

## **Get a CLUE: Four Elements to Increase Motivation and Memory in Learning.**

**From: *The Ten Minute Trainer*.**

**By Sharon L. Bowman, MA**

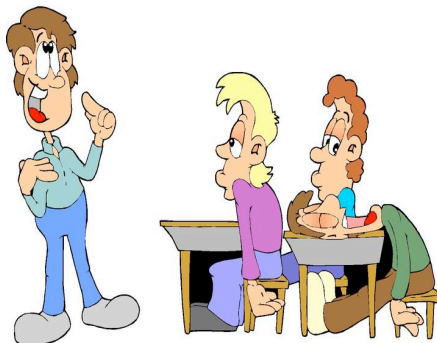
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It's no secret that classrooms and training rooms often house reluctant, resistant learners. Some folks just don't want to be there - and with good reason. Maybe the class is mandatory but irrelevant, unrelated to what their interests are or to what they do. Maybe it's just plain boring.



It's also common knowledge that teachers and trainers are expected to motivate these reluctant learners. Even knowing that motivation is an intrinsic thing - it has to come from

within the learner himself - the expectation is unspoken but clear:

***Thou shalt motivate  
others to learn.***

Fortunately, as "facilitators of learning," we know that our learners walk into our training rooms with two powerful motivational tools already in their possession: the mind and the body.

Actively involving these two tools in the learning automatically means that learning takes place, no matter how resistant the learner initially may be to the new information. The trick is to engage both the mind and the body in positive, interesting, and memorable ways.

According to Sharon Bowman, author of ***The Ten Minute Trainer*** (I love quoting my own

book!), there are four crucial elements that increase learner motivation. When we use all four of these elements in our classes and training, we also increase learners' long-term retention of the material we're teaching.

**The acronym CLUE helps us remember these four elements: Creative, Linked, Useful, and Emotional.** The words are linguistic reminders - clues - for making our training more memorable as well as motivational.

### ***CREATIVE***

We will get more of a buy-in from our learners if our training includes creative ways of teaching and learning. Examples of creative training strategies are:

**\* Using a variety of instructional strategies,** including some that stretch us out of our own comfort zone as trainers.



**\* Sprinkling our lecture time with short, quick activities** that make learners think while they review information. "Got A Minute?" 60-second activities from *The Ten Minute Trainer* are examples of these short review exercises. Download the free article "60-Second Shout Outs" on this web site to use some of these quick strategies.

**\* Balancing physically active and physically passive ways of learning** - if learners have been sitting awhile, they stand or walk around the room while reviewing material they've learned. If they have been standing and moving, they sit for awhile and take notes or join in small group discussions.

We will also get more of a buy-in if we allow learners to be creative in a variety of ways. Examples are:

**\* Solving relevant, topic-related problems,** using what they already know and what they have learned.

**\* Creating topic-related projects together** - working collaboratively towards a common goal.

**\* Presenting material they've learned** in a number of ways: skits, improvisations, demon-

strations, visual or verbal metaphors, discussions and debates, etc.

\* **Challenging each other** with topic-related questions and learner-created quizzes and games.

### **LINKED**

Whenever we can link the new learning to what our learners already know, we've increased both motivation and retention. We've also honored our learners by acknowledging that they already know a lot about the topic, that what they know is important, and that they can use what they know to learn what they don't yet know.

Ways to link new information to old include:

\* **"Pair-Share" dialogues between two learners and small/large group discussions** about how the new information fits with old information.

\* **Activities such as games and quizzes** that require learners to use what they already know as well as what they just learned.

\* **Pre- and post-assessment tools** that help learners evaluate what they knew when they walked in and what they learned

during the training.

### **USEFUL**

It goes without saying that learners are motivated to learn what is useful to them.



Our challenge is to constantly return to the usefulness of the material we teach - letting learners know why the information is important and how they can use it in their own lives. The more concrete and practical we can make the information, the more our learners will be open to learning it.

Learners themselves can also come up with ways to make the material useful. Examples of training strategies that do this include:

\* **Allowing enough time for learners to discuss** what they are learning and how to use it in their own lives.

\* **Posting a “Graffiti Wall”** made of chart paper where learners can write their ideas and suggestions about putting the information to use in practical ways.

\* **Challenging learners with real-life problems** that require the use of the new material for solutions.

\* **Giving learners time to create action plans** where they write or verbally state how they plan to use what they’ve learned.

## ***EMOTIONAL***

Every research book written about how the human brain learns tells us that:

***Emotion directs attention  
which directs learning.***



In the absence of an emotional connection to the material, no real learning takes place. Learn-

ers can’t move information into long-term memory without emotion. And motivation is directly tied to emotion - the more emotionally involved we are, the more we will invest time and effort to learn.

The emotional connections learners need to make not only include connections to the material, but also to the instructor, the other learners, and to the learning experience as a whole.

When the emotional connections are positive, the human mind opens to the learning with eagerness and anticipation. The mind will also want more of these kinds of positive learning experiences.

