

SUE PIVETTA, EDITOR

# 911 TRAINING CONNECTION

A NEWSLETTER FOR EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS

## '12' PROVOCATIONS!

**T**his issue is dedicated to discussing the fine points of adult learning theory and how it relates to the center setting. What do we do that works, what do we do that does not mesh with current adult learning theory? How can we bring the blurry concepts (that most trainers feel from their finer senses) into focus in very real and practical ways. These 12 are meant to PROVOKE thought!

What do we do in training that just doesn't work for the trainee's ability to learn at the highest level possible? What type of person makes an exceptional trainer? What trainers do we need to dump out of the training program? What are we doing to support and assist trainers to do good work and what gets in their way? Come and explore some new thought on 9-1-1 training.



### WHAT ARE YOU — EGG, TADPOLE OR FROGGY? CAN YOU HANG, WIGGLE OR LEAP?

Adult Learning Theory says that we must progress from the simplest form — step by step — to more complex learning. Recognized in adult learning theory are **7 LEVELS OF LEARNING**. 1st is 'COGNITIVE, 'reCOGnize' - "*Oh, I see —CAD is like a computer card that has information on it.*" 2nd is KNOWING — I remember — which is Knowledge: Remembering previously learned material — "*Now what do you mean by CAD again?*" 3rd is COMPREHENSION Ability to grasp the meaning. "*So priority tells us how many and what type of units!*" 4th level is APPLICATION or the ability to use learned material. i.e. Enter a call into CAD using the correct priority. 5th Is ANALYSIS to understand content and structure "*I put that in as a Priority 2 —why didn't it recommend a K9?*"

6th level is **SYNTHESIS**: Internal judgment of a never encountered call type or situation that requires an immediate decision based on prior experience and knowledge. 7th the pinnacle **EVALUATION** expert judgment and valuing which is the ability to look at any work and compare it to a Best Practice.

List these 7 and consider where your trainee is - you can determine this by the trainee's feedback to you - to get inside the trainee's brain - read on - for more trainer tools.



### ARE YOU SCARING YOUR TRAINEES? DUMP VICIOUS TRAINERS!

Trainers often think trainees are motivated by the "...or else" concept. Fear of losing the job or failing the test is the ANTI-learning technique. Adults learn more from having a 'mature, patient, skilled' trainer who creates ideal growing conditions - and are equals. We often hear from trainees who describe their trainer as: *not people person, rude, condescending, abrupt, critical, and embarrassing*. They ask us what to do, they know this is not good training! Learning is private — so growth comes from learning events being trainee-centered: Such learning events are designed for maximum intensity and direct involvement of the trainee.

For example: Placing a trainee in a simulated call allows for — and welcomes — mistakes. Putting a new trainee in a LIVE setting creates stress and anxiety in some TRAINERS, creates tension FOR THE TRAINEE — not good learning. Great console training involves being floor ready and confident.



### PEEKING INTO THE TRAINEE'S BRAIN LEARNING IS A PRIVATE AFFAIR

How can you tell what they are learning? A simple form found in The Exceptional Trainer called the Trainee Observation Form is the

*continued on page 4...*

## PROVOKING TRAINING THOUGHTS

*continued from page 1*

ultimate trainee centered learning tool. With this form you not only involve trainees in their learning- you give them the responsibility that is theirs — learning.

The trainer has one job — to create a safe and expert learning environment for their equal — the trainee. If you use a DOR or Daily Observation Report you are ‘thinking’ you know what your trainee is learning — wrong. You are reporting what you observe, not what they have told you they are learning. ***How can you find out?*** By asking with dialogue exercises or the feedback form suggested. The trainee has just provided you with proof positive that they ‘got it’ or didn’t in their own handwriting. Clear training documentation.

At a training site I asked a trainee the following question: ***“How is your learning going up to this point in time?”***

I received a two page hand written narrative that was packed with great information; praise for his trainer, needs, and self valuation. No one had ever asked him. Try it.



### **FACING THE TRAINING EXECUTIONER DIE, BARELY SURVIVE OR THRIVE?**

Malcolm Knowles, the father of adult learning concepts, developed two terms — ***pedagogy*** and ***andragogy***. Pedagogy simply states we treat learning like K-12. Learning is structured, fed, trainees do not participate in design, and training is inflexible.

