Member Care Update

Ethnê-MC Facilitation Team
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Ethnê-MC Update **Issue 2: October 2007**

Welcome to the *Update*! This monthly report informs you about important member care resources, news, and topics. We especially want to further equip people with member care responsibilities who are focussing on mission/aid personnel in least-reached people groups (LPGs). In addition to the mission/aid emphasis, each report usually contains relevant material from the international humanitarian, health, business, and human resource sectors. Each report is also archived on our web site: **www.ethne.net/membercare**. Please share the *Update* with others and your networks. Feel free to submit materials for us to include too. The Lord bless you!

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The goal of our instruction is love. I Timothy 1:5
As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another. I Peter 4:5

In this Issue: Member Care Training

SPECIAL EVENTS: Gatherings to help you connect/contribute to the member care field

- *Canada: Member Care Training and Seminars, CARES; October and November 2007*

  CARES offers four-day training in member care, emphasising character, theory, and practice.
  www.cares.ca/Pages/mctraining.html

- *USA: The Heart of Humanitarian Relief; People In Aid and Headington Institute*, Nov. 2007

  This symposium explores managing/supporting humanitarian staff in the global context.
  www.Headington-Institute.org and/or **www. PeopleinAid.org**

SPECIAL RESOURCES: Tools to further equip you for member care

- *Reflections and Resources for Member Care Training; Member Care Associates Weblog*

  Probe the many core materials on training in the June/July entries of this member care site.
  www.COREmembercare.blogspot.com

SPECIAL TOPICS: Current issues and approaches related to member care

- *Adult-Sizing" Our Training, by Jane Rhoades*

  Jane summarises key principles of adult learning, with important applications for mission training.

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The *Update* is compiled on behalf of the *Ethnê-Member Care Network*. We are a growing *network of colleagues* from different nations and organisations. Our passion is to see the least-reached people groups (LPGs) experience the transforming love of Jesus Christ. We are committed to help provide and develop member care resources in order to support the diversity of people/senders who are working among LPGs. Our *Network* is part of the Ethnê to Ethnê Movement (**www.ethne.net**).

Email: mc@ethne.net
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SPECIAL EVENTS: Gatherings to help you connect/contribute to the member care field

- *Canada: Member Care Training and Seminars, CARES; October and November 2007*

CARES offers four-day training in member care, emphasising character, theory, and practice. The locations are: Abbotsford, BC: October 31-November 3; Toronto, ON: November 7-10; and Calgary, AB: Spring 2008 TBA. Specific areas to be addressed include marriage and family, team relationships, cross-cultural issues, stress management, changes and transitions, trauma, conflict management, etc. Participants are also encouraged to do two special exercises: PRIOR to the training event, briefly describe the current member care practice in your sending group and AFTER the training event, draft a strategy for ways to enhance member care in your sending group.

Contact: www.cares.ca/Pages/mctraining.html

- *USA: The Heart of Humanitarian Relief; People In Aid and the Headington Institute*, 14.11.07

This one-day international symposium is for those in humanitarian organisations who are responsible for management, human resources, or staff health and welfare. The symposium will: a) showcase good-practice and recent research relevant to managing people effectively in high-pressure situations; and b) facilitate learning, sharing, and networking among the humanitarian aid community. A combination of challenging presentations and interactive seminars will help directors, managers and human resource professionals grapple with issues related to:

*Anticipating future challenges for human resource management
*Managing disaster response teams
*Building trust
*Mitigating the risk of vicarious trauma
*Providing psychological first aid and peer support
*Coaching managers.

Contact: www.Headington-Institute.org and/or **www. PeopleInAid.org**

SPECIAL RESOURCES: Tools to further equip you for member care

- *Reflections and Resources for Member Care Training; Member Care Associates Weblog*

This international blog is filled with current thinking on good practice. The postings for June and July 2007 focus on member care training. There is material on training opportunities, future directions, core subjects, a course syllabus, and more. Here are some suggestions (entry16.07.07) to make quality training more available**.**

****1. Develop a global listing of training opportunities.** Consider updating it every month…include brief descriptions and web/email links…A coordinator or coordinating group…would be necessary. Some commentary/analysis on what training is being offered—who is benefiting/where the greatest needs are—would also be important.

****2. Form a network of trainers.** Consider connecting with other people who are doing training…Establish some criteria for being part of such a network….Accrediting/vetting member care workers (MCWs) can be very difficult due to the international diversity of backgrounds and training for MCWs. Develop an agenda to coordinate as much as possible some of the training…

****3. Increase access to training.** Develop materials and courses to be used by correspondence (mail/post) and the internet, in addition to face to face training. Training materials in different languages and in audio and DVD format would be very important.

****4. Maintain an annotated listing of key materials in member care.**

Include books and articles, and web sites. Organise these also by language. Currently for example, there is a listing of some key books at **ethne.net/MemberCare/pages/resources** an annotated listing of many articles at **www.missionarycare.com/dbTopics.asp** and several web sites in the "web links" section at **www.ethe.net/membercare**

Contact for the *Member Care Associates* weblog: www.COREmembercare.blogspot.com

SPECIAL TOPIC

"Adult-Sizing" Our Training

by Jane Rhoades, Member Care Consultant, YWAM

As mission trainers we would never think of squeezing our mission workers-in-training into tiny desks, but we could inadvertently use child-sized educational methods for our mission training! Much of the training in educational design is geared to childhood education. While many traditional educational principles apply for adults, let me highlight some differences between children and adults.

First of all, children come to school because they are supposed to be there—it's mandatory! In contrast, adults usually come to training voluntarily because they have a need. In many ways children are recipients of learning who are very dependent upon a teacher and most often do not question the authoritative input the teacher gives. Adults, on the other hand, are very much "self-directed" in that they are accustomed to being responsible for their lives and their learning and can readily question what is taught, depending upon the culture.