When the emotional connections are negative, the human mind only learns what it needs to learn in order to stop the negative feelings. It won’t want to return to learning experiences that remind it of the painful emotions it felt.

A training in which learners feel positive, eager, and willing to learn doesn’t mean that the material being presented is easy or “dummied-down.” A positive training can still be challenging, intense, thought-provoking, and exciting.

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Feeling positive in a learning experience simply means that learners feel physically and psychologically safe. They know that mistakes are an “okay” part of the learning process. They know that no question is a “stupid” one. They know that they have the respect of the instructor as well as the other learners.

Examples of ways to create a positive emotional tone in training include:

- \* **Using opening activities that connect learners to each other,** to the topic, and to you as the instructor in safe, engaging ways. See the article “Birds-of-a-Feather” on this web site for an example of this kind of activity.

- \* **Setting up “need-to-know” behavioral guidelines** about what is acceptable behavior and speech in the training - and what isn’t. One example is the guideline “No Putdowns” during the training. Another is pointing out that teasing can often quickly move from “friendly” to “hurtful” So another guideline might be: “When in doubt, leave it out.” A caveat: Don’t ever assume that just because people work or go to school together, they feel psychologically safe with each other. Set a few simple boundaries in the beginning of the training to

help keep the emotional climate positive.

- \* **Keeping the personal connections going** throughout the training by using a variety of short, quick activities like the 60-second ones mentioned earlier. This means constantly connecting learners with each other, with the material, and with you as the trainer in safe, positive ways.

- \* **Stopping to address or discuss any problems** that are causing negative emotions among learners during the training. This can be done privately, one-on-one, within the small group where the problem lies, or with the whole group as part of a solution-seeking process.

- \* **Making sure that the activities are psychologically safe** for the learners - and always giving them the “right to pass” so that they don’t have to participate if so desired.



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## ***FINAL THOUGHTS***

When, as teachers and trainers, we make our classes and training creative, linked, useful, and emotional, we not only motivate our learners to become involved in their own learning, but we help move that learning into long-term memory. Our learners can then remember and use the information they learned long after the class or training is over. Furthermore, they will associate learning with positive feelings and want more of what makes them feel good. It's a win-win for everyone - for the learners, for their company or school, and for the larger world they inhabit.

So let's get a CLUE and make our message both motivational and memorable for all!

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Resources that will add to your knowledge of the importance of the four CLUE elements are:

***A Celebration of Neurons: An Educator's Guide to the Human Brain*** by Robert Sylwester.

***Learning and Memory: The Brain in Action*** by Marilee Sprenger.

***Telling Ain't Training*** by Harold Stolovitch.

***The Accelerated Learning Handbook*** by Dave Meier.

***How To Give It So They Get It*** by Sharon Bowman.

***Shake, Rattle and Roll*** by Sharon Bowman.

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"Get a CLUE" is an excerpt from Sharon Bowman's newest book ***The Ten-Minute Trainer! 129 Ways to Teach it Quick and Make It Stick***, to be published by Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer in 2005, and printed with permission. Please cite the source when downloading this material. You can contact [www.Bowperson.com](http://www.Bowperson.com) for more information about ***The Ten-Minute Trainer***. Read on for a brief description:

**Got a minute?** Choose from over dozens of **60-second activities** to help your learners review, repeat, and remember. Or select a number of high-energy, **5 - 10 minute activities** to move information into long-term memory. Use the **Power Hour** templates with your own training topics. And best of all, discover the most useful training tool around to speed up both design and delivery – **The Training Compass**. The bottom line?

**Create a lot of learning  
in a little time!**

***The Ten-Minute Trainer*** is a "grab-it-and-go" book – with loads of back-pocket ideas you can use immediately with little or no preparation. To be notified when the book is published, send your contact information to: [Sharon@Bowperson.com](mailto:Sharon@Bowperson.com). Be sure to log onto [www.Bowperson.com](http://www.Bowperson.com) for selected excerpts of ***The Ten-Minute Trainer***.

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Author and traveling teacher Sharon Bowman helps educators and business people “teach it quick and make it stick,” - fine-tuning their information-delivery skills and turning their passive listeners into active learners.

Over 40,000 copies of Sharon’s 6 popular teaching, training, and motivation books are now in print. Titles include: “***Preventing Death by Lecture,***” “***Presenting with Pizzazz,***” “***How To Give It So They Get It,***” and “***Shake, Rattle, and Roll.***”

Sharon is also the “Trainer’s Coach,” helping individual teachers and trainers polish existing lessons and training programs, and creating new ones that reach all learners.

For more information about Sharon Bowman and her books and training, log onto [www.Bowperson.com](http://www.Bowperson.com), or email her at [SBowperson@aol.com](mailto:SBowperson@aol.com).

For book orders, go to [www.trainerswarehouse.com](http://www.trainerswarehouse.com), [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com), or call **Bowperson Publishing** at 775-749-5247.

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