

Attention and Motivation Action Plan Checklist (last updated 1/28/2016)
Use this planning checklist to help prepare instructional strategies for your programs.

Attention: is the root of the learning process and essential for facilitating a meaningful learning episode. To ensure learners are ready to learn, consider these items:

- Mental energy:
 - Good fuel that supports focal maintenance: exercise, hydration, fresh fruit (glucose), protein (avoid carbohydrates and sugar – especially sugar).
 - Adequate sleep: Brain Rule #6 Sleep well, think well: <http://brainrules.net/sleep>
- Saliency determination: (i.e. meaningfulness – overlaps into motivation)
 - Is the learning meaningful (connected to past experience) and does it make sense (key consideration for novices)? Learning that is associated with emotional or personal meaning are most likely to become relational memories and be stored in the long term memory.
- Focus: The good news is there is no such thing as not paying attention; your brain is always paying attention to something...the bad news is a learner's brain may not be paying attention to your instruction. "We don't pay attention to boring things. What we pay attention to is profoundly influenced by memory. Our previous experience predicts where we should pay attention. We pay attention to things like emotions, threats and sex. Regardless of who you are, the brain pays a great deal of attention to these questions: Can I eat it? Will it eat me? Can I mate with it? Will it mate with me? Have I seen it before?" (Medina, 2008).
 - Mindful awareness practice: helps learners develop controls to maintain focus and avoid cognitive wandering.
 - No multi-tasking (multitasking is referred to as a neuromyth – the brain can't do it).
 - Chunk learning segments into 10 minute segments; "you must do something emotionally relevant at each 10 minute mark to regain attention" (Medina, <http://brainrules.net/attention>).
- Novelty: Novelty is an innate attention-getter as is intensity of stimuli (loud and bright) and movement. However....a novel event is only novel for a short time before habituation sets in.

Motivation: the act or process of giving someone a reason for doing something; the condition of being eager to act or work; a force or influence that causes someone to do something (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/motivation>). Learning motivation rock stars Richard Ryan and Edward Deci (2007) suggest these considerations in planning a learning episode to facilitate motivation:

- Reason/rationale: the learners have a clear understanding of why the learning benefits them.
- Connect to the other learners, the learning and the instructor ("We feel therefore we learn").
- Effective in the sense the learners have a sense of success with the learning and usefulness in applying the learning.
- Agentic, the learner has the capacity to act independently and make their own choices.
- Self-efficacy (this is from Linnenbrink and Pintrich, 2003) ensure the learners know they can accomplish the learning task (albeit with an appropriate amount of effort).
- Stress...when frightened, nervous or tense you can't get to the higher cognition levels of your brain and repeated stress causes the dendrites to actually retreat and retract preventing the information from passing into the long term memory for storage and recall. Stress basically shuts down your brain functions except for fight or flight.
- Fun...having fun speeds learning because dopamine (aka happy juice a neurotransmitter) is secreted when having fun. Repeated success results in anticipated fun and secreted dopamine even before the fun learning activities begin. Sometimes it can be as simple as a smile or a welcoming environment.

Reflect and Adjust for continuous improvement: What did I set out to do?; What actually happened?; Why did it happen?; What needs to change to improve this instruction?

Questions? Need to learn more? Need the references or citations details? Contact Chuck (chuck.bagley@unh.edu).