

TEACHING OUR TEACHERS

A

HANDBOOK FOR INSTRUCTORS

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TEACHING OUR TEACHERS

A Guide for Instructors in OLLI at Furman

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INTRODUCTION

The Bernard Osher Foundation sponsors the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI). The purpose of OLLI is for older adults to be able to explore new and varied subjects and interests and to enjoy the challenges of mind-stretching ideas and concepts.

OLLI at Furman offers courses and activities during fall, winter, and spring sessions. The courses cover numerous and varied areas including history, literature, music, and science, while the activities range from travel to hiking and field trips.

Many of OLLI's instructors/teachers/leaders have never actually taught. They are engineers, doctors, investors, lawyers, musicians, both professionals and amateurs who are excited about their fields of interest and who wish to improve their knowledge of teaching and their teaching skills in order to more effectively engage their students. Because teaching mature adults is different from teaching children and college-aged students, the Curriculum Committee of OLLI at Furman charged a group of our instructors with a background in education to come up with a short course to improve the abilities of our volunteer instructors in the classroom.

The first workshops took place prior to the fall term in 2007. Two three-hour programs were given to twenty-six potential instructors. The feedback we got from these student-instructors was very positive, and we have prepared this guide for future OLLI instructors based on the presentations at those initial workshops.

The workshop's goal is to provide instruction and materials to those who have an area or areas of expertise to share and who wish to more effectively engage their students in that process.

ANDRAGOGY

Olli at Furman is more focused on the concepts of andragogy than on pedagogy.

Andragogy is the process of engaging adult learners. The term was developed into a theory of adult education by the American, Malcolm Knowles , whose ideas include:

1. Adults need to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction.
2. Experience plays an important part in adult learning. Through their experiences, adult learners connect to new material and stretch their knowledge base.
3. Adult learning is more self-directed and autonomous. Teachers act more as guides to lead learners to knowledge rather than simply supplying facts. Many times teachers are learning as students are learning because the process is more of an unfolding of knowledge than compulsory and strictly fact based.

On the following page is a chart which compares andragogy with pedagogy and helps explain something about the characteristics of adult learners.

Differences Between Andragogy and Pedagogy

| | Andragogy | Pedagogy |
|-------------------------------|---|--|
| <i>Demands of Learning</i> | Learner must balance life responsibilities with the demands of learning | Learner can devote more time to the demands of learning because responsibilities are minimal |
| <i>Role of Instructor</i> | Learners are autonomous and self-directed. Teachers guide the learners to their own knowledge rather than supplying them with facts. | Learners rely on the instructor to direct the learning. Fact-based lecturing is often the mode of knowledge transmission |
| <i>Life Experience</i> | Learners have a tremendous amount of life experiences. They need to connect to their knowledge base. They must recognize the value of the learning. | Learners are building a knowledge base and must be shown how their life experiences connect with the present learning |
| <i>Purpose for Learning</i> | Learners are goal oriented and know for what purpose they are learning new information. | Learners see no reason for taking a particular course. They just know they have to learn the information. |
| <i>Permanence of Learning</i> | Learning is self initiated and tends to last a long time. | Learning is compulsory and tends to disappear shortly after instruction |

Adapted from Green, J. (1998). *Andragogy: Teaching adults*. In B. Hoffman (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Educational Technology*

Needs of Adult Learners

Adults are people with years of experience and a wealth of information

- Focus on the strengths learners bring to the classroom, not just gaps in their knowledge
- Provide opportunities for dialogue within the group. Tap their experiences (a major source of enrichment to the class)
- Remember that you, the teacher, do not need to have all the answers as long as you know where to go or to call to get the answers. Students can be resources to you and to each other.

Adults have established values, beliefs and opinions

- Demonstrate respect for differing beliefs, religions, value systems and lifestyles
- Let your learners know that they are entitled to their values, beliefs and opinions, but that everyone in the room may not share their beliefs
- Allow debate and challenge of ideas

Adults are people whose style and pace of learning has probably changed

- Use a variety of teaching strategies such as small group problem-solving and discussion
- Use auditory, visual, tactile and participatory teaching methods
- Reaction time and speed of learning may be slow, but the ability to learn is not impaired by age
- Most adults prefer teaching methods other than lecture

Adults relate new knowledge and information to previously learned information and experiences

- Assess the specific learning needs of your audience before your class or at the beginning of the class
- Present single concepts and focus on application of concepts to relevant practical situations
- Summarize frequently to increase retention in recall. Material outside of the context of participants' experiences and knowledge becomes meaningless.

