

Lesson Plan 6: The Stages of Learning



60 minutes total

Lesson Description



In this lesson, participants learn about the four stages of learning and how a learner progresses through the stages. Understanding how people progress through different stages of learning is important for trainers to provide proper support and guidance while also avoiding potential trainer pitfalls.

Learning Outcomes



At the end of this session participants will be able to:

1. Describe the four stages of learning.
2. Evaluate how different stages of learning impact learner performance and attitude.
3. Optional: Create strategies to support participants in all stages of learning.

Materials



- Flip chart paper
- Markers
- Tape
- Paper
- Pens/Pencils
- Sana's Story* (See end of lesson plan)
- Optional: *Learner Profile* handouts

Preparation



- Read and prepare lesson plan
- Write the learning outcomes on the flip chart
- Write the phrase "I only know one thing: That I know nothing" on the flip chart
- Draw the *Stages of Learning Ladder* on flip chart paper
- Print 4-5 copies of *Sana's Story*
- Optional: Print the *Learner Profile* handouts

Introduction

5 minutes



1. Present the participants with the phrase "I only know one thing: That I know nothing" on the flip chart.
2. Ask the participants: "What do you think this phrase means?" *The phrase is often attributed to the philosopher Socrates, who believed that wisdom begins by admitting one's ignorance. Learning begins when you admit that you don't know everything.*

3. Present learning outcomes or lesson description.

The Stages of Learning

25 minutes



1. Divide the participants into small groups of 3-4 people. Give each group a copy of 'Sana's Story' and ask them to read it. Ask the participants to try to divide the story into different stages of Sana's learning process about hand washing as they read it.
2. Ask each small group to present how they have divided the story to the large group.
3. Explain to participants that there are four stages of learning. Post the *Stages of Learning Ladder* on the flip chart. Explain each stage as follows:
 - *Stage 1: Unconsciously Unskilled. A person does not know something and is unable to identify what they do not know. They may not recognize a new skill as useful and thus they are not motivated to learn it.*
 - *Stage 2: Consciously Unskilled. A person does not have a particular skill, but is aware of their shortcoming. The person recognizes the value in developing the skill.*
 - *Stage 3: Consciously Skilled. A person has a particular skill but it requires concentration and focus. They have not yet mastered the use of the skill.*
 - *Stage 4: Unconsciously Skilled. A person has had so much time and practice with a specific skill that it has become natural for them. They can perform the skill easily without concentrating.*
4. Use the example of *Sana's Story* and your own examples of learning specific skills or knowledge to help explain the 4 stages of learning. *Possible examples to use include: Knowing how to read and write, driving a car, building a biosand filter, learning how to play an instrument, learning how to use a camera, etc.*
5. Ask the participants: "Where on these stages do we function as trainers?" *The answer is that often, we function in Stage 4. However, we do not want to be in this stage, because it means we cannot effectively communicate skills and knowledge to others.*
6. Ask the participants: "When a person is in Stage 4 with a particular skill, is it possible for them to effectively teach that skill to others?" *The answer is no. They need to break down the skill into all its steps so that they can explain it clearly to a learner, but often do not understand their own competency enough to do so.*
7. Explain to the participants that a trainer should function outside of the stages of learning. *The trainer must have mastered a skill, be self-aware, and remember what it felt like to be a learner.*
8. Explain that as trainers, the key stages for us to remember are Stage 1 and Stage 4. Stage 1 is where many learners may be when we first go into a community to teach about WASH skills or behaviours. Our goal is to trigger an awareness to move them forward. Stage 4 is important because this is a "trap" trainers can fall into. We must break down skills, competencies, and our own understanding to effectively communicate skills and knowledge to others.

Optional: Strategies to Support Learners**25 minutes**

This section is more appropriate for higher-level participants who want to examine strategies for supporting learners through different stages of the learning process.



1. Explain that participants will create strategies for supporting learners at each stage. They will do this by reading a learner profile and recording their ideas on a piece of flip chart paper.



2. Keep the participants in their small groups. Give each group a piece of flip chart paper, a marker, and one profile from the *Learner Profile* handout.
3. Give the groups 5 minutes to develop and record their strategies.
4. Ask each group to post their strategies on the wall.
5. Ask participants to walk around the room and read the strategies. Encourage them to add additional strategies.
6. As a large group, ask the participants:
 - "Was there anything that surprised you?"
 - "Were there patterns or strategies that appeared in all stages of learning?"
 - "What strategies will you use with learners in the future?"