***Andragogy*** makes the following assumptions about the design of learning: (1) Adults need to know why they need to learn something (2) Adults need to learn experientially, (3) Adults approach learning as problem-solving, and (4) Adults learn when treated with respect.

I can testify from eleven years of teaching adults at college that these 2 concepts are 100% solid, not theory. Andragogy is adult training and becomes most useful when you must

fire someone. Don't you often ask yourself — ***“Did I do everything I could to train this person right?”*** Many programs use the K-12 methods which may cause learning gaps, turnover and a host of other problems some of us thought were just the way it is in this work. Strategies such as **case studies, role playing, simulations, and self-evaluation** are NOT just distractions — they are necessary for the highest level of skill development. Great trainer adopt a role of facilitator or learning resource rather than lecturer, parent, or executioner.

Adult Learning Theory application isn't just fluff — with high turnover and training budgets cut we must honor those who make it through the hiring process by ensuring that we keep our promise to value them and their learning.

How hard is learning to do this work — in this setting — with our current practices — on an adult learner? Can you imagine? And do we care? After all if they don't survive they don't belong here — RIGHT?

***“If students aren't learning the way we teach them, then we need to teach them the way they learn.”***

This is an interesting quote used by my college Dean. Training programs can be flexible and supportive.



### **SIT DOWN, SHUT UP & HANG ON HALF OF YOU PEOPLE WILL FAIL!**

During an Exceptional Trainer course, a very experienced trainer bragged to me that she always began her class with a warning about how difficult the training was going to be and ‘statistics’ regarding how many people would fail. This is contrary to adult learning theory — and here is why. Adults need to believe they are competent and **capable** of learning or gaining the skill offered. Although some trainers believe ‘warnings’ are motivators, adult learning experts say the opposite happens — adult learners don't want to fail, become protective and ‘downshift’. Somewhat like entering a beautiful

cove to swim while being told there could be sharks present — the freedom to relax and enjoy may be taken away. We all learn more when we are relaxed, alert and energized.

A better approach may be to remind the trainees they were chosen from many good candidates and you have **every expectation** they will be the highest scoring trainees ever to walk through the doors. The higher self-confidence you can promote, the more success you will have as a trainer.



## THE NEW TRAINEE – YOU KNOW – WHAT’S HIS NAME

**Do You Love Me? Do You? HUH?**

If you have studied Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs you know that FITTING IN is vital to learning. Why? Because learning takes place in the higher parts of the brain — the Neo Cortex — not in the lower Reptilian brain — where fear survival instincts take over. The ability to memorize or critically think cannot happen when a trainee is **worried about surviving**. What do we do to promote a trainee’s ‘fitting in’? What does a trainee do to NOT fit in? How can we avoid this problem as trainers?

A trainee related she felt like an outcast and didn’t know why. Is this hazing? As I entered City Comm I noticed a huge banner above the door — WELCOME BARB AND DAVE! On the table was a white sheet cake — WELCOME BARB AND DAVE. Great job, City Comm! — In recognizing a very basic adult learning theory of ‘fitting in’ and being valued to learn better.



## ME MULTI-TASK! I CAN BARELY TYPE THEN JUST MOVE OVER (\$%&\*&#!)

Typing is a skill; a skill is learned by practice. A skill is not demonstrated one day and magically learned the next. If you type 30 wpm the day you are hired, you will type 30 wpm for a long time — unless you practice hours every day. In my college program it took students 6 months of daily practice to rise their typing scores 10-12 wpm.

Multi tasking is a skill that is simply **many skills added** together to create a new skill called ‘**multi-tasking**’ — the skill of integrating ALREADY FORMULATED SKILLS at once. Adult learning theory says that to improve a motor skill, there is ONE way — practice, practice and practice. If you hire someone who cannot type at least 40+ wpm they will ‘appear’ to be unable to multi-task. In reality they are unable to integrate typing into the multitude of things they are asked to do -because the skill is not at the level it needs to be. This has to do with left and right brain activity — but more on that later. The POINT? The higher the isolated skill, the better the adult will be able to integrate it into the other skills.