Adults are people with bodies influenced by gravity

Plan frequent breaks, even if they are two-minute “stretch” breaks. During a lecture, a short break every 45-60 minutes is sufficient. In more interactive teaching situations, breaks can be spaced 60 to 90 minutes apart.

Adults have pride

- support the students as individuals
- Self-esteem and ego are at risk in a classroom environment that is not perceived as safe or supportive. People will not ask questions or participate in learning if they are afraid of being put down or ridiculed.
- Allow people to admit confusion, ignorance, fears, biases and different opinions
- Acknowledge or thank students for the responses and questions
- Treat all questions and comments with respect. Avoid saying “I just covered that” when someone asks a repetitive question. Remember, the only foolish question is the unasked question.

Adults have a deep need to be self-directing

- Engage the students in a process of mutual inquiry. Avoid merely transmitting knowledge or expecting total agreement.
- Don't “spoon feed” the participants

Individual differences among people increases with age

- Take into account differences in style, time, type and pace of learning
- Use auditory, visual, tactile and participatory teaching methods

Adults tend to have a problem-centered orientation to learning

- Emphasize how learning can be applied in a practical setting
- Use case studies, problem-solving groups, and participatory activities to enhance learning
- Adults generally want to immediately apply new information or skills to current problems or situations

Note: New information and skills must be relevant and meaningful to the concerns and desires of the students. Know what the needs are of individuals in your class. Students do not wish to learn what they will never use. The learning environment must be physically and psychologically comfortable.

Adapted from California Nurses Association, *AIDS Train the Trainer Program*, 1988

BLOOM'S TAXONOMY

An important area of understanding for teachers and instructors is “higher order level of learning,” or Bloom’s Taxonomy. According to Bloom the lowest level of learning is Knowledge. You may have known a person of limited mental capacity who could memorize an amazing amount of information. This level of learning is not very challenging. It mainly involves recall and recognition. Just above Knowledge is Comprehension. Comprehension requires the learner to do something with his acquired knowledge, such as paraphrasing, organizing, or explaining. You can memorize a song in German, and never comprehend what you are singing about! Comprehension assumes some understanding of knowledge. Above Comprehension is Application. The learner applies knowledge and comprehension to new situations to solve problems or to draw conclusions. At this level of learning/thinking, the process begins to present some challenge. A step above Application is Analysis, which requires an understanding both broad and deep enough to be able to break something down into its parts to see how the parts relate, to understand structure, to outline or diagram, to compare and contrast. This level of thinking and learning becomes quite complex and sophisticated. An even higher order of thinking is called Synthesis. If one can analyze information, then hopefully one can reorganize that knowledge in new forms, see new ways of putting ideas and information together, find new uses for prior information, create new systems. The highest level of thinking is Evaluation. Thus learners form opinions, make judgments, prioritize or assess from all they know.

A teacher or instructor does not ask much of a student if s/he asks only for memorization or recognition of facts, or requires only recall of data. But the instructor who leads class members to analyze or to evaluate has given a gift beyond mere information or knowledge. Knowledge is not trivial, but its importance lies in the fact that it provides the building blocks for more significant thought.

Attached is a list of questions you can use and adapt to your subject matter which will help direct students and class participants to higher level thinking.

TYPES OF QUESTIONS BASED ON BLOOM'S TAXONOMY

From Bloom, et al, 1956

As teachers, we tend to ask questions in the “knowledge” category 80% to 90% of the time. These questions are not bad, but using them all the time is. Try to utilize a higher order level of questions. These questions require much more brainpower and a more extensive and elaborate answer. Below are the six question categories as defined by Bloom.

