Successfully Investigating Acquaintance Sexual Assault
A National Training Manual for Law Enforcement

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Adult Learning

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Treating Law Enforcement Officers Like Adults in Training

At one point or another in our careers, most of us have attended a training session that we really enjoyed. If asked how the training was, we might respond that the instructor was knowledgeable, humorous, or entertaining. At best, we might respond that we learned a lot. But how many of us could honestly say that we learned how to apply that knowledge or that skill?

Question and Answer:

The above activity might best be completed as an exercise in which the instructor asks the participants to recall a training session that they really enjoyed. The instructor then asks the participants to give reasons why the training was enjoyable and those are listed on a flip chart. The instructor then directs student attention to those answers that identify the application of knowledge or skills.

The goal of training should be to allow an opportunity for the student to practice knowledge and skills which they need to do their job. As Langevin Learning Services Workshop for Trainers puts it, "Training is the place where employees come to practice their jobs."

Without that practice component, we simply have education. This is not to say that education isn’t important. Education is the basis for training and the two go hand in hand. However in the past several decades, much has changed in the area of adult education. Contemporary theories of how adults learn have added new dimensions to the design of training for specific jobs. Law enforcement training has benefited from these insights, although perhaps only in limited areas.

Although it is common to incorporate techniques such as demonstrations, drill and practice, and simulation to skill areas such as firearms training or field sobriety testing, other areas do not readily lend themselves to the utilization of techniques that enhance the learning process. The investigation

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of sexual assault is one such area. Although resistance to these techniques exists, the inclusion of them in training is absolutely necessary for effective learning to take place.

Prior to beginning a discussion of how to best implement a training curriculum, a review of contemporary theories of learning is necessary. The current literature on adult learning is expansive and the following will be a brief overview.

**How Adults Learn**

There is a great difference between how children learn and how adults learn. Adults who have been at a training session in which they felt like they were treated like children understand this concept. Children attend school in order to obtain knowledge and skills they will use throughout their lifetime. In most cases, education is compulsory and the children are led through the learning process. Pedagogy is the term that often refers to the process of teaching children. The term is from the Greek and literally translates as "child leading."

Adults learn in a much different manner. When adults attend a training session, they typically do so in search of knowledge and skills they can utilize in their current job. Andragogy is the term that refers to the art of helping adults learn. It is another Greek term, however it translates as "man leading". The theory of andragogy began to be examined in our country in the early 1970's and has been expanded upon greatly in the past three decades.

Central to the theory of andragogy are several main assumptions that differentiate it from pedagogy, and set the stage for the development of effective training for adults.

1. **Adults need to know why they need to learn something.**

   Adults need to see the benefit of learning or the consequences of not learning prior to opening themselves to the learning. As Langevin Learning Services puts it, they need to know "what's in it for me?" The first question a law enforcement officer wants answered in any training is how the training will benefit him or her. Will it make the job easier? Will it increase arrest rates? Will it increase prosecution rates? Will it increase victim cooperation? Will it decrease the chances of successful lawsuits against the officers? Will it simply make the officer feel better about his or her job? Given the importance of "the need to know," it is critical to communicate how training will benefit them in their personal or professional lives.

2. **Adults learn best if allowed to direct the learning themselves.**

   Adults have a distinct self-concept that is lacking in children. Adults know who they are and what they want, and they want to be in control of the learning process. If treated like children or made to feel that someone else is "shoving training down their throats," they will most likely resist the training and fail to learn. The profession of law enforcement tends to attract personality types who are clearly self-directing. One way to guarantee failure when training police is to treat them like children. The utilization of techniques such as discussion groups and case studies allow the learners to assist in the direction of training.
3. Adults have a myriad of prior experiences that affect their learning.

Because adults have experienced more of life than children have, they enter a training situation with a larger knowledge base. Techniques that allow them to expand upon this base will work more effectively with adults. The range of experiences among law enforcement officers is wide and varied. If their prior experiences are ignored or rejected by the trainer, learning will most likely not occur. If a police investigator enters a training session and indicates that she or he has worked quite a few unfounded cases of sexual assault, the trainer needs to acknowledge this and utilize training techniques that allow the investigator to examine these past experiences in more detail.

