



Non-directive training methods

Introduction

There are many methods that can be used in the delivery of trainings, but these methods can broadly be divided into two approaches: directive and non-directive.

The directive approach involves you choosing what content to give the participants, and how and when to give it to them, based on the training needs, aims and objectives.

In the non-directive approach, you create a learning environment that allows the participants to find their own way through the content of an exercise or an entire session, guiding them only where and if necessary.

How to use this Trainers' Talk

This Trainers' Talk aims to show when it would be appropriate to use a non-directive approach.

Before your talk everyone should read '[Chapter 4 - Training methods](#)' of *Training*.

You could use this Trainers' Talk as:

- a supportive tool at your Trainers' Support Group meeting to explore non-directive methods
- a personal reference tool for planning trainings.

Non-directive training methods

Non-directive training methods can include:

- facilitation
- use of open questions
- brainstorming
- case studies
- discussion
- role play
- team building.

Advantages of non-directive methods

For participants, using non-directive training methods gives the opportunity to contribute skills, knowledge and experience in a positive and productive way within the session. It encourages them to be fully involved and therefore more likely to remember what they have learned.

For you the Trainer, it provides the opportunity to understand from the participants where their strengths and learning needs are, and allows you to tailor the session with them to more directly meet those needs. It also

creates the flexibility within the session to engage with the participants by passing to them direct control over what they talk about and what they learn.

Equipping Trainers

You may find delivering non-directive training methods challenging or may not realise that you are already delivering in this way. A good opportunity to air concerns and try out various non-directive methods is at a Trainers' Support Group meeting. This will provide you with a place to practise in a comfortable and supportive environment.

Optional activities

- Share and discuss with the group the following.
 - Your skills and experience with using a non-directive approach.
 - If not yet feeling comfortable with using a non-directive approach, your reasons for this.
 - Options to support and assist with concerns. For example, trying out a method in the Trainers' Support Group meeting, observing a Trainer delivering training using a non-directive training method, co-training with another Trainer who is delivering using a non-directive training method, and asking someone to watch you train and give constructive feedback afterwards.
- Using brainstorming, list the advantages of each non-directive training method. Compare your list with the advantages stated in '[Chapter 4 - Training Methods](#)' of *Training*.

Creating the right conditions

There are three elements that are beneficial for creating the right conditions when using non-directive training methods, as follows.

Direction

Although the training method is non-directive, you need to be clear about the direction of the training as a whole, and your purpose in choosing to use this method. You also need to be clear with the participants how any open, participant-led discussion and activity links directly to meeting the overall direction of the session and achieving the aim and objectives.

Motivation

Within a non-directive training approach you can still create a motivated group by:

- valuing individuals
- making sure everyone has the opportunity to take part in the discussion or activity
- ensuring that the subject is interesting and relevant to their circumstances
- checking that they will be able to use the knowledge gained and/or end product in the future.

Creative thinking

If you are unused to non-directive training methods, challenge your accepted practices and approaches to training. By looking for ways to introduce a non-directive element, however small, into every training you deliver, and when appropriate seeking feedback on how it went, you will increase in confidence and self-assurance in knowing when and how to use this method.

Optional activity

Share and discuss what you do as a Trainer (for example the use of ice-breakers, energisers and so on) to quickly establish the level of engagement and enthusiasm of the participants.

Back to basics

It is always possible to introduce a non-directive element into a training session in some way, but there are factors to consider when deciding if the extended use of the non-directive approach (eg for more than a third of the time available) will be effective and productive.

- **The subject of the training** - Is it something the participants will have personal experiences of to contribute? Or are they too new and inexperienced? If the latter, being put into a small group with other inexperienced participants to share views will not be productive.

- **The venue** - A large group in a small room may struggle to hear themselves speak in any discussions in smaller groupings or pairings, so although the subject might lend itself well to a non-directive approach, the delivery would be ineffective.
- **The number of participants** - Often, a helpful way to take feedback from a large group about queries and individual learning needs is to ask them to work in smaller groups first to discuss with each other before feeding back. This is a non-directive approach. Similarly, if the group is small, working non-directively in a single group works well, with you just asking open questions if needed to help facilitate the group to a useful outcome to their discussion.

Optional activity

When planning a training what are the factors that might lead you to want to include one or more non-directive training methods?

Evaluation

Evaluation and validation of training is essential - and to find out if a non-directive training approach has been effective or not you may need to consider finding ways within the session to assess how it is being received by the participants. This can include you observing them throughout the session (to adjust the training method if necessary), asking informal questions such as 'How did that go? In what way was that discussion useful?', listening for comments about the experience from the participants while they are working, and so on.

Optional activity

How could you include reflections on your use of non-directive training methods in your current personal self-evaluation plan?

Resources

Chapters 4 to 6 of *Training*, www.girlguiding.org.uk > Members' area > Resource library > Trainers' resources > Training.