KNOWLEDGE

1. remembering
2. memorizing
3. recognizing
4. recalling identification
5. recalling information
 - a. who, what, when , where, how...?
 - b. describe

COMPREHENSION

1. interpreting
2. translating from one medium to another
3. describing in one's own words
4. organization and selection of facts and ideas
 - a. retell

APPLICATION

1. problem-solving
2. applying information to produce some reasonable use of facts , rules and principals
 - a. How is... an example of...?
 - b. How is... related to....?
 - c. Why is... significant...?

ANALYSIS

1. subdividing something to show how it is put together
2. finding the underlying structure of a communication
3. identifying motives
4. separation of a whole into component parts
 - a. what are the parts or features of....?
 - b. classify.. according to...
 - c. outline/diagram...
 - d. how does... compare/contrast with...?
 - e. What evidence can you list for...?

SYNTHESIS

1. creating a unique original product that may be in verbal form or maybe a physical object
2. combination of ideas to form a new whole
 - a. What would you predict/infer from...?
 - b. What ideas can you add to...?
 - c. How would you create/design a new...?
 - d. What might happen if you combined...?
 - e. What solutions would you suggest for....?

EVALUATION

1. making value decisions about issues
2. resolving controversies or differences of opinion
3. development of opinions judgments or decisions
 - a. Do you agree that....?
 - b. What do you think about....?
 - c. What is the most important...?
 - d. Place the following in order of priority....?
 - e. How would you decide about....?
 - f. What criteria would you used to assess....?

GETTING ORGANIZED TO TEACH

Goals and Objectives

Regardless of the subject matter you are presenting, you must begin by identifying your course goals and objectives. If you are leading a class in learning needlepoint, what skill level can you realistically hope for them to attain? If you are offering a class in modern American history, where will you begin and end? What can you realistically cover in the time allotted to you? If you are involved in language instruction, what skills do you want the students to acquire? What vocabulary do you want to introduce? You cannot accomplish what you have not planned for. So your starting place is to identify what you specifically want to achieve.

Examples:

Class members will learn three new crochet stitches and produce three distinct pieces of work.

Class members will be able to describe the characteristics of music from the Romantic Era.

Class members will be able to identify at least five composers from the Romantic Era and describe their works.

Class members will be able to read/interpret the stock market page in the newspaper and follow the progress of three selected stocks over two months time.

Class members will be able to evaluate the advisability of investing in the three selected stocks.

Class members will be able to swim 10 laps of the pool with four distinct strokes.

Course objectives need to be specific and they need to be measurable. You can hope that class participants in a class on music of the Romantic Era will develop an appreciation of that music. But how do you measure whether they have done so? Some course outcomes will be assumed to proceed from the measurable objectives you have identified. These objectives and goals help determine how you organize the course you are presenting.

Selecting Materials

Your next step is to identify the materials you will need in order to accomplish the goals you have established. If there is a book or books that will be helpful, if there are handouts you want to provide, if lab equipment, or A-V equipment is needed - all of this

must be identified early so that you can be certain you have what you need when you need it. Scrambling for materials and illustrations and equipment at the last minute is frustrating, counterproductive, and usually futile. So think through what your course objectives dictate in terms of materials so that you can provide these in a timely fashion. Obviously as you begin planning instruction methods, new ideas may occur and additional materials and equipment may become necessary. But the more you can do ahead of time in working out the logistics of providing appropriate materials, the more comfortable you will be in the process of teaching.

Outlining Class Procedures

The key to a class that runs smoothly is to determine your class procedures before you begin. Is a record of attendance required? How will you handle taking attendance? When and how will assignments be collected? Are assignments necessary? How will you evaluate work submitted? Can you provide a rubric that will let students know what is expected of them? Is practice time required of students? How will you validate that practice has occurred? How will you organize break time? Individual presentations? Question/answer sessions? If you have a procedure worked out, you save time and you keep class activity well-organized and meaningful. Think carefully about procedures before you begin, and be sure to clarify these procedures with the participants in your class.

Choosing Methods of Instruction

The most crucial step in your planning is to select presentation methods to match the topics and skills you have identified in your goals with students' interests, their learning styles, your own preferred teaching style(s), and a realistic assessment of time available. Your comfort level is certainly important. But finding creative ways to present information that will hold class participants' attention, allow them to interact, or use their knowledge and skills is imperative. There are many ways to organize learning activities. Experiment with them. But always keep in mind the learning characteristics and needs of your "audience."

