Maximize/Minimize Learning

GOALS

- to engage participants in a process of becoming responsible learners;
- to identify strategies for maximizing learning (and potential potholes along the way);
- to encourage personal self-reflection.

Time

45-60 minutes

HOW IT'S DONE

Maximize/Minimize Learning is a powerful tool to help participants take responsibility for their own learning and identify personal strategies for them to make the most of the training!

It is a specific kind of discovery list. The facilitator first asks "How, in your experience, do you maximize the value of a learning experience? For example, maybe a friend offers to show you how to use a new computer program, or you go to an evening class to learn a new skill. How have you found that in your life you're able to maximize the value of a learning experience?"

Note that you are not asking them how the teacher can be more effective, or how the environment can be more supportive. The teacher may be terrible and the environment worse. The point of this exercise is empowerment. How can you maximize the value of a learning experience? Be very clear about this in your own mind, and when a participant offers an idea which is not about what they have the power to do, explain again the intention of your question: what do you do to maximize . . . .

List the ideas, and interact, ask for an example or two, ask for hands on how many others have found that a way of maximizing the value, ask for surprising ideas that might not already be conventional wisdom in the group.

When the group has generated a sufficient list and understands the range of ways to maximize its learning (no need to make this an exhaustive list), switch to "How, in your experience, do you minimize the value of . . . ?" Smile, assure them this is honesty time, give permission for them to do self-disclosure. Interact a lot with them after the first one or two (not at the beginning). Ask them for examples at first, then ask them how that way of minimizing might show up in this workshop. "Ah, you get sleepy after lunch and zone out? How many others sometimes do that (show of hands)?"

"What have you found works when you zone out, to bring yourself back to the present?" Get some options from participants -- no need to write those up. Another way to ask this question is: "If this shows up in this training, how will we know?"

You have options after this list is up, like forming buddies to talk about how to handle these discoveries ("What support do you need?), or small groups to take different ones of the Minimizing list and do problem-solving, etc. etc.

WHERE TOOL COMES FROM

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