

Adult Learning—What You Need to Know

It has been said that learning changes the individual. At DSAIA, we want our attendees to have a truly transformative experience. We hope every session will challenge and inspire; but we also hope that, by coming to this year's DSAIA Leadership Conference, our attendees will leave with useful, relevant content that will change the way they work. That's where our presenters come in! To have the best chance of getting your proposal accepted, we ask that you create your proposal from an adult learning perspective. And here is what we mean by that:

- Create a learning experience that is particularly relevant to the DSAIA audience which includes staff, Board members, and volunteers who work in Down syndrome associations.
- Don't be afraid to challenge assumptions and explore other points of view.
- Adults learn best when they learn by doing. Plan to engage participants throughout your session.
- Recognize that adults come to the table with their own set of questions, life experiences and motivation. They want to direct their own learning and apply their learning to concrete situations when they get home.

Here are some ideas to get you started:

1. Have clear participant goals—and share them with attendees.
2. Know your learners—be sure you know how the information you present will be useful to them.
3. Don't plan to do all the talking! If your session is primarily lecture, it is less likely that attendees will be engaged and much less likely that they will use the information in a practical way when they get home.
4. PowerPoint or Keynote can be useful to offer visuals but don't let your attendees get bored reading slides.
5. Encourage questions and comments—make sure you leave room for attendee participation.
6. Think about what you expect attendees to “do” during your session. If you simply want them to sit and listen, you may be missing an opportunity to engage your learners.
7. Using a conversational tone can make content more relatable, engaging, and lively.
8. Learners prefer examples over explanations. Make your content come to life with real-life examples that attendees can relate to.
9. Provide materials to extend the learning experience. It may be an implementation tool, a list of resources for more information on the topic, a template the attendee can use in their workplace, or a document that promotes a deeper understanding of your content. The idea is to give attendees a clear strategy to continue learning. Materials will be provided to attendees electronically via the DSAIA-2023 app.

Thank you for making the 2023 DSAIA Leadership Conference a great learning experience for our attendees,