Listed here with brief descriptions are some varied ways to organize presentations and to conduct class.

Lecture/discussion - In many ways lecture is the easiest method of conducting a class. It is certainly efficient, but not necessarily effective. It does not in any way guarantee an engaged audience! Therefore, lecture should be intermixed with questions, illustrations, discussion, demonstrations, etc. Lecture certainly works better with adult learners than with younger students, but it should be used sparingly and in the company of more engaging methods.

Small groups - Discussion is a great way to conduct a class if it is well-planned and organized. The class may be divided into small groups, with each group having a list of questions to discuss. Or each group can have a different question, depending on group interests. Each group should have a leader to keep discussion going and to keep the group on task. A recorder is also desirable so that the rest of the class can be informed regarding the ideas discussed in each particular group.

Question/Answer sessions - Questions asked by the teacher of the whole class can be a good way of discussing and reviewing information. The instructor can present the question, then call on a student to answer the question. If several students indicate they would like to answer the question, it would be desirable to call on a student who isn't usually vocal in class. Keeping all of the class involved when only one student is answering can be tricky. Some means of holding the class members accountable is obviously desirable. With adult learners, more often the questions will be asked by them. This can keep the instructor on his/her toes!

A particularly good way to organize a class is to assign a certain amount of reading. Ask the students to write questions (3-6) on what they have read. In class call on students to ask their questions and let others in the class respond. If the facility allows, students can write some of their questions on the board, and the class can respond to each of them. Students are more attentive when their own questions are being addressed.

More detailed information on good questioning techniques is included at the end of this section.

Jigsaw Activity - A jigsaw activity is a way of covering a lot of material in a limited amount of time. Divide the class into groups. Each group has a different assignment, or a different question to entertain. After a suitable amount of time, each group can report to the whole class. The instructor can close the class with a brief discussion of how the various activities or questions fit together to offer a whole picture of some concept or information.

Skill Application - Maps, puzzles, worksheets, demonstrations, etc., allow students to practice and develop skills in a variety of ways. They can also provide meaningful review of information. Simulations are also an excellent means of applying and practicing skills.

Student Presentations - Students should have some input into the presentations assigned. Or students can even generate the ideas for presentations. Students should also have some voice in how the presentations are given and evaluated.

Panel Discussions - Class members with particular knowledge or skill levels can participate in a panel discussion on a given topic of interest. Also guest panelists can be invited to expound on a topic of current interest to the class.

Audio-Visual Presentations - The use of A-V material can be very effective if the class is properly informed and prepared. Before the presentation, give class members a list of questions to answer, or a list of terms (or people, or events) to listen for. A worksheet can be assigned to be completed during the presentation. The idea is to provide some means of keeping the viewers engaged in the presentation so that they don't "wool-gather!" A question/answer session can follow such a presentation to be sure that all pertinent information is highlighted.

Case studies - A case study will not fit all types of courses. But if a case study is applicable to your particular subject, by all means use it. This provides a realistic example to the class, and it gives students a chance to use their knowledge to assess or analyze a real situation. Case studies can be assigned to individuals or to small groups and then reviewed for the whole class. Or one case study can be assigned to the whole class, to be followed by a question/answer session.

Role-playing - Role-playing can be a very effective way for students to be immersed in a subject. A mock trial, a reacting of a congressional session, a staged "interview" of a pivotal person, the actual reading of a drama – all of these can be scintillating for students.

Seminar - If the goal of educational activity is to develop inquiry skills, there is no better method for doing so than through the seminar. "Human beings, it seems, are hard-wired to learn by talking together in small groups. People thrive intellectually when they have the chance to generate ideas in the course of conversation, to reassess customary views, and to participate actively in the generation of knowledge."* The seminar provides this opportunity.

The characteristics of a seminar include the following:

- a. Students create knowledge by building on what they already know.
- b. Students are encouraged to appreciate diversity.
- c. Opportunity is provided for frequent, meaningful dialogue.
- d. Students are encouraged to respect the contributions of all class members.
- e. Curiosity is welcomed and encouraged and rewarded.
- f. The expertise of all participants is recognized and valued.

Suggestions for organizing your class as a seminar experience include the following:

- a. Define your learning goals.

