Learning Objectives | with this toolkit you will be able to:

- **Outline** the basic principles of adult learning.
- **Observe** how to facilitate and present fail fests well.
- **Integrate** recommended practices into the design and facilitation of your fail fest session.
Table of Contents

Conference Vision

Adult Learning Principles
  Mel Silberman's Top 10 Training/Facilitation Tips

Fail Fest / Risky Business Stories
  Fail Fest Story Example #1
    What Went Well?
  Fail Fest Example #2
    What Went Well?

Design and Presentation Tips

Additional Resources
Conference Vision

The 2020 USAID Global Education Conference is our opportunity to create an ongoing system of learning, build relationships and networks across sectors and countries, and share our collective knowledge, evidence, and experience to better support education as a critical part of a country's journey to self-reliance.

As the education sector, we are committed to creating spaces and opportunities that apply best practices in adult learning and encourage active engagement. This means relying less on lectured PowerPoint presentations and instead applying more innovative formats and methods that are better suited to spark and support learning around a given topic.
Adult Learning Principles

"My conception of adult learning is this: a cooperative venture in non authoritarian, informal learning, the chief purpose of which is to discover the meaning of experience; a quest of the mind which digs down to the roots of the preconceptions which formulate our conduct; a technique of learning for adults which makes education coterminous with life and hence elevates living itself to the level of adventurous experiment."

- Malcolm Knowles | Author, The Adult Learner

Mel Silberman's Top 10 Training/Facilitation Tips

Mel Silberman is the author of the seminal book, Active Training: A Handbook of Techniques, Designs, Case Examples, and Tips, among many other books on adult education. Below are his top 10 tips for designing and facilitating successful learning sessions for adults.

1. **It's not what you give them; it's what they take away that counts.** Our minds are like sponges as we soak up knowledge and information. When sponges are saturated, any additional water will run right through. Just as the sponge is overloaded, a learner can experience cognitive overload when he or she receives more information than the brain can store in its working memory. It doesn’t matter how much information you disseminate. If the learner does not retain that information, learning has not taken place. The challenge to the trainer is to present information in such a way that participants do not experience overload.

2. **You can't hide in a pair.** Don't overlook the power of pairs to promote active learning. Asking participants to work with learning partners is an efficient and effective active-learning technique. It guarantees 100 percent participation.

3. **Telling is not training.** The belief that "I gave them information," "covered the material," or "told them how to do it" is very misleading for both the trainer and the learner. Telling, explaining, or lecturing does not guarantee the receiver of the information understands it. Learning is not an automatic result of pouring information in another person’s head. People learn by doing, not by being told.
4. **Distinguish between “need to know” and “nice to know.”** When designing your training program (session), focus on what participants absolutely need to know. This is particularly important when there are time constraints. Don’t try to cram eight hours of content into a two-hour program. By clearly defining objectives for what participants will know and be able to do by the end of the sessions, trainers clarify content and select appropriate learning strategies.

5. **Inquiring minds want to know.** Human beings are naturally curious. If you have any doubt, just watch young children exploring and learning about the world around them. Take advantage of that innate curiosity. Create learning experiences that require the learning to seek something such as an answer to a question, information to solve a problem, or ways to do his or her job.

6. **When training is active, the participants do the work.** Participants work in concert, encouraging and facilitating one another’s efforts to achieve, complete tasks, and reach the group’s goals. People understand concepts better and retain information longer when they are actively involved with the learning process. The trainer’s role is to create and environment in which learning takes place and to facilitate the learning process.

7. **People will remember what they figure out for themselves.** One of the trainer’s objectives is to get participants to think. Learning experiences that require participants to use their minds will result in better retention, both long term and short term.

8. **Get them active from the start.** Getting people involved from the very beginning through some type of opening activity accomplishes several purposes. Techniques that immediately involve participants are very effective in piquing interest, arousing curiosity, and preparing them for the learning experience. They can help reduce tension and anxieties, energize the group, set a tone for the session, and involve everyone. Most importantly, opening activities communicate to the participants that they are not going to sit back and be passive learners or receivers of information.

9. **It’s not about you.** Focus on your audience, not on yourself. Unfortunately, some trainers are more concerned about showcasing themselves and demonstrating how much they know. When you put the needs of the learner first, you automatically change the way you design and deliver training.
10. When I hear, I forget. When I hear and see, I remember a little. When I hear, see, and ask questions or discuss with someone else, I begin to understand. When I hear, see, discuss, and do, I acquire knowledge and skill. When I teach to another, I master. This Active Learning Credo is a modification of what Confucius declared over 2400 years ago: "What I hear, I forget. What I see, I remember. What I do, I understand."

Fail Fest / Risky Business Stories

Designed to embrace the learning value of taking risks. Presenters will share a story that celebrates a risk they have taken in their work and did not pan out as hoped, but nonetheless led to valuable learning. After the stories are shared, participants in the audience ask the storyteller(s) questions to learn more about what happened.

This is an ideal format for unpacking challenges and lessons learned from your work.

“I’ve missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I’ve lost almost 300 games. Twenty-six times, I’ve been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I’ve failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed.”

- Michael Jordan
Fail Fest Story Example #1

In this presentation, Rikita Kurup, the Assistant Director of ReadySetSoar, shares their "Fail Forward" story at the 2013 Cradle to Career Network Convening in Dallas, Texas.

What Went Well?

- **She follows the 4-part fail story construction**, clearly articulating:
  - (1) what the program tried
  - (2) when they started to notice things were not going as planned
  - (3) how they pivoted
  - (4) what lessons were learned.

- **Her story is less than 10 minutes**. A fail story should not be long. It's important to paint a picture of what happened and get to the point, but not include a lot of unnecessary details.
Fail Fest Example #2

In this presentation at the FHI 360 Challenge Conference, Wayan Vota gives a talk on failure - the unspoken partner to innovation and scale in international development programs. This is not a "Fail Fest" story, per se, but in this presentation he does share the importance of celebrating failure. He also models good public speaking techniques and hence there is much that can be learned about this format with this example.

What Went Well?

- **Engaged the audience right at the beginning** asking folks to raise their hands if they feel they have failed in a development project. He also closes his talk by engaging the audience at the end.

- **He injects humor throughout his presentation** to keep the audience energy light and fun.

- **He is clearly well rehearsed**, allowing him to have good pacing, good eye contact with the entire audience, and clarity in the points he is making.
Design and Presentation Tips

- **Your story should be ten minutes or less.** Think about someone telling a story at the dinner table or at a social gathering. Anything that goes on for more than 10 minutes, uninterrupted, will most likely be perceived as too long. Audience members will have an opportunity to ask questions about your story, so you will have time to elaborate on certain aspects of it if need be.

- **Practice telling your story in front of friends and colleagues.** Get their reactions and feedback to where the story was clear/unclear, too fast or too slow, etc. and then refine accordingly.

- **Use the 4-part fail story structure:**
  - Part 1 - here is what we tried...
  - Part 2 - this is when we knew it wasn’t working...
  - Part 3 - this is how we pivoted...
  - Part 4 - here is what we learned...

Additional Resources

- [Fail Fest FAQs](FailFestival.org)
- [Fail Fest Workshop Kit](Wikimedia.org)
- [Why Failure Is the Foundation of Innovation](Inc.com (article))
- [8 Ways Smart People Use Failure to Their Advantage](LinkedIn.com (article))