

## CHARACTERISTICS OF ADULTS AS LEARNERS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING-LEARNING SITUATIONS

*David E. Hartl*

CHARACTERISTICS OF ADULTS AS LEARNERS	IMPLICATIONS
When people mature in a healthy way:	Implications of these characteristics are:
1) They increasingly regard themselves as having control over most aspects of their lives and learn that responsibility for some aspects of their being is theirs alone (e.g. learning, attitude, interpretation of experience, responses to events, willingness to trust, initiative, courage, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Informal, mature learning environment</li> <li>b) Clarifying learning needs</li> <li>c) Understanding what must be learned and why</li> <li>d) Participating in learning experiences as active persons</li> <li>e) Specifying and assessing what has been learned</li> <li>f) Involving learners as active participants in the learning processes</li> </ul>
2) They increasingly rely on their past experience as the basis for their thinking and behavior; experience can be used as a basis for expanded learning and growth or can serve as a learning inhibitor due to over-reliance on past experience in the face of changing circumstances.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>g) A high degree of trust</li> <li>h) Engaging learners' experiences as a resource</li> <li>i) Utilization of experiential learning techniques</li> <li>j) Emphasis on practical application</li> <li>k) Helping learners to examine experiences objectively and non-defensively</li> <li>l) Facilitating learning from other learners</li> </ul>
3) They are increasingly interested in learning what they need to learn to solve problems, deal with life circumstances, cope with difficulties and opportunities; they increasingly need to know why they are learning what is being offered.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>m) Providing a satisfactory rationale for learning goals</li> <li>n) Organizing the learning process and sequences of activities</li> <li>o) Helping learners to realize issues and ask questions before providing relevant answers or content</li> <li>p) Applying learning to reality as soon as possible</li> </ul>
4) They are increasingly willing, paradoxically, to defer immediate satisfaction to serve the achievement of larger, longer-term goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>q) Helping learners to fit immediate learning experiences into larger life and career patterns</li> <li>r) Facilitating the development of life-long learning skills and values</li> </ul>

Adapted and expanded, with the author's permission, from "Assumptions of Adults as Learners" by Malcolm Knowles, *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: From Pedagogy to Andragogy, Revised and Updated*. (Chicago: Follett Publishing Co., 1980)