4. Adults must be ready to learn.

Adults must be ready to learn in order to do so. Their readiness is often determined by the whether they see value in the learning as it relates to their lives and jobs. The veteran investigator who has handled a number of sexual assault cases will see value in different training topics than a patrol officer who has never responded to a sexual assault case. When designing the training, efforts must be made to encourage readiness for all learners by including varying topics and establishing the importance of the interrelationships between all levels of the investigation.

5. The adult orientation to learning is grounded in life.

For adults, learning must be oriented toward the here and now and should be task oriented or problem oriented, rather than generalized as it often is with children. In other words, when training a law enforcement officer to effectively conduct an interview, the officer may learn best by utilizing case examples which he or she might likely encounter on the job.

6. Adults often are motivated to learn by internal factors.

For many children, identifying the motive for learning is easy ? parental pressure, grades, etc. Identifying the motivation for adult learners is less obvious and more difficult. Although external motivators do exist, the most powerful motivation appears to come from within the adult learner instead of from the outside. In the case of law enforcement, the officer who attends training because he or she wants to be more satisfied with the job is more likely to learn than the officer who attends simply because it is a condition of employment.

Buzz Groups:

The above information may be presented in the form of a group exercise. The class should be divided into 6 groups. After a brief explanation of each of the six assumptions, each group is assigned one of the assumptions. As a group, they are to identify ways or examples of how the assumption affects the manner in which law enforcement officers in particular are trained. Each group will list their responses on a flip chart and then present to the group as a whole.

Although the above assumptions about adult learners are very important, they are not all encompassing. As Knowles admits, "there are many individual differences among learners that interact
with the core adult learning principles to shape adults’ learning behaviors.” Therefore it is necessary to design training that takes into account individual learning differences in style and ability.

**The Principles of Learning**

In order to develop training that takes into account individual learning differences, a review of the some additional principles of learning is helpful. These principles have been adapted from a variety of fields, including individual learner difference research, learning how to learn interventions, and cognitive development theories.

1. Adults use all of their senses when receiving and understanding information, but they do so to varying degrees. Training design should encompass visual, auditory and physical activities in order to affect as many learners as possible. Examples of visual activities include overheads, white boards, videotapes and handouts. Auditory activities include lectures, discussions, and audiotapes. Physical activities include anything in which the learner must play an active hands-on role in the training, such as a role-play.

2. Adults differ in the rate at which they learn. Training should be designed to allow learners to process information at different points in time by conducting periodic reviews. Too often trainers do not conduct reviews at frequent enough intervals, preferring instead to wait until the end of a course. Reviews are an excellent way to refresh learners after a break, at the end of a day, or at the beginning of a new day of training.

3. The average adult learner can process only a small amount of information at a time. Chunk information into groups of 7 items (plus or minus 3 depending on the difficulty level) at a time. Most of us can easily remember a 7 digit phone number, and even include the 3 digit area code, but have difficulty remembering longer strings of numbers. Memory retention is also best for those things covered at the beginning and the end of a session, therefore cover the key items early and review them again at the end.

4. Adults are used to being active and should be actively involved in the learning process. The utilization of practical exercises allows adults to participate in an active manner rather than simply be passive receivers of information. If passive activities cannot be avoided, make sure they are not scheduled during the low points of the day (just before lunch break, just after lunch break, and just before the end of the day). At those times of the training day, practical exercises that require active participation are best utilized.

5. Learning is affected by the environment in which it takes place. Trainers should strive to create an environment which is comfortable, free from distractions, and conducive to group work. If possible, avoid setting up the room in the typical classroom style with rows of seats facing the front or the learners will assume that they are simply going to be passive observers. Utilize smaller round tables of 4-6 people. The trainer should move around the room during training and avoid standing behind a podium. The trainer should also always remain aware of comfort levels within the training room.
6. Adults want to be successful, especially in the learning environment. When designing practical exercises, care should be given to ensure that the learners see progress being made. Feedback should be given consistently throughout the learning process, especially after practical exercises. The trainer may give the feedback or the learners may give feedback to each other.

