have groups compete in a game to answer review questions on calculating vaccine needs for implementation of the new pentavalent vaccine.	*Provide an example of a district that is implementing the new pentavalent vaccine and include all relevant information such as target population, number of doses per infant, etc.* *Learners work through the steps (calculate doses needed and wastage factor, etc.) in small groups to determine the total number of vials needed. Pause after step one for a group discussion to review the answer and process; groups complete the rest of the calculations and then review.*	The activity is focused on problem-solving, builds skills, and is broken down into manageable steps. Providing all the information needed and allowing for review and feedback after the first step builds the confidence of learners and satisfaction that they can complete the task. These are important elements in motivating learners. The task is also directly relevant to immunization program managers and will have value to them in their work.
When facilitating activities, provide feedback such as: *"Great job calculating the vaccine needs in that activity. You are very good at math!"*	*When facilitating activities, provide feedback such as:* *"Great job calculating the vaccine needs in that activity. I can see that you really spent time trying to understand the process and formulas for this exercise."*	This approach to giving feedback can promote a growth mindset by emphasizing processes and efforts. Those with a growth mindset are motivated to learn, even in the face of setbacks, because they feel effort and dedication can lead to success. The first approach reinforces a fixed growth mindset, in which learners feel that intelligence (which is inherent and cannot be developed) alone leads to success. These learners may avoid challenges or be less resilient (and thus less motivated) in the face of constructive criticism or learning that requires effort.

Before They Leave

Motivating learners during training and creating enthusiasm and energy can help to ensure the overall goals of training, including behavior change and improved outcomes after health workers return to work. However, it is important to remember that learners may encounter many obstacles to applying what they have learned. Therefore, it is important to help learners visualize specific ways they will apply what they learned before they leave the classroom. Approaches to keeping learners motivated when they return to work include:

- Hold a group discussion at the end of training to discuss what changes learners will make on the job based on the training.
- Ask learners to identify barriers they may have to implementing the skills they are learning and make a list of barriers and approaches they can discuss with supervisors or managers when they return to work.
- Have learners develop realistic action plans for what changes they will implement in their work setting; these should reflect things that are within their control.
- Encourage learners to share their new knowledge and skills with their colleagues.

Special Considerations for Online Learning

You may use many of the strategies mentioned above to motivate learners in online training, but also consider the following:

- **Embed levels or stages** into a course to give learners a sense of progress, achievement, and satisfaction.
- **Use storytelling,** or videos from those in similar jobs, to make the content feel real and relevant to learners.
- **Provide a sense of individual control** as much as possible; for example, allow learners to choose activities or cases studies based on their experience and what is relevant to them.
- **Incorporate social networks** and social media to provide learners with a chance to connect with others in similar jobs or settings.
- **Provide concrete proof of completion,** like a printable certificate.
- **Add a social element.** For example, a webinar might be followed by a discussion on how the new learning could be applied in the work setting. For facilitated online courses, include activities like interviewing or polling coworkers on practices, to create face-to-face interactions. When health workers at the same facility or within a district are taking self-directed online courses, brief discussions about how they are applying their new skills could be incorporated into other regularly scheduled meetings.

Sustaining Motivation After the Training Is Done

After training, you should include motivation-oriented questions in your post-training evaluation. More importantly, though, be sure to provide post-training performance support and encouragement in order to sustain motivation and drive behavior change. Other tips:

- Provide checklists for new procedures.
- Use WhatsApp or other forums to contact the learners with updates and encouragement.
- Encourage learners to form a peer group and support each other.
- Contact managers to encourage them to support learners and to collect success stories.
- Include questions that measure motivation in your training evaluation, such as, "Name one thing you will do differently when you return to the workplace."

TIP: Be sure to evaluate trainers and facilitators. Their ability to assess motivation and apply adult learning principles is important for keeping learners motivated. Provide feedback and guidance as needed to help trainers improve their skills and motivate learners.

Annex 1: Theories and Models of Adult Learning and Motivation

ARCS model

In the ARCS model, John Keller built on Knowles's adult learning principles to look specifically at what motivates learners, focusing on attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction. According to this model, training activities to motivate learners should:

- Get and keep **A**ttention of learners.
- Be **R**elevant to the work of learners.
- Build **C**onfidence of learners.
- Result in **S**atisfaction on the part of learners.