Review**5 minutes**

1. Ask the participants to discuss with a partner the characteristics of each stage of learning. They should select a specific skill and use it to illustrate each of the stages. Some skills they could use include: reading and writing, driving a car, riding a bike, playing an instrument, building a house, cooking, etc.

Reflections on Lesson

Sana's Story

Sana always rinsed her hands with water after using the toilet. When people asked her if she practiced effective handwashing she said “Yes.” It wasn't until she attended a WASH awareness workshop that she discovered that she was not practicing correct handwashing.

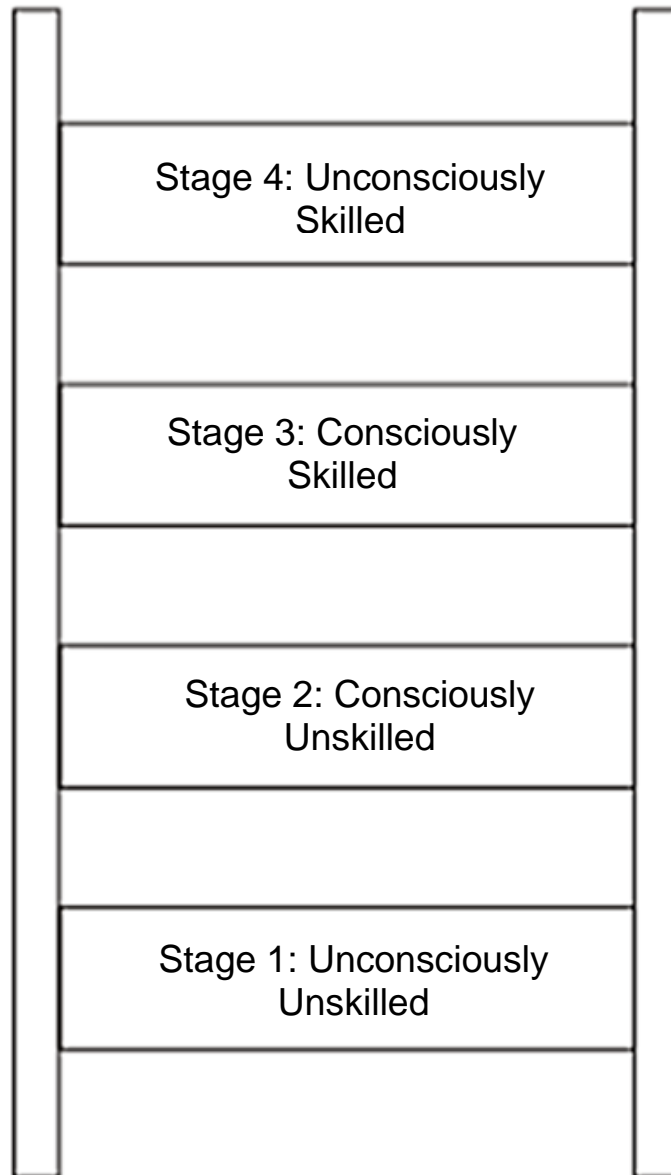
Sana realized that she should wash her hands with soap, not just water. She also discovered that she should be washing her hands after changing her baby's diaper, and before handling food. Sana was afraid that she would forget to wash her hands at these critical times.

At the workshop, they gave Sana a poster to remind her when to wash her hands. She looked at it multiple times a day as a reminder. Over time, Sana realized that she no longer needed the poster. She automatically washed her hands with soap at the critical times.

Questions:

1. By learning about proper handwashing techniques, Sana went through different stages in her learning. Try to divide the story into different stages of Sana's learning.
2. Now that you have divided the story into different stages of learning, try to give each stage a title or general description.

Stages of Learning Ladder



Adapted From (Adams, 2011)

Learner Profiles

Learner Profile 1: Unconsciously Unskilled

Learners:

- Are not aware of the importance or relevance of a new skill
- Do not see the benefit or need for learning something new
- Are confident in their current level of understanding or ability

Learner Profile 2: Consciously Unskilled

Learners:

- Understand what they need to learn
- Are aware of their own lack of knowledge or ability
- Realize the benefit of additional training or learning
- May feel overwhelmed

Learner Profile 3: Consciously Skilled

Learners:

- Can reliably demonstrate their skill
- Need to concentrate to perform the skill
- Can demonstrate their ability but cannot teach others well

Learner Profile 4: Unconsciously Skilled

Learners:

- Can easily perform the skill without concentrating
- Can perform the skill while mentally focusing on something else
- Are able to perform the skill instinctually and do not understand how complex it is for others