7. Learning is a social activity. The majority of learning actually takes place outside of training in an informal setting. During training, this learning may actually occur during short breaks or meal times. If possible, training should be set up to encourage learning that occurs in the informal setting.

Listening Teams:

The additional principles of learning may be presented using the technique of listening teams. Each group is assigned one of the seven principles and asked to listen closely, take notes and prepare questions. At the end of a discussion of all the principles, each group is asked to summarize their principle to the group as a whole, concentrating on those aspects of the principle that might affect the design of training for law enforcement officers.

The Design of Training

As a result of much of the research into how adults learn, training formulas have been developed which differ from those used in educating children. The three key ingredients of successful adult training are presentation, application and feedback. Most trainers are very familiar with the first ingredient, presentation, and mistakenly equate it with training. However, if we accept the assumptions and principles of adult learning, we realize that training should consist of much more.

Presentation is the delivery of content to the learners in a training session. Although many forms of presentation methods exist, the most common method is lecture. However, recognizing that adults learn in ways that are different from children, additional methods should be utilized. Behavior modeling, buzz groups, demonstrations, discussions, listening teams, interviews, neighbor discussions, question and answer, skits, and slip writing are examples of presentation methods that are often just as successful, if not more so, than lectures.

The application phase of training is when the learners are given an opportunity to practice the knowledge and skills gained in the presentation phase of training. Often the learner is not presented with this opportunity until he or she is back on the job. Knowing that adults want to take an active role in their learning, the benefit of application during training is obvious. Some examples of application methods that may be used during training are case studies, critical incidents, critiques, games, mini case studies, practice exercises and role-plays. Remember training should be the place where people practice their jobs.

The feedback phase of training should occur directly in conjunction with the application phase. When a learner is attempting to practice knowledge and skills, or apply concepts learned in the training, he or she should be given immediate feedback as to performance. In many training sessions, feedback is confused with evaluation. The learners are given a test at the end of training in an attempt to evaluate whether they have successfully grasped the concepts of the course. Although this form
of evaluation is widely utilized, most trainers recognize that it does not accurately test whether learning occurred. The true test of learning is whether or not the learners can actually apply what they learned. Through a combination of application and feedback, trainers can get a much better grasp of whether this is occurring.

Now, think about much of the training that you have ever attended. How much time was spent on presentation versus application and feedback? In an ideal training session, one third of the time should be spent on presentation and two thirds of the time should be spent on application and feedback.

Critique:

At this point, ask the learner groups to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the above proposal. Propose the following questions to the groups:

- Is it possible to meet this goal in all training?
- Will this ratio differ from one type of training to another?
- Would a certain type of training (e.g. Skill based) lend itself to more application and feedback?
- Why does most training concentrate on presentation?

Allow the groups about five minutes to discuss the above questions, then report back to the group as a whole.

Perhaps one reason why most training does not come anywhere near this ideal ratio is because most trainers are much more comfortable with their role as presenter. Recently I spoke with someone who had just attended a one-day training session. I asked him how the session was and he replied "It was great." I then asked him why, and he indicated that the trainer was a good presenter. I finally asked him if what he had learned. After contemplating the question for a few minutes, he responded "No, I guess I was just entertained."

Trainers often believe that their success is measured by course evaluations. If we entertain the audience, we tend to receive higher evaluations. However the true test of the success of a trainer is whether learning occurred and whether that learning can be applied in the workplace. Given his knowledge of how adults learn, Malcolm Knowles suggests that we can best accomplish this if we reject our role as teacher and instead become "facilitators of learning."

The Trainer as Facilitator

The first step to recognizing our role as facilitator of learning requires us to break out of our traditional role as instructor or educator. As such, let's begin with one premise:

The learner should work harder than the trainer.
Anyone who has conducted training with law enforcement students can tell you that this is not always the case. Often times, the instructor is more depleted upon conclusion of the course than the students. If that is the case, then the students probably have not been effectively trained in other words they probably have not had the opportunity to practice the knowledge and skills that they learned during the training.