CCAF model

Like the principles of adult learning and the ARCS model, Michael Allen's CCAF model also considers how the design of learning can lead to motivation in learners. Although Allen's theories relate to eLearning, the model is still helpful for considering motivating learners overall. Allen proposes that learners can be motivated by the task itself. By carrying out the actual tasks of learning, individuals will see the value of their learning and thus be motivated to learn. In this framework learning should include:

- **C**ontext—a meaningful framework and conditions.
- **C**hallenge—a stimulus or urgency to act.
- **A**ctivity—a physical response or gesture in response to the challenge.
- **F**eedback—the reflection back to the learner about the effectiveness of their actions.

The models discussed thus far all recognize that motivation to learn comes from within, but propose ways of organizing and designing learning that, when followed, will build motivation in learners.

However, when trying to understand what motivates adults to learn, it is also useful to consider some other concepts from the field of psychology that focus more on the perspective of the individual learner in motivation. In light of these, approaches to motivate learners may need to also focus on individuals, rather than just on the development of training consistent with the principles of adult learning and other learning or instructional design theories.
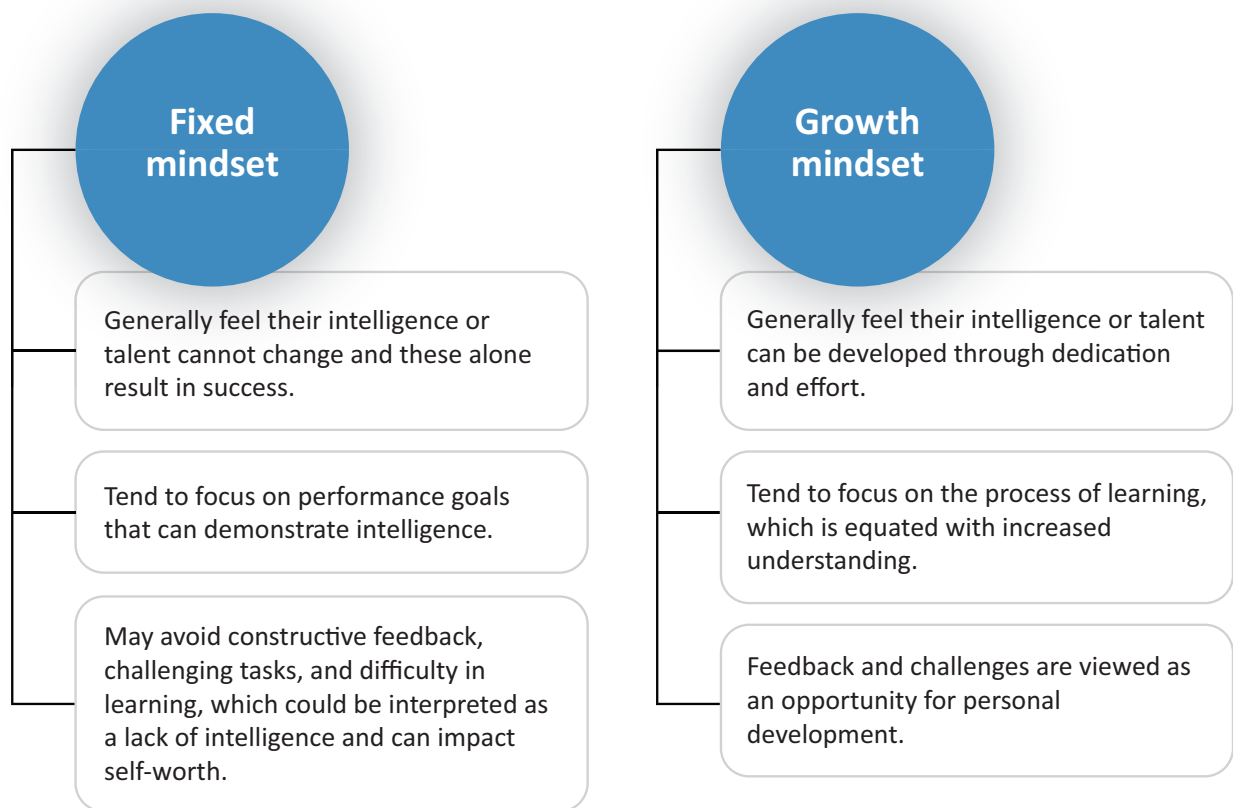
Internal and External Motivation

Type of Motivation	What it Means	Example
Intrinsic	Doing something because you *enjoy it* or feel passionate about it	• An immunization manager attends training because she loves what she does and wants to improve her skills. • A learner volunteers to present the results of group work because she feels very strongly about the content and enjoyed the activity.
Extrinsic	Doing something in order to get a particular outcome, because some *force is driving you* to do it.	• An immunization manager attends training because she is required to attend to receive a salary increase. • A learner volunteers to present the results of group work because she feels like she should do it, since she has been sent to the training.

