

Setting the Context

Why is setting the context so darn important?

Setting the context is a useful strategy in any training you conduct. How many trainings have you attended and you didn't know the purpose or reason you were there? When you don't have the answers to those questions, you typically "check out." You probably don't pay attention to the materials; nor do you think about how you could implement the information to improve the work you do with children, adults, and families.

Context setting is the trainer's opportunity to clearly inform the audience of the training purpose AND even more important, it is an opportunity to motivate and encourage buy-in from the training participants.

These are ***participant questions*** you should consider when setting the context for your next training:

- Why are we here?
- How does this affect my job?
- How does this make my client/consumer's lives better?
- Do I have to be here?
- I won't have to change will I?
- I already do everything you are saying!

There are many tools and strategies you can use to set the context. Engaging participants at the very start of your training presentation is a crucial part of this. John VanDenBerg and Jim Rast of Vroon VanDenBerg suggest the following strategies when engaging others in training:

- **Engage.** Get to know who you are training. Spend time with them. Go to some of their meetings. Talk to them.
- **Read and Research.** Read their materials. Google is a great tool – use it. Find out their mission and programs. Learn their history. Mention this in your presentation. Use data.
- **Assess Their Training Needs.** If possible find out if the agency has done similar trainings in the past. Ask what their training needs and goals are. Find out what could be done to make the trainings go well.
- **Respect and Thanks.** Honor and acknowledge the work that the agency has done. Begin with respect and thanks, continue with thanks and end with thanks.
- **Acknowledge the Power Players in the Room.** Recognize their accomplishments.
- **Encourage Participation from the Start (*Consider ALL Learning styles*).**
 - Use the Socratic method – ask opening questions for the auditory learner
 - Use data and slides for the visual learner
 - Have them raise their hands for the kinesthetic learner