This curriculum is designed to allow opportunities for practice. Given the nature of this training topic, some creativity in that practice is necessary. Creativity on the part of the instructors is also necessary. We have shown some examples of activities that may be conducted and a complete listing will be found in Appendix 1.

So, how do we become facilitators of learning? Simply put, we apply our knowledge of adult learning principles to the training. As trainers it is our responsibility to set up our training so that our learners can be successful. When developing a lesson plan for a particular topic, utilize the following format:

**Introduce the lesson**

- State the objective
- Give a brief overview of the lesson
- Explain the benefits of learning the subject

**Present the content**

- Utilize different methods of presentation
- Remember to chunk information into groups of 7
- Utilize visual, auditory and physical activities

**Conduct application exercise**

- Give clear instructions for the exercise
- Make time restrictions to encourage efficiency
- Monitor performance during the exercise

**Provide feedback**

- Utilize trainer and learner feedback
- Focus on performance

**Summarize**
• Review the lesson
• Emphasize how the lesson relates to entire subject

Practice Exercise:

Ask each trainee to pick a curriculum topic (e.g. Forensic examination) and prepare an introduction for the topic. Include the objective, an overview of the lesson, and the benefits of learning about the subject. Each introduction should only be a few minutes in length. Ask for volunteers to provide their introduction to the class. Provide assistance as needed and feedback at the end of each introduction.

Dealing with Training Problems

As any trainer is aware, problems associated with training are inevitable. Whether you are a novice trainer or an "expert" who has conducted thousands of training sessions, problems will arise which challenge your ability to facilitate learning. The key to being a successful trainer is to prepare for potential problems and to be flexible in your approach to them.

Most of the research in the area of adult learning and training has centered around the learner, however a recent study has taken a detailed look at trainers in order to determine the most common training delivery problems (Swanson and Falkman, 1997). Along with developing a list of the twelve most common problems, they also provided expert solutions for each problem. The following is a summary of their information:

Fear
• Be well prepared
• Use ice breakers
• Acknowledge the fear

Credibility
• Don't apologize
• Have an attitude of an expert
• Share personal background

Personal experiences
• Report personal experiences
• Report experiences of others
• Use analogies, movies, or famous people
Difficult learners

- Confront problem learners
- Circumvent dominating behavior
- Small groups for timid behavior

Participation

- Ask open-ended questions
- Plan small group activities
- Invite participation

Timing

- Plan well
- Practice, practice, practice

Adjust instruction

- Know the group needs
- Request feedback
- Redesign during breaks

Questions

- Anticipate possible learner questions
- Paraphrase learner questions
- "I don't know" is okay
- Ask concise questions

Feedback

- Solicit informal feedback
- Do summative evaluations

Media, materials, facilities

- Know your equipment
• Have back-up equipment
• Enlist assistance from the group
• Have participant material ready ahead of time
• Visit the facility beforehand
• Arrive early

Openings and Closings
• Develop an "openings file" containing icebreakers and other successful opening ideas
• Memorize the opening
• Relax the trainees
• Summarize concisely
• Thank the participants

Dependence on Notes
• Notes are necessary
• Use note cards
• Use visuals
• Practice, practice, practice

Mini Case Study:
Divide the class into their groups and then present each group with a different training delivery problem (See appendix 2). Ask each group to prepare recommendations for how to handle the situation and list them on their flipchart. Each group should then present their situation and recommendations to the class as a whole.

Appendix 1 - Instructional Methodology

1. Behavior Modeling (Presentation & Application)

A technique in which desirable behavior is shown to the trainees, either by the trainer or through video or other means. The behavior is then analyzed and studied. The trainees then have an opportunity to practice the behavior themselves with guidance and feedback. Commonly used for interpersonal skills and communication training.
2. Buzz Group (Presentation)

The trainees are divided into smaller groups for a quick discussion (5 minutes or so). They are instructed to react to a topic, question, or an issue and then report back to the group as a whole.

3. Case Study (Application)

The trainees are given a sample situation, either orally or in writing, and asked to respond to it either individually or in groups. They are instructed to analyze the situation and present their recommendations as to how to proceed or solve it.