It is not always that clear cut, though. Even though intrinsic motivation is usually more powerful, it is not always present in a training setting. Additionally, there can be different levels or types of extrinsic motivation. For example, a learner who is required to be in an EPI management training may not enjoy learning about cold-chain management but may still feel an inner acceptance of the value of the task, which may result in more openness to learning. This ties into one of the principles of andragogy, the need to know and understand the value of the material. Or learners may be motivated to perform well because of getting positive feedback from trainers — an extrinsic force — which makes them feel confident and satisfied.

Mindset Theory

Mindset theory, developed by Carol Dweck, also focuses on the individual. This theory suggests that a person's mindset about their own intelligence can impact their learning. Dweck posits that individuals can have either a fixed mindset or a growth mindset.

Knowing a learner's mindset and working to foster a growth mindset can help motivate learners. A growth mindset can create a love of learning and resilience when faced with tasks or learning that require effort, which in turn can lead to more motivated learners.

Fixed mindset

Generally feel their intelligence or talent cannot change and these alone result in success.

Tend to focus on performance goals that can demonstrate intelligence.

May avoid constructive feedback, challenging tasks, and difficulty in learning, which could be interpreted as a lack of intelligence and can impact self-worth.

Growth mindset

Generally feel their intelligence or talent can be developed through dedication and effort.

Tend to focus on the process of learning, which is equated with increased understanding.

Feedback and challenges are viewed as an opportunity for personal development.

The mindset theory builds on the concept of self-efficacy, which is a person's confidence in their ability. Self-efficacy is also important in motivation during training. For example, if a learner feels they can carry out tasks and succeed in training, they will be more motivated to participate and learn. In fact, psychologist Guy Lefrancois suggests that those who feel confident they are smart enough to learn the information presented will be more persistent, work harder and display more interest in learning.

Locus of control

A final concept related the individual that can help one understand how to motivate learners is locus of control, which refers to how much a person believes they have control over the outcomes in their lives. When a person has an internal locus of control they believe they are the source of outcomes as opposed to an external force. Similar to self-efficacy, helping learners feel that they have control over the outcomes of their learning may foster motivation.

Concepts and lessons from the theories and models presented above have been incorporated into the practical approaches suggested in this guide.

Annex 2: Resources

Explore these resources for more information about adult learning and motivating learners.
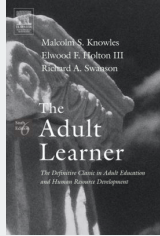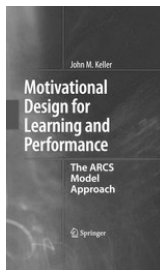
Theory of Andragogy (Adult Learning Theory)
The Adult Learner, by Malcom S. Knowles, Elwood F. Holton III, and Richard A. Swanson

Andragogy (Malcolm Knowles)
http://www.instructionaldesign.org/theories/andragogy/

Attention, Relevance, Confidence and Satisfaction (ARCS) Model for Motivating Learners
Motivational Design for Learning and Performance: The ARCS Model Approach Kirkpatrick's four levels of training evaluation, by John. M. Keller

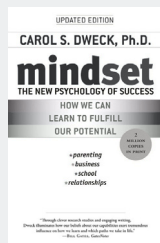*Instructional Design Models and Theories: Keller's ARCS Model of Motivation*
https://elearningindustry.com/arcs-model-of-motivation
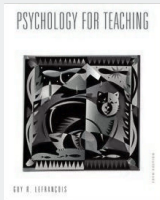
Psychology for Teaching, 10th Edition, by Guy R. Lefrancois

Motivation to Learn
Motivation to Learn: An Overview, by W. Huitt, W.
http://www.edpsycinteractive.org/topics/motivation/motivate.html

Mindset Theory
Mindset, The New Psychology of Success, by Carol S Dweck

What is Mindset?
https://mindsetonline.com/whatisit/about/index.html