How to Facilitate Living your Best Life (With Diabetes)!

How are sessions in this curriculum meant to be delivered?

* Sessions are taught using empowerment education and the theories of adult learners.
* In a traditional classroom the teacher instructs and the “students” listen and take notes. Empowerment education, is the idea that the “teacher” is really a facilitator that empowers all people in the room to both teach each other and learn from each other.
* In empowerment education, learners are invited to share their expertise their own knowledge and life experience. Activities are used to start conversations about how people might take action.
* Empowerment education is based on the adult learning theory.

**What is the Adult Learning Theory?**

* The Adult Learning Theory is based on the idea that adults already know a lot based on their past experiences and learn best when they are invited to share and build upon what they already know.
* Adult Learning Theory emphasizes hands on learning through real life problem solving, role playing, practicing of new skills, games and other techniques.
* Typically adult learners want to see that learning is related to their actual real life day-to-day experiences. They want to be able to use what they learn in their actual life.
* The facilitator will want to encourage participants to share their experiences and ideas. It is also important for the facilitator to foster an atmosphere of support and encouragement. Most adults tend to not contribute to a discussion if they fear criticism.

**The role of the facilitator is to:**

* Encouraging participation and questions from all learners, especially those who have a more difficult time sharing share their ideas
* Intervening if one participant is using shaming language with another participant or if there is conflict between participants.
* Offering support to a learner in a moment of distress. When discussing a topic like diabetes, you may find a participant becomes emotional. Letting them know that it is normal to feel emotions and giving them space to recover by calling on other people.
* Being warm and showing interest so that learners feel comfortable and safe expressing themselves.
* Keeping on task (in a reasonable way). Not that you can’t be flexible, learning can go in a different direction based on the questions and comments of the group, but you don’t want topics from all over the place. Everyone has joined the class to discuss diabetes, and you want to honor that. As a facilitator, you don’t want one person hijacking the class to discuss only what they are hoping to talk about. You also don’t want to get into something unrelated to the purpose of the class.

**Two of the most important things a facilitator can say is, “I don’t know the answer to that” and “Who do you think might be able to help you find the answer to that question?”**

* With any class that is related to health, personal questions cannot and should not be answered in a group. Each person has a unique health history, risk factors, medication plan, food plan, physical limitations, learning limitations, etc… It is VERY important to not answer a persons specific medical question, but refer them to their provider or diabetes educator. By doing this, we also take a tremendous amount of pressure off of ourselves to know everything, eliminate our liability, but most importantly connect people to their health care system and reinforce their active involvement in their personal healthcare.
* Some participants may be facing complex health challenges. There is often not a simple answer, even for the participant’s provider. Some health problems are addressed using multiple treatments. It is important for faciliators not to provide “answers” to these types of issues. It is also important for the facilitator to remind participants who are wanting to provide other participants with “answers” to problems that each person has a unique set of circumstances that simply cannot be addressed in a group.

**How to become comfortable saying I don’t know or I can’t answer that:**

1. If the question is simple, for example- “Are there any pharmacies in town that deliver medications?” You can simply say you don’t know the answer to that, then refer to the group. Perhaps someone in the group has more information about the topic. Also, ask learners to identity resources they have used that may help for this particular issue. For example, “I don’t know the answer to that question. Does anyone know a pharmacy in town that delivers medications? Does anyone have any experience using this service? How was it?”
2. If someone is interested in you commenting on a health condition they have or someone they know- don’t. Just don’t. Explain that medical conditions can be complex and just not something that can be answered in a group. Then ask “But who could help you find an answer to that question?” Review the appropriate health professional to answer that questions. Provider, diabetes educator, podiatrist, etc…