4. Critical Incident (Application)

A variation of the case study in which the trainees are given incomplete information and then asked to analyze the situation and ask correct questions in order to receive additional information needed to proceed or solve a problem.

5. Critique (Application)

The trainees are asked to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of a subject. They are then asked to provide suggestions for improvement.

6. Demonstration (Presentation)

Performance is demonstrated to the trainees either live or on video or audiotape.

7. Discussion (Discussion)

An exchange of ideas on topics of mutual concern. The trainer may lead the discussion or allow the class to monitor it themselves. Often used spontaneously.

8. Game (Application)

An exercise in which competition and cooperation are used to practice or review principles previously discussed. Should be fun, but not too difficult.

9. Interview (Presentation)

Trainees are given an opportunity to interview and question a resource person. Sometimes someone else conducts the interview, and the learners simply observe.

10. Listening Team (Presentation)

A group of trainees is asked to listen to a speaker, take notes, prepare questions and then summarize a session. Several listening teams can focus on different aspects of the presentation and report back to the group as a whole.

11. Mini Case Study (Application)
A brief variation of a case study utilizing only a few facts. Often used when different approaches are available to a situation.

12. Neighbor Discussions (Presentation)

A quick method to increase participation by trainees. They are asked to turn to a neighbor and briefly discuss a topic or answer a question. Often used spontaneously when participation is low.

13. Practice Exercise (Application)

The learners are given an assignment to practice performing a task.

14. Question and Answer (Presentation)

The trainer covers course content by asking a series of questions to the group. The trainees volunteer the answers and are also encouraged to ask further questions.

15. Role Play (Application)

The trainees are assigned to act out a situation in order to apply new knowledge or skills. Often used for interpersonal or communication skills. Numerous variations may be tried including:

- Monodrama - only one role and the player gives a monologue while others observe.
- Multiple - a number of separate role-plays occur at the same time in various parts of the room.
- Role rotation - during the role-play, the play is stopped briefly to allow participants to trade roles before continuing.
- Soliloquy - the role-play is stopped briefly to allow a participant to react to what is happening or asks questions about how to proceed

16. Slip Writing (Presentation)

The trainer asks the attendees to write their main question on a slip of paper and pass it to the instructor. The instructor then reads the questions and responds or asks the group to respond. A quick method of generating questions from a group in an anonymous manner.

17. Skit (Presentation)

A short, dramatic presentation that is prepared ahead of time and rehearsed to illustrate points or to generate discussion.

Appendix 2 - Managing Difficult Training Situations

Situation 1: The group won't respond.
You have opened the session, made everyone feel welcome and stated the purpose of the session as clearly as you can. Then you ask a general question and the group just sits there. What's the trouble and what can you do about it?

**Situation 2: Getting silent individuals to participate.**

You are conducting a classroom discussion in which it is important for everyone to participate, but two or three trainees are remaining silent. How do you get them to participate?

**Situation 3: Dealing with an individual who monopolizes the discussion.**

You are conducting a classroom discussion in which it is important for everyone to participate, but one individual talks so much that no one else has a chance. What do you do?

**Situation 4: Working with a group with mixed experience and knowledge.**

You have been assigned to teach a course to a group of fifteen trainees who have a wide variety of experience and knowledge on the subject. Some of them know quite a bit about the subject (or at least they think they do because they have a great deal of experience with it) while for the others they subject is new. How do you keep everyone interested?

**Situation 5: Dealing with individuals whose conversations disrupt the session.**

While you are teaching, two trainees are having a conversation that can be heard by others and is disrupting the class. What should you do about it?

**Situation 6: Dealing with technical difficulties.**

You arrive to begin the training. Your overhead projector bulb is burned out and the PowerPoint presentation will not boot up. What do you do?

**Situation 7: Dealing with inappropriate remarks.**

You are facilitating a training session. During a break jokes are told that are racist in nature. Some learners appear to be offended. What do you do?

**Situation 8: Dealing with a learner who is confrontational.**

You are facilitating a training during which one learner argues about various points, both with you and other learners. What do you do?