- b. Design seminar activities.
- c. Select appropriate readings.
- d. Create useful assignments that build on each other, that offer opportunities for feedback and debate, and that require students to share their research
- e. Arrange visits to significant sites
- f. Incorporate assessment and feedback which includes individual conversations with students and which provides an evaluation rubric so that students know what to expect

*Taken from *Leading a SAGES Seminar*, published by Case Western Reserve University.

Providing for Evaluation

Whether the program in which you are teaching asks for evaluation or not, you should provide some means to get feedback. A quick questionnaire, a written assessment, individual conferences, even a quick checklist can provide meaningful information to you. Students appreciate the opportunity to give feedback. You learn from their suggestions so that you can improve your course.

Creating a Course Syllabus

Once you have worked out the details of your course, you have everything you need to include in a course syllabus. Usually a syllabus is required. But even if it is not, it is a useful tool for you and your students.

A good idea is to place the name of the course, your name, as well as your telephone number, your e-mail address, and when and where the class meets at the top of the syllabus sheet. You may include a great deal of information in your syllabus, or it can be streamlined. But at least the following basic information should be included:

Brief description of the course

Materials to be used

Classroom procedures

Course objectives

Outline of topics to be covered

General requirements or assignments

A calendar of activities

How you will evaluate student performance

ANSWERING AND ASKING QUESTIONS

Adapted from William E. Cashin, Kansas State U.
IDEA PAPER No. 31, January 1995

1. Students Asking Questions

What are some things that you can do, when asked a question, other than directly answering it?

Repeat the question, paraphrasing it. This serves two purposes: It ensures that the entire class hears the question. More importantly, it lets the questioner check your understanding of his or her question. When you have not completely understood, often the student will rephrase or elaborate upon the question. In doing so, the student is often “thinking out loud” and may come to his or her own conclusions without further help. This process also gives the other students time to think about the question, and possible answers to it.

Redirect the question. You might ask another student (one who might know the answer) to respond. Or you might redirect question to the class in general, asking for an answer or comment, or an elaboration upon the issue. This procedure not only encourages more student participation, but it also implies that peers are a resource for learning.

Ask probing questions. You might respond to the student’s question by directing her or his attention to a particular aspect of the issue she has raised, or drawing her attention to some previously learned course material that is relevant to answering the question or by going beyond what the student has said in some way. The intent of probing questions is to draw the student's attention to things that may be implied in her answer, and so help her answer her own question.

Promote a *discussion among the students.* The three previous suggestions usually involve communication between two people, typically the instructor and one student, with the rest of the class simply listening. It may be that you will want to involve the majority of students in trying to answer some questions, for example, where there is considerable difference of opinion about the answer.

One reaction we generally do not recommend when a student asks a question is to assign that student the task of looking up the answer. Frequently, all this practice accomplishes is to teach the class not to ask questions.

2. Answering Questions

Directly answer the question. One obvious option an instructor has when a student asks a question is to answer it. In general, we do not recommend answering the students question directly if you wish to foster thinking or problem-solving skills. However, when the questions ask for information that other students in the class are not likely to have (or

questions asking for the instructor's opinion), directly answering the question is appropriate. Directly answering questions takes less time than attempting to have the student or the class come up with answers. If you choose to answer directly, make your answer brief and to the point. After responding you may want to check to see if you have really answered the question by saying something like: "Does that answer your question?" Or was that what you were asking?" etc.

Sometimes an instructor would like to use a student's question as an opportunity to bring in a related topic that the *instructor* wishes to cover, reasoning that students learn better when they see the material is relevant to their own interests. This should be done with care, or it may only confuse everyone. Answer the student's question first, then be explicit that you are covering something else that is on your agenda.

Postpone answering the question. Students are more likely to learn and remember, if the instructor answers their questions when they ask them. Nevertheless, on certain occasions you may decide to put off answering a question, for instance, when you are very short of time, especially if the answer is complex, or when the material will be covered in an upcoming class, or when the answer is of interest to only a few students. When the material is to be covered later, call it to the student's attention: "here is the answer to the question you asked before, Frank...." If the answer will not be covered during the course, we recommend that you offer to answer it after class or make an appointment to get together with the student sometime. By doing this you very clearly communicate to all of the students your willingness to try to answer their questions. Generally, you should answer more questions than you postpone or you're likely to find the students asking fewer and fewer questions.

