Variety of Teaching Methods

Examples of What Works

Ways to Engage Participants with Different Learning Styles

This handout describes various teaching methods that we use to promote the engagement of participants with different learning styles during NCCTS Learning Collaboratives. For additional ideas on activities that promote cross-team collaboration, please refer to the Cross-Team Collaboration Activities handout associated with Module 10 of the TOOLCIT.

Paired Discussions	Paired discussions are one way to turn a didactic presentation into a more interactive and engaging session. During a lecture, the presenter pauses and asks participants to turn to a partner and have a brief discussion reflecting on what they just heard. A specific question may be posed about the content for participants to discuss, or the discussion might be more open-ended. The goal is for participants to have a chance to digest and process the information before becoming an active listener again.
Role Plays	Clinicians tend to either love or hate role plays. Even Clinicians who do not seem to enjoy doing role plays, however, seem to get a lot out of the experience when asked. Role plays may be used as separate stand-alone sessions or woven into presentations and panel discussions. For clinical content, the group might form trios in which one member is a Client, another is a Clinician, and another is an Observer. It is often helpful to conduct multiple rounds of role plays so that all participants have the opportunity to play each of the three roles. Observers may complete a worksheet that guides the feedback needed about the interaction.
Table Talk	While some people feel comfortable speaking in a large group, most people prefer to ask questions and make comments in a small group format. After a didactic presentation, invite participants to engage in discussion with others sitting at their tables. Offer specific questions to jump start these conversations, either by posting the questions on a slide or by writing them on index cards placed on each table.
Listening Teams	Listening Teams engage people during didactic presentations by assigning roles to different groups of participants. For example, some participants might be instructed to listen for specific points made during the lecture, and then to share with the group during the last 15 minutes or so of the presentation. Two participants at each table might be “Supporters” —who will listen for two ideas that they like, and prepare to say why they support these ideas. Two participants might be “Naysayers”—who will have to come up with two ideas they disagree with, and be prepared to explain why they disagree. Two participants might be “Questioners,” who will identify two questions for the group to discuss. And finally, two other participants might be “Reflectors,” who will share the thoughts that the lecture stirred up for them. Additional roles may be crafted for participants to play depending on the content and goals of the session.

Read and Reflect	In order to appeal to visual learners, a vignette, article, or story may be assigned to the group. For this activity, it is important to provide the time, space, and a quiet atmosphere for reading the material. Different options may be considered for processing the reading material as a group, such as providing written questions for participants to reflect on and write about individually, or structuring small group discussions, similar to a book club type format.
Breakout Sessions	Multiple small group breakout sessions are often held at Learning Sessions in lieu of a single large group presentation, so that participants can choose the topic most appealing to them. Breakout sessions provide an easy way to address the varying needs and requests of different participants. For example, one Clinical Faculty member might offer a breakout group on adapting the EBT for use with foster children, while another Faculty member might simultaneously hold a group on adapting the EBT for use with children in residential treatment facilities. Participants choose the breakout session most relevant to them. If multiple sessions are enticing to participants, encourage them to select one team member to attend each breakout session. Afterwards, team members can compare notes, learning more than if only one session had been offered, and providing for smaller groups that allow for more meaningful engagement among participants.
Lightning Rounds	Participants begin by brainstorming a list of barriers to achieving a specific goal. The session facilitator writes each of the challenges on a flip chart paper. After all of the challenges have been identified, the facilitator asks participants to quietly write on post-it notes possible strategies or solutions to those barriers. After they write each one down, they stand up, stick the post-it note on the flip chart paper by the challenge it addresses, and then say it out loud for the entire group to hear. This process continues until participants have completed writing their strategies. Afterwards, the facilitator guides a group discussion around these strategies, working together to prioritize them and identify next steps. It is a fast-paced, high energy session focused on solutions.

NCCTS Training and Implementation Program (2013). Variety of Teaching Methods: Examples of What Works. Los Angeles, CA and Durham, NC: National Center for Child Traumatic Stress.