TIPS

FOR INCREASING PARTICIPANT ENGAGEMENT IN THE VIRTUAL CLASSROOM

PREPARATION IS KEY

By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail." ---Benjamin Franklin

How you prepare to deliver your content can impact how your content is received. Making sure participants & staff are clear about the program objectives and how to navigate the technology, and having a plan if connection is lost, will help to minimize disruption and confusion. Consider these tips when preparing for your virtual event.

EXPLAIN EVERYTHING

Entering a virtual classroom may mean something different for each learner. Create standardized definitions to capture the level of effort of staff and the expectations of participants to better evaluate the outcomes.

PROVIDE RESOURCE TOOLS

Provide participants with information and resources to access and activate the tools they'll need to engage virtually. Make this information available at registration or well in advance of the event.

UTLIIZE A PRODUCER

Utilize a producer to ensure that the technical aspects of the training run smoothly, while the facilitator/trainer presents the content & engages learners. Anyone on your staff can be trained to play this role. The producer's duties may include:

- Preparing the virtual tools to be used in the session.
- Conducting a class warm-up with the participants before the session begins.
- Handling technical support issues for the participants and the facilitator.
- Sharing & clearing whiteboards while the trainer facilitates the exercise.
- Acting as a back-up if the facilitator's internet connection is lost.
- Overseeing the chat area and monitoring for questions from the participants.

FACILITATE EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

"The role of emotions is critical in adult learning as they are closely linked with the construction of meaning and knowledge." --- Dirkx, 2001; Shuck et al., 2007

Assume your virtual training is not the participant's first or only virtual experience of the day. To support the emotional well-being of learners who may be overwhelmed with telecommunicating, consider these tips:

READ THE ROOM

Kick off the training with a quick poll to gauge how participants are feeling.

"On the scale of smiley faces, tell me how you're feeling today. Answer 1, 2, or 3 in the chat."

1   **2**   **3**
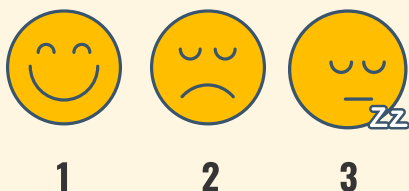
TURN CAMERAS OFF

Minimize classroom distractions to increase focus. WHEN APPRORIATE, ask participants to turn their webcams OFF during the training and turn them ON to ask questions.

TAKE A BREAK

Consider breaking up content-rich or lengthy virtual sessions with short breaks.

Participants may need to:

- **Breathe and stretch**
- **Review notes/digest information**
- **Respond to an issue offline**
- **Use the restroom**
- **Get a snack**

During breaks, facilitators can:

- **Highlight a resource**
- **Promote an upcoming event**
- **Play soft music**

SAVE THE DATE