Discourage inappropriate questions.

Usually students ask questions because they wish to learn, but sometimes a student will ask a question to sidetrack the class, to get attention, or even to embarrass the instructor. Handling such questions presents a dilemma. If you treat them like other questions you may encourage the student to ask more of the same, but if you turn that student down abruptly you may discourage not only that student but the rest of the class from asking any kind of question. In reacting, it is probably best to tactfully indicate what it is about the question that is inappropriate.

New teachers, especially, are often uncertain about how to tell whether a student really wants an answer or has some other purpose. This is probably best learned through experience, and new teachers will have to risk relying on their own judgment. One criterion is how relevant the point of the question is to what the class is trying to learn.

Admit when you do not know an answer. The answer to a question will probably not damage the student's confidence in you. If you do not know the answer to a student's question, we recommend that you say so. Although other roles of a college teacher are that of "expert" and "information source" admitting that you do not know the answer to a question will probably not damage the student's confidence in you.

3. Asking Questions

Ask open-ended, not just close-ended questions. A close-ended question structures the response for the student and can be answered by one word, often “yes” or “no”, or by a very brief phrase. An open-ended question leaves the form of the answer up to the person answering, and so it elicits much more thinking or information.

Close-ended questions are most appropriate when the instructor wants to check whether the students have learned or remembered specific information, or to get or keep their attention. If an instructor wishes to encourage student involvement, open-ended questions are preferable because they require a more complex student response. Instructors sometimes complain that students never enter into a discussion, that they answer only in monosyllables. This maybe because that is the only kind of answers our questions permit.

Ask divergent, as well as convergent questions. The distinction between convergent and divergent questions is whether there is a single or accepted “correct” answer (to a convergent question) or there are any number of possible answers, many of which may be acceptable (to a divergent question). Convergent questions may expect the student to repeat some conventional wisdom. Divergent questions often require new, creative insights.

Some answers to divergent questions may be more acceptable than others in terms of logical consistency, synthesis of relevant data, solutions of major aspects of the problem, etc. The major advantage in asking divergent questions is that the task they set for the students is to think about an issue or problem, not to discover the “correct” answer or the answer the teacher is looking for. Usually students are more willing to attempt answering divergent questions, because they run less of a risk of giving a “wrong” answer. Also divergent questions require a “higher” level of thinking. They cannot be answered from just memory (unless the student has already been exposed to answers to the question in a lecture, reading , etc.)

4. Pauses and Silences

One difficulty found by both novice and veteran instructors is deciding how to handle pauses and silences after asking a question. Pauses and silence can play a useful role.

Waits, pauses and silences are not inappropriate class behaviors. The discomfort many, if not most, instructors feel when a pause leads to an extended silence probably stems from a cultural norm for social conversation, where the silence is taken to mean

that there is some inadequacy in the communication. This discomfort often is especially acute for new teachers or teachers who lack self-confidence. If such an instructor were to tape record his class, he might find that these pauses actually last only a few seconds, very often less than five, not the “eternity” it seemed during the wait. In the classroom, constant talking is neither required, nor desirable.

Wait, give the students time to think. The basic reason for pausing after asking a question is to give the students time to think about possible answers. If the question is worthwhile (and more than rhetorical), even at the memory level, it deserves a wait. Questions at higher levels require considerable time--minutes--for students to think before they can adequately answer.

After an appropriate wait, you may want to simply acknowledge the pause by saying something like: “It's a difficult question and take some time to think about.” This clues the students that you are willing to wait for their responses. Or you may want to rephrase the question, or ask probing question, which would draw the students attention to relevant information.

If you really want the *students* to answer the question, you must give them enough time. You might want to try one or more of the active learning techniques. Give the students a few minutes to write out an answer. Have the students work in groups of two or three to solve the problem, or propose possible solutions. Such techniques require that all of the students are actively working on the answer, not just the smarter or faster students.