One of the most significant differences is that children come to class with limited experience, while adults enter the classroom with innumerable experiences with which to evaluate or add to learning. While children enter a classroom to be challenged with new subjects which are primarily theoretical preparation for the future, adults enter the classroom with a life- or task-oriented "now" mindset. They've come from home or work situations that require much of them and are usually looking for learning that relates to this real world in which they exist (Van Dyk et. al, p. 216).

In short, the uniqueness of the adult learner requires appropriately adapted training. Understanding the unique adult learner characteristics will help to shape the instructional planning, course content, and learning methods. Let's take a look at some adult learning characteristics and appropriate adaptations that can be made to our training.

Adults have a wealth of experience. Adults bring a wide variety and depth of experiences into the classroom. As wise teachers we will build on those experiences and adapt training to utilize learner experience. Knowles, an adult learning expert, emphasizes the use of "experiential… techniques that tap into the experience of the learners, such as group discussion, simulation exercises, problem-solving activities, case method, and laboratory methods…" (Knowles, p. 66). The use of experiential methods is ideal for mission education or member care training. For example, the use of group discussion facilitates learners sharing real-life experiences, problems of adapting to others' cultural values, or grappling with cross-cultural stress.

Adults are motivated to learn when learning applies to their real world. As adult trainers we are challenged to make teaching that is relevant to learner's experience and needs. We should make every effort to address real issues rather than theoretical issues that may no longer be relevant or issues that don't apply within the learner's setting. What is taught must be immediately applicable today. For example, as mission trainers we might use a list of problems students have seen in the churches they've attended in order to discuss a church planter's role in discipleship or in bringing about change. Such an approach is more likely to get the learner's attention because it is addressing current issues.

Adults want to be successful. Of course, no one wants to fail, but adults seem unusually sensitive to failure! As wise trainers we will plan training effectively so that every small step provides for success leading to further motivation to press on in learning. This includes planning early success with simple learning tasks, such as identifying cultural proverbs being used in the home, that lead to eventual success with more complex tasks such as identifying underlying values within the culture. It means planning training so that students understand the foundations before they are required to use new knowledge with a complex situation. For example, in member care training we start with giving foundational training in debriefing skills before developing more complex skills of trauma debriefing. This sounds so natural, but it is far too easy for us to set high goals and speed to the goal we want to achieve in too short a time—overlooking the crucial element of providing success.

Adults are masters of their own learning. Adults have come voluntarily because they have sensed a need. As wise teachers we will listen first to students to hear their hearts. What is it students need in this training? Adults come as decision makers accustomed to deciding many things for themselves. We can give students some decision making power as to how they learn. For example, we might have a written objective "able to research, analyze, and learn about host culture." While we as teachers may decide on the content of input, we may give students a choice of doing a written research project, a survey in a designated neighbourhood, a two-week home stay with required journaling, or an oral presentation of research findings. All methods could validate that the student has achieved the objective, but the choice of learning method empowers adult learners as master of their own learning.

Adults want to be respected for their age. Adults have made it this far and are making it in life, many with wives, children, and jobs or ministries. We can honour them by listening to their stories, their perspectives, and their accumulated wisdom. We can provide safety in the class room by exuding respect for every learner and showing appreciation for contributions. But we must also ensure respectful dialogue between learners, limiting disrespectful comments following student's contributions and encouraging affirmation.

Adults learn by doing. Jane Vella, a well known adult educator writes, "There is little doubt among educators that doing is the way adults learn anything: concepts, skills, or attitudes" (Vella, p. 11). Such a truth cuts across lecture- focused teaching. Teaching adults requires that we identify skills that adults need in order to be successful in their life and ministry and design training that moves the learners to a level of proficiency. For example, a course on evangelism will naturally include development of knowledge, but should also include a checklist of progressive skills that a student should be able to achieve by the end of the course and provide lots of practice to ensure that he is competent! Most of our mission training courses are ideal for developing competencies needed for students to be effective mission workers (Agron).

Adults learn by repetition. Often in training adults we overestimate their ability to assimilate material and "stuff" them with information. We would do far better to give a small amount of information with repeated opportunities for revision and discussion. Giving adults a number of learning activities related to the teaching gives learners confidence in their own knowledge and skills. For example, I might give instruction on leading a small group discussion and then provide learning activities for the remainder of the time that allow students to discuss experiences with leading a discussion, analysing successes and failures in leading discussion, identifying problems to be solved in leading a discussion, and practicing drawing out people's contributions. Each activity helps to cement the teaching into their thinking and helps to integrate new learning with their own knowledge and experience. Jane Vella summarizes, "Do it 1,142 times and you have learned it!" (Vella, p. 9).

In Conclusion. There are many changes we can make to "adult-size" mission training. Instructional planning should include getting up-to-date input on current learning needs of participants and the needs mission workers will face on the field. In this way the teaching will be relevant and as realistic as possible. Content should be focused on developing skills and the confidence to use them. And definitely our methods should be adapted to accommodate adult experience and their need for success and skills development. Methods should also provide lots of opportunity for practice, reflection, and application. Lastly, our training should include ongoing evaluation so that adults have power to direct changes to instructional design. After all, they are experts at being adult learners! Not every trainer has had the opportunity to experience adult learning methods themselves, but it is worth the effort to make appropriate changes in training so we accommodate and value the unique characteristics of adult learners. Let's develop "adult-size" mission training content and methods.

References

Agron, D. J. (2000). *What Can Be Done with a List of Globally-Validated, Essential-Core Competencies for Entry-Level, Cross-Cultural Missionaries*. **www.geocities.com/Athens/Rhodes/3387/whatdo.htm.
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