Adult Learning Theory and Practices

Constructivism is a traditional learning theory (before the 20th century), a way of creating meaning from experience and is the foundation to understanding much of adult learning and practice.

Learning Practices: Reflective Practice, Communities of Practice, Role Play, Observation, Structured small group discussion, Journaling, Problem solving activities.

Experiential Learning: Became popular in the early 20th century. Learning as a lifelong process, involving applying and adapting previous experiences to new situations. The experiences we have brings greater understanding a knowledge to draw upon in the future. A quantitative example of this is the evaluation process of *Plan, Do, Study, Act*. A qualitative example of this would refer to the experiences of family members going through the EHDI process, either successfully or unsuccessfully and then mentoring others in the future.

Learning Practices: Reflective Practice, Communities of Practice, Role Play, Observation, Structured small group discussion, Journaling, Problem solving activities.

Transformative (Transformational) Learning: The most studied and written about theories, replacing "Andragogy" as the dominant educational philosophy of adult education. A learning process of making meaning of one's experience and examining dominant ideologies with the goal of changing social inequities within one's self and/or others. Coming of age stories are transformational learning; the hero's journey. The process or transformational learning does require the learner, or in this case a parent, to have dialogue with others as they go through the learning process. We can see this in the relationship's families have within EI services, or connecting with other parents or Deaf adults, or all three.

Learning Practices: Service learning experiences. Storytelling activities. Interview someone
Resource:
1. 2012 *The Handbook of Transformative Learning*, edited by Edward W. Taylor and Patricia Granton (Josey-Bass publisher)

Andragogy: Considered the first systematic formulation of adult learning. Andragogy of the first adult learning theory that you see when Googling, Adult Learning, which include 6 assumptions.

1. Learners Self-concept: A person matures, his/her self-concept moves from that of dependent to self-directing
2. Experience: An adult accumulates a growing reservoir of experience, rich resource for learning.

3. Readiness to learn: The readiness of an adult to learn is closely related to the developmental tasks of his or her social role.
4. Problem centered orientation: There is change in time perspective as people mature—from future application of knowledge (Problem centered vs. subject centered)
5. Internal motivation: Adults are mostly driven by internal motivation, rather than external motivators.
6. The Need to Know: Adults need to know the reason for learning something)

These assumptions provide a framework for educators, but there is no way of knowing whether these strategies actually help adults to learn. Each assumption is situational and therefore may or may not apply to every adult learner.

Learning Practices: Exploring your own learning as an adult. How would you apply this to teaching others? What assumptions would you employ when teaching others? Which would be difficult to do?

Self-Directed Learning:

Personal attribute- an individual predisposition toward this type of learning, and comfort with autonomy in the learning process.
Process- an approach to learning that is controlled by the learner. Many parent leaders are self-directed learners based on the unavailable educational opportunities. Often, we are learning from other parents with mixed outcomes.

Learning Practices:
Consider SDL in virtual learning environments. Building self-learning in your schedule. Identify your self-directed skill level on Grow's Self-Directed Learning Stages:

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TABLE 4.1 GROW'S SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING STAGES

Stage	Learner Status	Educator Role	Teaching Strategies for Stage
1	Dependent Lacking self-direction	Authority Direct learning Coach Teacher-centered	Providing introductory material Giving few choices Lecturing—subject centered Drilling Helping the learner see the immediate connection between concepts and application Giving immediate feedback Tutoring
2	Interested Confident	Motivator Guide	Inspiring learning Helping learner set goals Assisting with development of learning strategies Lecturing inspirationally with guided discussion Applying the basics in an interesting way Providing close supervision
3	Involved Engaged as self-directed learners Possess knowledge and self-efficacy for SDL	Facilitator Partner	Applying the material Facilitating discussion Applying learning to real problems Group projects or presentations Encouraging critical thinking Providing learning strategies Collaborative learning
4	Self-directed learner Able to plan, execute, and evaluate learning	Consultant Delegator Mentor	Encouraging independent projects and learner-led discussions Learning through discovery Offering expertise, consulting, and monitoring as needed Providing autonomy Building in opportunities for learners to share their learning with each other Focus on both the process and product of learning Service learning Coaching

Source: Adapted from Grow, 1991, 1994.

The Oddi Continuing Learning Inventory (OCLI) and the Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale (SDLRS) are used extensively to measure learners' tendency toward self-direction. The OCLI is a 24-question scale that measures self-directedness as a personality trait (Oddi, 1986; Oddi, Ellis, & Roberson, 1990). The more widely used SDLRS was developed

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Digital Learning: Adult learners today will not think twice of using technology as a tool to their learning. There are many opportunities from information surfing topics of interest to higher education sources. (online learning, social media, Google, You Tube, etc.)

Considerations to think about regarding digital learning are effectiveness of online learning, navigation and digital literacy (knowing how to use the technology including what apps to use and platforms to work from) Finally, applying evaluation to digital learning.

However, when considering using technology to inform and connect it's helpful to know the level of digital literacy someone has and if they have access to the proper technology.

Learning Practices: Join a social network such as Facebook. Construct an element of technology into an activity. Create a class on Wiki, or Facebook. Review scholarly articles about Online Learning
Resources:
1. Aleph Molainari: "Let's Bridge the Digital Divide" TED Talk
2. Salman Kahn: "Lets Use video to Reinvent Education" TED Talk

Critical Thinking: Thinking critically requires us to check the assumptions that we hold, by assessing the accuracy and validity of the evidence for these assumptions and by looking at ideas and actions from multiple perspectives. A person who thinks critically is much better placed to take informed actions; actions that are well grounded in evidence and that are more likely to achieve the results intended.

Learning Practices: Learners explore and discuss their own privilege and how it relates to others. Connect with someone who does not have the same privilege, what can you learn about them?
Resources:
1. Brookfield, S. (2012b). *Teaching for critical thinking: Tools and techniques to help students question their assumptions*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
2. http://www.stephenbrookfield.com/workshop
3. www.criticalthinking.org

Culture and Context: Just like being parenting, adult learning is a journey. "Culture is a pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problem of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valued and taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems." (Schein, 2004, p.17) Culture deeply influences nation, ethnic groups, geographic religions, organizations, social groups, neighborhoods, and schools. Privilege and power are a part of the culture dialogue.

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Learning Practice:

- Interview someone from another culture than your own.
- What are the key social differences? How is learning and education valued?
- Create a pie chart of positionality (Woman, adult learner, mother, spiritual, educator, worker, middle class, etc)
- Reflect on the questions below either individually or in small groups.
    - What are some of the theories you hold about the world around you?
    - How did you derive these theories?
    - What makes a theory "good"?
- When designing a workshop, consider "POP".
    - Purpose
    - Outcomes
    - Process for attaining Purpose and Outcomes

Resources:

1. http://www.ctl.uga.edu/pages/diversity-resources
2. http://www.couragerenewal.org/
3. McLean, G.N. & Johansen, B.C.P. (Eds.). (2006). Worldviews of adult learning in the workplace. Advances in Developing Human Resources: *Worldviews of adult learning in the workplace*, 8(3).

Reference:

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