Wait, or you will establish an undesirable norm. Classes, like any group, fairly quickly establish norms, that is, standards of what will be considered acceptable behavior in that group. If, in the first week or two of class, the instructor waits only a few seconds before answering her (or his) own questions, the class will quickly learn that when the instructor asks a question, she or he does *not* expect an answer; wait a few seconds and she will answer it herself. Students are often more than willing to let the instructor answer all of the questions. If you want your students to answer the questions you ask, you must be careful to cultivate that expectation by waiting after you ask a question.

5. Creating an Encouraging Atmosphere

If encouraging students to ask questions is desirable behavior, then it is also desirable that the instructor create an atmosphere where students are not afraid to ask questions for fear of embarrassment, etc.

Ask for questions. If you want the students to ask questions, give them opportunities to do so. Pause after making an important point or explaining that topic, or say “Any questions?” or “Are you with me?” or “Do you want me to say more?” However, such statements must be more than rhetorical or a technique for you to get your thoughts together before going to the next point. Give the students time to formulate their questions before you move on. Also, look at the students to make sure you do not miss someone with his or her hand up.

Pausing to ask for questions is an active teaching device to use routinely, but if you are aware that some students are confused, it becomes a must. When some students are frowning or shaking their heads, saying something like, "Some of you seem puzzled, what don't you understand?" should elicit questions that will help you clear up the misunderstanding. Some teachers feel that they have done their duty by professing the material to the students. We believe that unless instructors help their students to learn, they are not teaching.

Answer questions. If you want your students to ask questions, then you should reinforce them when they do by answering their questions. Therefore, we suggest that you rarely postpone answering a question or ignore student questions, which is what you do if you do not call upon a student who has his hand up.

It is not unusual in a class of any size to have one or more **students who tend to monopolize class time**. One approach with such students is to give preference to those who have not yet said anything. This can be done explicitly by saying, "Let's take comments from people we haven't heard."

Also it is not uncommon for a class to have at least one **student who appears to be antagonistic toward the instructor or hostile, to the subject matter** and who asks questions that serve only to express the student's disagreements, which often have little relationship to the rest of the class. Because such questions usually stem from emotional rather than intellectual concerns, answering only on a cognitive level serves little purpose. It is probably best to see that student outside of class and explain what seems to be going on from your point of view. Often such a talk is sufficient to enable the student, at least to censor the questions he or she asks in class, although it may do little to solve the underlying problem.

Answer student's questions adequately. It is not enough that you respond to the students' questions, but you must answer the question to the student's satisfaction as best as you can. Your answer should be concise and to the point, and you should ask the student if you have answered the question. This fosters both accurate communication of content and says to the student, "Your question is important, and I will take the time necessary to answer it, if I can." If, after two or three attempts, you still have not answered satisfactorily, and other students cannot help answer, then it is appropriate to suggest getting together after class.

Listen to the question, or to any student comments. The way you listen to a question or comment also communicates your attitude toward the students. In most U.S. cultures look at the students when they are talking: show that you are following by nodding, etc; check whether you really understand what they are saying by rephrasing the question.

Sometimes little things that we do unknowingly communicate something to students that is very different from what we intend. For example, one instructor used to occasionally take a look at his watch, when a student would ask a question. He found out in the end –

of-course evaluation that one student interpreted this to mean that the instructor felt the questions were wasting time, rather than that the instructor simply **wanted to know what time it was**.

Do not put down the students. In general, you should avoid anything which would embarrass a student who asks the question. Rather than responding with a value judgment to the student's question or comment, ask a probing question. You may help the student arrive at the correct answer, or an acceptable answer, in which case, rather than proving the student "wrong", you have helped him or her to be "right".

PERSONAL PRESENTATION SKILLS

It is possible to provide an excellent syllabus, to research your subject and collect materials in advance, to use the most appropriate methods of teaching and still not be as effective a teacher as you wish. For this reason we have included some suggestions for personal presentation skills to help you “make a connection” with your students. Your students are intelligent, educated, older adults who appreciate a teacher/instructor who is personally engaged with and cares about his/her students. The following suggestions may help you and your students become more involved in the excitement of engaging in lifelong learning.

Personal Presentation Skills

Body language: be open in your manner

Smile.

Wear your name tag to every class.

Introduce yourself as class members arrive. Shake hands. If that's not your style, stand at the door, and speak to class members as they enter. Tell them you are happy to see/meet them. Welcome every person personally, if possible.