## WHAT WERE YOU THINKING THIS JOB WAS?

**BUT...I DIDN’T KNOW WHAT I WAS GETTING INTO!**

Trainee turnover excuse #101 — they didn’t know what they were getting into. Maybe, maybe not. Maybe they understood that they were working nights, rotating shifts, do you offer ‘training’ or resources to help them know how to manage or handle this new way of life? Managing your life around rotating shift work is as much a part of skillful work as typing. Give high regard to the complexity of learning when physically tired, mentally stressed and unfamiliar with how to handle home life and shift work.

Agencies could ease a person into shift work so that when they are scheduled to learn — they aren’t given a crazy-making schedule. You want them to learn — so help a kid out. The care and feeding of trainers is as important as the trainee. Trainers who are scheduled trainee after trainee often become burned out - which is demonstrated by apathy and lack of involvement - that plus tired trainees - trouble.



## WE SUCK! THEY SUCK! WE ALL SUCK! WHAT HAVE I GOTTEN MYSELF INTO?

People in emergency communications are very good at what they do, and they’re human. Humans sometimes like to complain. Can the common habit of complaining about others interfere with learning?

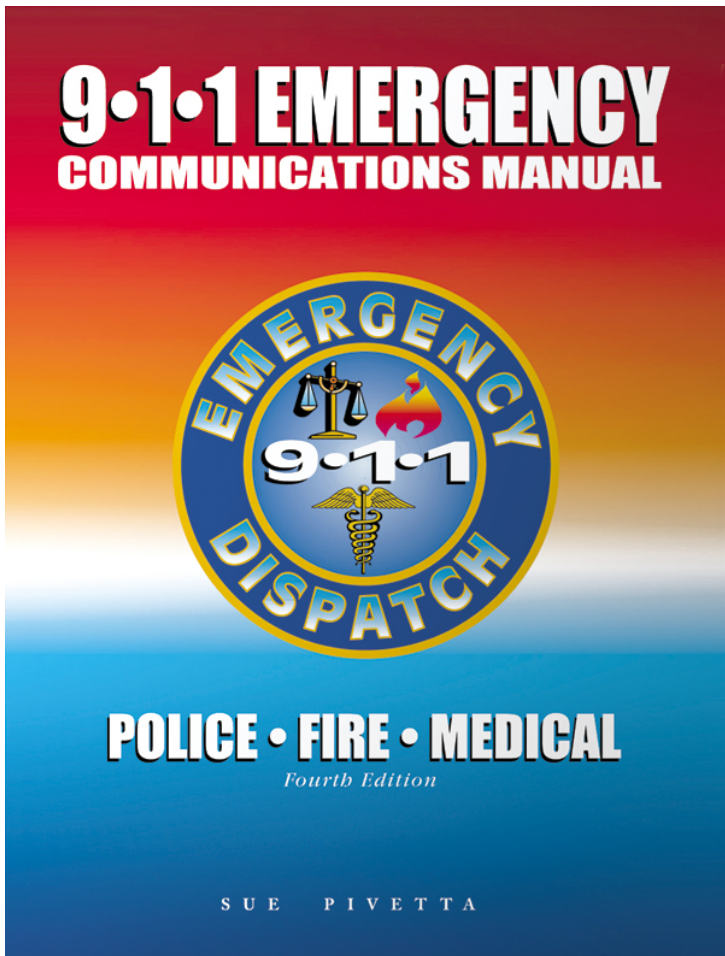
Adult Learning Theory says learners must believe they are learning from a ‘competent source’ of information — the experts. They need to feel they are in good hands with their trainer — they need to feel this person is someone they can trust to offer competence. Why, because they plan to be ‘great’. *“We all do it different”* may result in — *“OK, then I must look for what I believe to be the best practice, best trainer, best way of doing things!”* — which MAY not be what my current trainer is offering. This is not spoken of course, only considered.

*“Our evaluation form sucks!”* may result in — *“Then I can make up my mind about my own abilities and progress.”*

If indeed all your trainers believe they do it different perhaps you can make a list of what the trainee has ‘discretion’ on and what they do not. What is non-discretion — trainers all do the same - teach the same. If the evaluation form sucks — possibly create a work group to improve either the form — or the trainers’ perception of the form — or the practice of complaining to the trainee. Take care about the reputation of your training and your trainers — or — the already challenging work of training in the center will become even more difficult.

