



Wlodkowski, R., & Ginsberg, M. (2017). *Enhancing adult motivation to learn: A comprehensive guide for teaching all adults* (4th ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

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Teachers ask, how can we make them want to learn? This mistitled book is one place to look. The title, *Enhancing Adult Motivation to Learn: A Comprehensive Guide for Teaching All Adults*, is wrong (more later on why wrong) but indeed, the word 'comprehensive' is right: The book covers everything. What to do before the session, how to start a lecture, how to keep things moving, getting results, online or face-to-face, it is all in these 400 plus pages. Many book reviews seem to say must read. Relax, not this book review. Not a must read, unless you are researching educational motivation, or maybe in a job requiring assessment of learning. Average teacher? Took me a month to get through this heavy book, a month with no teaching. Normally I simply would not have had the time.

Although not a book to put on your *must read* list, this is a book to put on your *if you have time* list. Maybe your life is not too hectic, or perhaps you are director of learning somewhere. Then this encyclopedic volume may be worth slogging through. Not easy reading, but smoothly written. Parts seem aimed at teachers like me: lots of concrete examples, light on fancy jargon, even somewhat engaging. But the adjective 'encyclopedic' above seems to me appropriate. It has so much good information, but more like an encyclopedia than like a novel that you would read cover to cover before stopping.

But say you are considering tackling it, either because you have some time and the topic does intrigue you, or maybe your job is exactly in this area, when you open the book what will you see?

Even before the first chapter, there is a useful preface. That preface gives a hint of what is to follow. The preface helped me visualise what good things to expect, but also raised some warning flags. In the preface we learn that the book contains 24 tried and tested strategies useful in online learning, then 60 strategies useful anywhere, plus 2 ways, and 4 approaches plus 4 examples.... At this point I could almost hear my Asian adult students asking, will all these 24 + 60 + 2 + 4 + 4 be on the test? To be fair, the 24 online strategies are repeated in the 60 use-anywhere strategies, so only 60 + 2 + 4 + 4. Can I understand all 70 well enough to get an A on the test? Also triggering a moment of fear was the note

that all would be integrated in a Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching, each word capitalised. I have grown to distrust, even fear, solutions in Capital Letters. But even with these clouds of doubt, the preface is useful. It lets the reader know that the book contains many good things, all put together with some worthwhile guiding principles. The very first principle strikes a responsive chord: motivation and learning are inseparable. The authors, both experienced educators, also note that learning and culture are also inseparable. This also makes sense to me, as an educator who has taught people in many cultures and from many cultures. The other guiding principles help me see that this is a book written by teachers who have thought about what is important.

Chapter 1 then introduces the topic of motivation in 28 pages, with an extremely interesting section titled "a neuroscientific understanding of motivation and learning." I found those ten pages on what could be a heavy topic, readable. Only after completing my reading of this discussion did I realise how well researched this book is. In this one section about the brain, I see more than two dozen references, from books and journals in education, medicine, business, and the popular press. I appreciate that this information on how the brain fits in does not read like some *Academy of Management Journal* articles that try to include every possible reference in case the author might be a reviewer. These references are not noticed, unless like me, I see a point I would like more information about. The references are great, and do not make the book feel like a purely-academic work. The book has an impressive 48-page section of references, and at about 12 per page, that means close to 600 helpful places to go for further study. This fact alone makes the book worth considering. Although very well researched, it is the authors' insights, not the facts, that grab me. "As instructors we need to pay close attention to the emotions of our learners" (16). Why?

A logical explanation or well-constructed argument usually does not have the biological impact to cause the physical changes in a learner's brain that need to occur for a real alteration in the learner's attitude or belief (12).

Chapter 1 gives hints as to what follows in the rest of the book, including a preview of the significance of emotion, culture, and participation. The second chapter considers how aging and culture impact motivation to learn. The culture part is introduced but not explored in depth. Not to worry. Chapters three through ten all look at culture and learning. The bulk of chapter 2 relates to aging. However, as was mentioned before and will be explained further later, the entire book is not quite properly titled. I find that chapter 2 may also be mistitled. Chapter 2's "characteristics of adult learners" is informative but not really about "adult" learners. This chapter makes clear that there is no one category we can call "adult" learners. I suspected and now see, thanks to chapter 2, that 73% of all college students are "non-traditional" learners. The old path, graduate from college at age 18 and then go to college, only applies to about a fourth of today's college students. Young adults and older adults taking courses increasingly may be pursuing their education nights, weekends, and online. The chapter also lets us see that millennials may be qualitatively different than other age cohorts. All this, in a chapter on how aging affects motivation to learn? Even though perhaps mistitled, chapter 2 is worth reading. For example, I did not know that more than 50% of males over the age of 75 have difficulty hearing. Perhaps I had heard this before, but wasn't really listening, or perhaps not hearing. The section on Gardner's multiple intelligences did not speak to me, nor did the brief section on Goleman's emotional intelligence. But for some readers, these sections may be just what is needed.