Introduce yourself at the beginning of the first class. Say what your name is, a little about your background, how you became interested in your subject, etc. This shouldn't take too long, just a couple of minutes to let your class have a bit of information about you. They don't need your life history or your troubles. Be sure your name is written on the board.

Learn names. Speak to everyone every week. If the class is large, try to speak to everyone sometime before the end of class, even if it is just a nod or smile.

Laugh easily and often. Enjoy yourself. Laugh with, not at. Do laugh at yourself when it's called for! Laughter encourages camaraderie.

Be accessible to class members. Arrive early for every class. Stay a little while after the class. Mingle.

Consider giving class members your e-mail address and your phone number. Put your e-mail address on the board on the first day, along with your name.

Treat each person with the utmost respect. Learners come to FULIR with varied backgrounds. They want to learn. They have much to give. The knowledge and talent in the room will amaze you. Never, under any circumstances, devalue a person in the class.

Wear nice casual clothes. Stand up straight. Look good. You don't have to be a fashion plate, but you do want to look nice for every class. Be clean. Don't smell of perfume or too much shaving cream. Some people are allergic to such things.

Use gestures. Be animated.

Look at class members as you speak.

Move around. Be energetic. Don't stand behind a podium and lecture. Use your notes as reference to remind yourself from time to time, but do not read those notes to the class. Know your material well. Share it.

Allow spontaneity. Yes, you definitely want to be organized and ready for class, but maintain some flexibility. So what if you didn't get everything done you had planned; maybe something more exciting or more informative came up. It happens all the time. Be ready to change plans if something else will work better.

If a change in the syllabus seems necessary, discuss it with the class first. Some people schedule doctor appointments, etc, according to the topics on the syllabus.

Allow others to share with you and the class. Solicit their help. Ask for participants on a particular day for presentations on specific subjects.

When they bring in something that has to do with the class, ask if you can take it home with you. Read it, look at it. If applicable to any of the class lessons, use it and give credit to the person who shared it with you. Return it promptly and in as good a shape as it came to you .

Encourage interaction and involvement during the class. Has anyone got _____? What's the best word for _____? Also, set aside a few minutes at the end of class for **questions and comments.**

Use of audio-visual aids. Posters, DVDs, pictures, music, overheads, dress the part, sing, anything to add a little pizzazz and change the routine.

Whenever you see **something that pertains to the class**, something that's informative or funny, bring it to their attention. Pretty soon they will be seeing things that relate, too, and, they will bring them for the class to see.

Every week, **remind class members** what happened last week. At the end of class remind them what's coming next week.

Remember: this is not *your* class. This class belongs to everyone in the room.

Make class interesting, and varied enough and you will catch even the most reluctant of learners along the way!

Speaking skills: Vary your tone and rhythm:

Many OLLI at Furman class members are **hard of hearing**. Speak distinctly and loudly enough, but not too loudly. Also, some people who are hard of hearing find it easier to hear the lower tones. If you notice your voice sometimes reaches some high tones, lower the pitch of your voice.

Pay attention. Ask class members if they can hear you. Also, repeat the questions from the audience before you answer them. If someone who obviously cannot hear well is in the last row, arrange for them to move forward. Be tactful.

Listen to your tone. Tone is a complex subject. Consider how your voice sounds. Are you being condescending without realizing it? Are you speaking in the same monotone throughout the entire class? If “yes” is your answer to these questions, you must learn to vary your tone.

Change the rhythm of your speaking. For instance, you might slow down when you want to emphasize something, speed up when you are explaining something that's exciting or surprising, and slow down a bit when you are discussing something more serious. Do not be afraid to let your emotions show from time to time. It's OK to be passionate about your subject!

The same will be true for inflection and timbre. Your subject matter and your body movements will affect the way you speak.

If you are moving around the room, making eye contact, laughing a bit, enjoying your class members and your subject, you will not be speaking in a monotone. You will be animated and full of life, and so will your voice-- and the class!

Finally, THANK YOU for being an instructor!

Please ask if you need help or have questions for our staff or members of the Curriculum Committee; we're here to help.

Please call the office if you will be late or absent for class.

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