

## Training Should be Fun

*Evidence and tips on why it's more effective!*

### **Games & Simulations**

"One must **learn by doing** the thing, for though you think you know it-- you have no certainty until you try." *Sophocles, 5th c. B.C.*

Approximately 65% of 131 students surveyed stated that **they prefer to play in teams**; Only 37% gave high importance to competition with a clear winner. *Sherry Robinson, Penn State Univ., Academy of Ed Leadership, Vol. 12, No. 1. Jacksonville, 2007*

76% of students surveyed **felt game rules need not be strictly followed**. 37% gave high importance to competition with a clear winner. 47% preferred games with a mixture of skill and chance. *Sherry Robinson, Penn State Univ., Academy of Ed Leadership, Vol. 12, No. 1. Jacksonville, 2007*

"**Setting time limits for game questions** and team tasks creates a competitive spirit that motivates learner interaction with the topic. It's a great way to bring fun and energy to your lesson plan." *Steve Sugar, The Game Group*

### **Recognition**

**Don't wait until the end of the session to congratulate learners.** "Feedback has been shown to be one of the most significant activities a teacher can engage in to improve achievement." *Hattie, J., Spec. Ed. Conf., May 1992.*

**Invite Oscar recipients to give an acceptance speech.** It adds levity to the session but also helps them share their wisdom, pride and accolades with others. *Marci Goldshlack, Director of Corp. Training, Philadelphia Workforce Development Corporation*

### **Suggested Activities**

Invite students **to write their preferred nickname on a tent card**, and share a favorite interest. It sets a welcoming environment conducive to learning.

Have students create a circle and pass the ball until all have received it once. Have them repeat the exercise 2-3 times passing it in the same sequence. Repeat the circuit, adding in a second ball, then third, .... See how confusing surroundings can make an individual's job much harder. *Lori DeLude*

During multi-day training sessions, **post the name of your MVP of the day** – the participant who makes the greatest contribution to the group's learning. Alternatively, post the name of ALL significant contributors.

## Memory

“Allow students to consolidate their notes by **pausing three times for two minutes each during a lecture**. Students will learn significantly more information.” *Ruhl, Hughes, and Schloss 1987*

Students who used **more imagery** [mental visualization of objects, events or ideas] during learning displayed more creativity in their discussions, modeling and assessments. *LeBoutillier & Marks, 2003; Sousa p. 231.*

Studies show that **retention** after 3 days is 10% from lecturing and 20% **from demonstration**. *Sousa\*, p. 95.*

Studies show that **stories engage all parts of the brain** because they touch on the learner’s experiences, feelings, and actions. *Schank, 1990; Scott-Simmons, Barker, & Cherry, 2003; Sousa\*, p. 145.*

You are more likely to keep students focused during lesson segments if you **go off-task between the segments** [i.e. tell an unrelated joke]. *Tony Buzan 1989; Sousa\*, p. 93.*

During a learning episode, **we remember best that which comes first**, second best that which comes last, and least that which comes just past the middle. *Gazzaniga et al., 2002; Terry, 2005; Sousa\*, p. 89.*

Practice does not make perfect. **Practice makes permanent**. If practice is stopped altogether, the neurons that are no longer being used are eventually assigned to other tasks and skill mastery will decline. In other words, use it or lose it! *(Amunts et al., 1997)Sousa\*, p. 97.*

Several studies have shown that **listening to certain music** [Classical, New Age, etc.] can stimulate the parts of the brain that are responsible for memory recall and visual imagery. *Nakamura et al., 1999; Sousa\*, p. 224.*

In a study of surgeons, for example, **background music enhanced their alertness** and concentration. *(Restak, 2003, Sousa\*, p. 224).*

When we sit for more than 20 minutes, our blood pools in our seat and our feet. **By getting up and moving**, we recirculate that blood. Within a minute, there is about 15% more blood in our brain. We do think better on our feet! *Sousa\*, p. 34.*

Test performance improves if you prepare the brain. Try this mix: get learners up to **exercise** for 2 minutes; give them 2 oz. of **fruit** (fresh or dry); wash it down with 8 oz. of **water** to get sugar into the bloodstream and hydrate the brain. Then wait 5 minutes before testing. The energy effect lasts about 30 minutes. *Sousa\*, p. 35.*

“**Chunking**,” treating a set of data as a single item, is an effective way to enlarge the working memory’s capacity. *Sousa\*, p. 111.*

**When asking a question, extend the wait time to 5 seconds or more** to give everyone time to answer and improve the quality of responses. “Calling on the first hands to go up signals the slower retrievers to stop the retrieval process.” *Mary Budd Rowe 1974; Sousa\*, p. 129.*

Relieve stress and help people feel positive about their learning environment. It will release endorphins in the blood, which gives a feeling of euphoria and stimulates the frontal lobes. *Sousa\*, p. 84.*

## Stress

**Eliminate stress and make learners feel welcome.** Stress causes your body to release cortisol into the bloodstream, which destroys glucose, the brain's only source of food."

(Tina Konstant, *Teach Yourself Speed Reading*)

**Laughter** reduces stress. Actually it reduces at least four of neuroendocrine hormones associated with stress response -- epinephrine, cortisol, dopac, and growth hormone. *Paul E. McGhee, PhD, Health, Healing and the Amuse System, 1999. [www.LaughterRemedy.com](http://www.LaughterRemedy.com)*

Many doodle while on the phone or jingle pocket change. **Invite your group to fidget in class.** It helps all types of kinesthetic learners and improves everyone's enthusiasm for learning. *Jerry Evanski, Classroom Activators*

**Belly laugh results in muscle relaxation.** Laughter reduces at least four of euroendocrine hormones associated with stress response: epinephrine, cortisol, dopac, and growth hormone. *Humor and Health, by Paul E. McGhee, PhD*

**Student performance increases with the use of background music.** Students remained on task longer and commented, "the music helps me concentrate, relax, and remember..." Anderson, Henke, et al. "*Using Music to Enhance Memory and Improve Learning*," *Saint Xavier Univ., 2000*

**Positive learning environments** lead to endorphins in the blood, which gives a feeling of euphoria and stimulated the frontal lobes. *Sousa\*, p. 84*

## Participation

90.9% of the students surveyed either "Agreed" or "Strongly Agreed" that **Audience Response systems improved engagement and participation**; 81.8% said it increased their attention span and helped them learn more effectively. *Caldonian Business School, UK, Andy Sharp and Angela Sutherland*

**Give everyone time to answer.** "Calling on the first hands to go up signals the slower retrievers to stop the retrieval process." (*Mary Budd Rowe 1974; Sousa\*, p. 129*)

\* Sousa references are drawn from David A. Sousa's *How the Brain Learns*, Third edition, Corwin Press, Thousand Oaks, CA 2006.