

# CHART



## Introduction to Adult Learning Principles

Adults learn best when they feel there is mutual trust, respect and cooperation between themselves and the educator(s). This resource can help you create breast health education to better connect with your audience.

Research has identified six principles that describe how adults learn. Below is an overview of Knowles' six adult learning principles with guidance on applying these to breast health and breast cancer education in Black and African American communities.

Principle	Description	Application
1. Adults are internally motivated and self-directed.	<p>Life experiences play a major role in adults' motivation to learn.</p> <p>Adults who know a breast cancer survivor or someone who has had a benign (non-cancerous) change in their breast may be motivated to learn about their own risk factors and what they can do to reduce risk.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Invite people to share their experiences with breast cancer.</li><li>• Ask them to share their reasons for attending the discussion or presentation.</li><li>• For example, you can ask:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Have you been affected by breast cancer in any way?</li><li>• Does anyone in the audience know a breast cancer survivor?</li><li>• Do you want to share your experience with us?</li></ul></li></ul>

Principle	Description	Application
<p>2. Adults have prior knowledge and experiences.</p>	<p>Information about and prior experiences with breast cancer can affect the way people approach the subject of breast health.</p> <p>For instance, a learner who has cared for a loved one with breast cancer may be able to easily understand her own risk of breast cancer. However, misperceptions and misinformation can lead her to ignore warning signs if they do not match her prior experience.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask the audience about their knowledge and previous experience related to breast cancer.</li> <li>• Having this information will give you the chance to replace myths and incorrect information with accurate information, and to build rapport with the audience.</li> </ul>
<p>3. Adults are goal-oriented.</p>	<p>Generally, adults come to the learning experience with set goals in mind.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask participants what they would like to learn about breast cancer.</li> <li>• Offer information to meet those learning goals.</li> <li>• Let participants know that they can ask questions at any time during the presentation.</li> </ul>
<p>4. Adult learning is relevancy-oriented.</p>	<p>Adult learners need to have a firm understanding of why the information being taught is relevant to them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share that breast cancer is a problem in the community and that many people do not know about it.</li> <li>• Modify your talking points to make them more relevant for your audience.</li> </ul>

Principle	Description	Application
5. Adults are practical.	Adults tend to learn best by practicing what they have learned.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give your audience opportunities to practice what they are learning from you.</li> <li>• For example, instead of simply describing questions that a person might ask a health care provider, you can engage in role-play activities that allow participants to ask each other questions.</li> </ul> <div data-bbox="1073 625 1458 968" style="border: 1px solid #d9534f; border-radius: 15px; padding: 10px; margin-top: 10px;">  <p data-bbox="1122 825 1409 930">See <a href="#">Questions to Ask the Doctor</a> for more information.</p> </div>
6. Adult learners need to feel respected.	Adults do not learn well when they feel degraded, inexperienced or unknowledgeable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Always treat people as equals with relevant experiences and knowledge.</li> <li>• Allow listeners and audience members to express themselves without fear of criticism.</li> <li>• Foster respect and connection with people by introducing yourself and any personal experience or reasons that you are passionate about your work.</li> <li>• Ask participants to introduce themselves and share their knowledge and experiences about breast cancer.</li> </ul>

1 Knowles, M. *The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species*. (Houston: Gulf, 1984).