Chapter 3 offers "five pillars" worth considering. A motivating instructor has expertise, empathy, enthusiasm, teaches with clarity and is culturally responsive. This chapter is a gold mine of information, tips, ideas, and plans to make us, make *me*, better teachers. But this chapter helps explain why I say the chapter, and the book, may be mistitled. Every one of the great strategies and tactics in this chapter could also help the teacher who daily motivates my eight-year-old third grade son. The book is about more than enhancing adult motivation to learn. This volume is a valuable handbook on "enhancing motivation to learn" and applies to those teaching adults, or eight-year olds, or 28-year olds, or 38- or 58-year olds. Expertise? Empathy? Enthusiasm? Teach with clarity? And the fifth pillar reminds us that

Being culturally responsive means being aware of how the contexts in which we teach perpetuate bias and maintain norms, policies and practices that deny educational equality to students who have historically been underserved (74).

Chapter 4 explains, unconvincingly for me, how adult learning differs from how children and adolescents learn. True, with age comes experience, but please do not underestimate my eight-year old.

Another section in chapter 4 lets us see what happens when learners are "*in flow*" (italics in the original). Although previously introduced on page 19, *flow* is referred to again here on page 86 and later on again on page 260, I never become convinced that there is such a thing as *flow*. But then, I am not by nature a religious person.

The fifth chapter connects the ideas of this book to online learning. I found this chapter usable as a stand-alone overview of plusses and minuses of online learning. Fortunately the tips in chapter 5 are there to help me when I move from blended learning (partially online) to 100% online, which seems inevitable, someday. The 24 strategies included in chapter 5 seem applicable online or face-to-face. Indeed, each of these 24 appear again in chapters 6 through 9, which are the nuts-and-bolts of the book.

These four chapters cover inclusion, positive attitudes, enhancing meaning, and engendering competence. For example, under engendering competence, we consider strategy number 47, provide effective feedback, strategy 49, promote equity while assessing, strategy 55, use self assessment, continuing on to strategy number 60, provide closure at the end of each significant unit (lecture, topic, course, etc.). Each strategy from 47 to 60 merits consideration. Number 60, for example, tells me that I do not do a good job providing closure. This reminds me of my colleague Roger. In the last few moments of any course Roger gives a rapid-fire upbeat rundown, "look at all the things we've done!" Roger then ends with "I say, not bad! I think you should all give yourselves a hand!" This may be a bit sneaky, even unfair, but I always love it when the last minute of a course all the students are applauding. This book, along with what I learn from Roger, gets me thinking. Can I do it? I may try.

So, I may modify what I do stemming from strategy 60 but for sure, will use strategy 55, self assessment. The idea here is to use a short easy-to-answer quiz, with perhaps five questions. Such a quiz could be paper-and-pencil, not to be turned in, or perhaps by using some personal response system (PRS) technology. I could do this. I *will* do this. I now see how well-intentioned but misguided was my matching quiz handout used in a recent strategy class. I handed out the quiz on day one and again in the last hour of the entire class. In one column were 30 company names. The other column had a short descriptor, such as "They said an electric car would never sell, but Elon Musk proved them wrong." Many could match even on day 1 but by the end of the course, perhaps with the video about Tesla and Elon Musk fresh in their minds, everybody could match correctly. But 30 firms, 30 facts? The intended self-affirming self assessment became a chore, a task. Next time I will have a few five-question self-assessment quizzes, spread throughout the course. So easy, I can do this. I will.

Chapter 10 wraps it all up, but in my mind provides no shortcut to learning. Those who hope they can skip reading the book and just read the concluding chapter may be disappointed. Just as it would be impossible to add a summary chapter to an encyclopedia, chapter 10 cannot be an excuse not to read the book. However, having made my way through the entire volume, I am eligible to view chapter 10. And yes, it does help me review what has been learned.

Where does this leave us? The comments above, while not condemnatory, have a bit of a skeptical tone. I say that the book is mistitled, spends time on ideas such as *flow* that do not convince me, and I leave the impression that the book has too many lists for my taste. But this would not convey the message I should leave. This is a comprehensive

guide, not a mystery novel. And like an encyclopedia, it is packed with information, and insights. In my case, I wrote down about a dozen tips, things I will try in my very next class. Better closure, smarter self assessment, and tip after tip, I can use this. Just one more example. I always use small groups or have teams of two. I usually do these near the end to revitalise the group. This book made me see that for a four-hour night class I should do some activity *within the*

first 20 minutes. And the book explains why. These tips, and many more, are what made the book valuable for me.

What it is is what it is. Anyone ready to study a comprehensive guide for teaching all, including adults, should dig into *enhancing ~~adult~~ motivation to learn*. Note the strikethrough on the word ~~adult~~. It may be well worth the effort, regardless of the age of our learners.