

PTS Tips for Co-Training

Presented by Dave Turk at the November 2014 PTS Statewide Trainers' Meeting - Additional ideas compiled from PTS Staff

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Co-training is more than just two trainers being in the same room together; and it is more than just dividing up the content of a class. There are elements of intention and preparation that need to be addressed to co-train successfully.

"Co-training takes place when trainers work together, merging their skills, expertise, and experience to jointly conduct a training session or program. The synergistic effect of co-training generally results in a product better than either person would have produced alone."

From "A Guide to Co-Training in Face-to-Face Programs," by James A. McCaffery and Wilma J. Gormley, www.trg-inc.com

Preparing Together

- Have face-to-face planning time if at all possible. This can be critically important for co-trainers who have never worked together or when dealing with unfamiliar classes.
- Allow at least ½ day of planning for a full day of training.
- Clearly define responsibilities for bringing technology, handouts, etc.
- Be sure to discuss back-up plans if things don't work the way you anticipate (technology will fail you, so make sure you don't fail each other).
- Talk about learning points, purposes of scenarios and activities and historical perspectives of training material, not just the words on the pages.
- Plan for needed tasks in the training room. For example, will one trainer record information on a flip chart while the other is leading a discussion? When will evaluations be distributed, and by whom?
- Build on each other's strengths when planning your training strategy.
- Agree on a way that either of you can ask the other to jump in if you're feeling stuck.
- Discuss covering for each other if the unexpected happens (such as - trainer caught in traffic and won't arrive until after the session begins, sudden illness, needing to deal with a class participant individually).
- Plan to close the loop after the training session.

During the Training

Be present for each other. When you are not actively leading a section, it's not down time (for checking e-mails, texting, etc.). Co-training is sharing responsibility, not handing-off that responsibility.

Support your co-trainer, but don't interfere or interrupt. You are a team, so affirm each other when needed and assist when requested. Make use of each others' strengths to create the best training experience possible.

Tips for Experienced Trainers

- Be intentional about including your co-trainer in the flow of the class. Be willing to let your co-trainer share the wisdom.
- Be open to alternative ways to approach discussions and activities.
- Fight the urge to jump in.
- Don't try to re-create yourself. Different definitely can be OK.
- Provide gentle support when needed.
- When your co-trainer is presenting, minimize yourself as a distraction.
- Give positive reinforcement and feedback often.
- Show respect for your co-trainer.

Tips for Newer Trainers

- Don't be afraid to ask lots of questions before the session.
- Plan to share your experiences that relate to the material and can enhance learning points. This also helps you build credibility with the trainees.
- Don't try to duplicate the way someone else trains the class. Be yourself.
- Fight the urge to defer to your co-trainer.
- Remember that experience builds confidence.
- Show your strengths, but don't be afraid to take on a challenge.
- You are part of the PTS team, so it's a given that you are awesome! Let your awesomeness shine.

Remember

Always de-brief the co-training experience. What went well? What could have been better? What would you do differently the next time? Be honest if something made you uncomfortable so it can be addressed before you co-train again.

Co-trainers are there to help each other look good, but at the end of the day, it's not really about us. We are here to support the people who are helping some of Wisconsin's neediest families find a better life.