

INTRODUCTION

It's not what you tell your participants that counts. What counts is what they take away with them. That's because the more you tell them, the more they will forget. Moreover, you can't learn for them. They must do it themselves. Your role as a trainer, therefore, is to spark and guide their learning and help to make it last. How to do that is what *Training the Active Training Way* is all about.

The "active training way" was first introduced back in 1990 in my book, *Active Training: A Handbook of Techniques, Designs, Case Examples, and Tips*. (The third edition of this book will soon be published.) On the heels of *Active Training's* success, I compiled a fieldbook to go along with it entitled *101 Ways to Make Training Active*. (The second edition of this book was recently published.) Now, I am providing a third resource on "the active training way."

Active Training remains the most complete text. It not only provides an extensive rationale for "the active training way" but also examines the entire context of active training, from assessment to design, to facilitation, and to evaluation. By contrast, *101 Ways to Make Training Active* is the ultimate book of recipes for trainers. It contains 101 methods to host a learning feast and 200 quick tips for organizing and facilitating them. It's a book you peruse looking for instant ideas for promoting active learning in your training session.

Training the Active Training Way is not a recipe book. Its objective is to guide you to be an exceptional chef who prepares meals of learning that participants will be hungry to participate in. While it's a book you don't need to read from cover to cover, it has a comprehensive plan you can follow, rather than a collection of ideas from which you pick and choose. At the same time, it is a quicker read than *Active Training*. In less time, the reader obtains concise plans for making training come alive.

The eight strategies in *Training the Active Training Way* are for any trainer, even if someone teaches dry material. The strategies also apply to any topic, from the softest to the hardest. They work with small groups or large audiences.

They are ideal for both live and virtual classrooms. From team building to safety standards, from conflict management to project management, from new employee orientation to advanced training, *Training the Active Training Way* will help you turn your ordinary training sessions into extraordinary events.

The Eight Strategies

If you want to spark active learning in your training sessions, the eight strategies presented here will bring you success. You don't need to heed all eight, but I have found that most of them are critical for any trainer, at any level, and in any subject matter.

Strategy 1: Engage Your Participants from the Start

Use opening activities at the beginning of an entire course or at the beginning of any single training session to develop a climate for active learning, promote peer interaction, and build immediate involvement in the learning topic.

Strategy 2: Be a Brain-Friendly Presenter

Present information and concepts that maximize understanding and retention through techniques that stimulate participants' brains to be mentally alert and receptive to new data.

Strategy 3: Encourage Lively and Focused Discussion

Structure discussion so that participants are motivated to participate and pursue the topic in depth.

Strategy 4: Urge Participants to Ask Questions

Motivate participants to ask thoughtful questions and seek information that will answer them.

Strategy 5: Let Participants Learn from Each Other

Set up effective group learning and peer teaching activities that require peer collaboration.

Strategy 6: Enhance Learning by Experiencing and Doing

Design and facilitate games, practice exercises, role plays, and other experiential activities to enhance the learning of information, skills, and values.

Strategy 7: Blend in Technology Wisely

Effectively integrate synchronous and asynchronous e-learning tools with classroom learning activity.

Strategy 8: Make the End Unforgettable

Close a learning experience so that participants review what they have learned, reflect on its importance, consider future steps, and celebrate their accomplishments.

Training the Active Training Way is organized around these eight strategies. Following a brief introduction about each strategy, you will find a group of three to five tips for its implementation. A worksheet is provided for each tip (there are thirty-two tips altogether) to encourage you to apply it to your training session. For example, the second tip for Strategy 1 is “Structure the initial social interactions among participants.” The following illustrates how you might complete the sheet found on page 16:

PLANNING SHEET

Structure the Initial Social Interactions Among Participants

Use the following sheet to implement this tip.

Technique: (check one or more)

- Start off with social icebreakers
- Weave course content into your social icebreakers.

My Plan

Use the “Stand Up and Be Counted” activity for my time management workshop. Mix in items that pertain to the topic, such as:

Stand up . . .

- ✓ if you create a daily “to-do” list
- ✓ if you wait till the deadline to get a job done
- ✓ if your desk is usually cluttered
- ✓ if you deal with email as soon as you read it
- ✓ if you have difficulty saying “no”
- ✓ if you take care of the easiest tasks first
- ✓ if you maintain a “tickler file”
- ✓ if you make time for important priorities
- ✓ if you delegate things that others can do

As you become acquainted with each strategy in this book and the tips that support them, consider how it applies to your training situation. Understand that each training situation has its own unique context. For example, you might conduct some of your training in brief, single sessions (from 1 to 3 hours in total length). In such brief periods, you might have time for only one short opening and/or closing activity. Therefore, limit yourself to a single technique and keep it quick. When your training involves a multi-session

format, there is time for more openers and closers and the employment of non-traditional methods such as team learning. In that case, make use of more techniques. Or you might be working with a subject matter that is very technical in nature and there is little, if any, need for extended discussion. In that case, ignore the strategies on lively and focused discussions. Or you might be involved in a leadership development program that requires skill in managing real-world situations. In this instance, be sure to consider the advice on experiential learning. While each strategy may be important to your specific situation, some will naturally have greater applicability.

Please heed some words of caution if you are a new or infrequent trainer. There are more ideas in this book than you will be able to use with confidence until you have more experience. Don't bite off more than you can chew. Less is better than more. Find tips that stretch you a little, but don't stretch yourself to the point of overload. Your skills as an active trainer will grow by taking small steps away from straight lecture and slides, consolidating what you can do well before expanding your repertoire. You might begin, for example, by inserting a few simple tips, such as providing an initial case problem before you lecture or asking participants to recap what you presented with someone seated next to them. Observe how well the tips work for you. After you have tasted some success, you can add other strategies.

Those of you with more experience will, no doubt, find many of my strategies and tips familiar. Use this book as a way to assess what you are currently doing to promote active training and select areas in which you would like to sharpen your efforts and expand your repertoire.

Regardless of whether you are a new or veteran trainer, I hope you find *Training the Active Training Way* to be an eminently practical guide that will spark learning in your training sessions.