*continued on page 7 ...*





## PROVOKING TRAINING THOUGHTS

*continued from page 5*

**10** **I AM NOT A ROBOT!**  
THOUGHTS & THE THINKER  
Trainers and Trainees may look like they are on autopilot but they're not.

There is an amazing colorful array of wild emotion, imagination thinking, hidden feeling and secret analysis going on inside those heads! What is a good way to keep all this 'thinking' from interfering in the learning and training process?

Journaling provides clarity, discovery, and authentic expression. *"The difficulties we encounter in our life are like logs; our inner life is like a flame. What we need is a safe way to burn the logs,"* revealed Ira Progoff, called the "Father of Journal Therapy."

For the trainer, keeping a journal can help to organize thoughts, plan and reflect on valuable tidbits of information that would have otherwise been

## The 9-1-1 Desktop Academy

" The **pre-loaded** training software is **perfect** for the employee **just starting** off and will serve as an **excellent refresher** for the **seasoned** dispatcher."

— Michael F. Curtin, Division Supervisor, Amherst 911



lost. Journaling is not a daily observation report on the trainee — it's a trainer's self-observations of his or her training -how is it going — how is the trainer feelings — what might they want to bring up at the next meeting? It is their 'someone to talk to daily' — self. For the trainee, a journal is a record of experiences, perceptions, thoughts and observations. A self-portrait and self-inventory, a journal can be a springboard to put the present into perspective or a way to decide and take action.

Famous diarist Virginia Woolf once explained, *"The past is beautiful because one never realizes an emotion at the time. It expands later, and thus we don't have complete emotions about the present, only about the past."* In a journal, a trainee can celebrate his or her own personal growth.



### HANDLING THE 'KNOW IT ALL' TRAINEE YEAH — KNOW THIS!

A trainee says, "I KNOW" a lot and it's annoying to the point of distraction. You know that your demeanor towards them will begin to show in your irritation — you want to handle this right — but aren't quite sure what to do. You try to be patient but you really just want to push them off their chair. **What is the adult thing to do?**

The trainer could choose to interpret this behavior in many ways:

- 1) The trainee does know
- 2) The trainee is trying to look knowledgeable
- 3) The trainee is an annoying human

The solution to this problem is to simply communicate the problems openly and honestly. "You seem to say,

# Think Like?



...not act like

LEARN MORE...

Check Out [Call Taker Training](#) on the website!

'I know' a lot in training and this is distracting to me. I'm sure you do know a lot, but can you help me think of a way that I can do what I'm obligated to do without distraction?"

The trick here is to say this without clenched teeth. And of course the wording can be your own — but the idea is to enlist the adult learning in solving THE problem (not YOUR problem). When you have a problem in training — no matter what it is — you can use TACTICAL TRAINING TECHNIQUES.

### Here are the steps:

- 1) Define the problem in behavior terms
- 2) Define the preferred
- 3) List ALL possible causes
- 4) List all possible solutions
- 5) Rate your solutions and create action steps
- 6) Share this with the trainee!
- 7) Ask the trainee for their input on what might work best to solve this problem



### STOP THE INSANITY! KEEP DOING WHAT YOU'RE DOING ... AND...

Trainers don't want to train? Trainers are tragic heroes? Trainers are burning out? Trainers complain a lot? Trainers complain about each other? Trainers are giving up complaining? Trainers are apathetic clumps of human misery? Trainers are pit bulls wishing for the jugular?

### What do trainers need most?

Trainers need to be listened to and motivated! They need meetings with other trainers — give it to them.

Trainers need stuff that costs real money. So, increase your training budget for their STUFF.

Trainers need to be valued. Pay them or pay them more!!

Trainers need more TIME — give it to them so they can plan and evaluate and do good work.

Trainers need to love what they are doing. So, honor people who LOVE to educate — find them and use them. And honor people who do NOT love to train — and release them.

Trainers need to deserve and receive respect. Trainers must be the ELITE RANK of the agency. Show that with trainer pins, trainer badges — halos — whatever!

Let's do more thinking about our most valuable resources — trainers and trainees.