

Notes on Working with Target Groups in IPC Programs

Because IPC programs are, by nature, more profound than other types of programs, it is important to engage audiences in a deeper, richer way. Within IPC programs, it is the quality of the interaction with the audience that will determine the degree of your success. To this end, there are some principles for working with various audiences that can make the IPC program richer.

Principles of Participatory Learning

1. *Involve participants in the program planning and implementation*
Their participation can begin at the needs assessment process when participants agree upon goals and objectives. People tend to commit to processes and programs in which they feel they've participated in and contributed to the planning. In fact, working with a high risk population to plan their own intervention is, unto itself, an effective IPC Strategy.
2. *Create a climate that encourages and supports learning*
The learning environment should be characterized by an open process that enhances learner self-esteem. When conflict occurs it is handled in a way that challenges learners to acquire new perspectives and supports them in their efforts to do so. People learn best in an atmosphere that is non-threatening and supportive of experimentation, in which different learning types are recognized.
3. *Include and build on participants' experiences in the learning process*
Develop an understanding of learners' experiences and communities and draw upon these as a resource. Not only do adult learners have experiences that can be used as a foundation for learning new things, but also, in adulthood, readiness to learn often stems from life tasks and problems. Life situations and perspectives that adults bring to the classroom can provide a rich reservoir of learning. Youth too have seen a lot and have formulated opinions that can contribute to the process.
4. *Foster critically reflective thinking*
Express a tolerance for uncertainty and diversity, promote questioning and question answering, problem finding and problem solving. Adult learning is facilitated when teaching activities do not demand finalized correct answers and closures. Youth, on the other hand, tend to need a more structured setting to move them forward on the behavior change continuum.
5. *Include learning that involves examination of issues and necessitates analysis and development of solutions.*
Use instructional materials that are based on real-life experiences. An important part of the participatory approach is using instruction that reflects the content of participants' lives. This is sometimes called "contextualized learning."
6. *Generate a participative environment*

Incorporate small groups into learning activities. This promotes teamwork and encourages cooperation and collaboration among learners. Structured appropriately, they emphasize the importance of learning from peers, allow all participants to be involved in discussions, and to assume a variety of roles.

7. *Encourage self-directed learning*

If participants have been accustomed to teacher-directed learning environments, they may not display self-directedness. Self-directed learning should be nurtured within the group.