

Teaching Techniques for Childbirth Educators

- Lecture: The most straightforward teaching technique: stand in the front of the classroom, and tell them all the information they need to know.
 - Advantages: Gets the most information out in the least amount of time.
 - Disadvantage: students only retain about 20% of what you say to them.
- Lecture with Visual Aids: Using posters, models of pelvises, real medical equipment, handouts for them to hold, etc. is much more effective than pure lecture, as seeing objects helps to reinforce your words to your students.
- Lecture while writing on the board. When you write key points on the board, it can help to emphasize those points to everyone in the room, but it's especially beneficial for visual learners to see it written down, and for kinesthetic learners to watch you write it.
- Question and answers:
 - Advantages: gets people thinking more as they come up with questions. They will better integrate information they hear in response to questions than they will information that just gets handed to them in lecture form.
 - Disadvantages: Too few questions, leaving you standing and waiting for someone to talk (to prevent this, make your opening specific. Instead of "do you have any questions about the video?" try "Do you have any questions about the comfort techniques used?"). Or, you may get too many questions: it's easy to get distracted, so keep the group disciplined and on-track.
- Brainstorming: Instructor asks a question, all the students give answers. (For example: "what are some comfort techniques which you have heard help with labor pain? Or "What are some benefits of breastfeeding?"
 - Advantages: Gets students involved. Gives them a chance to share what they know, and reinforce their competency.
 - Disadvantage: Don't overuse this: students can quickly feel as if you don't actually know any information and are hoping they will provide it...
 - Things to consider: It's very important that after they give suggestions, you provide feedback which gives more information and amplifies what they have said. Also, if you use this to cover a topic where they need to come up with *all* the answers (like warning signs), you should have a list of everything you need to cover, so you can bring up anything they missed.
 - You can sort student's answers... for example, if you've asked for signs of onset of labor, you can write them on the board in three columns, then label the columns "maybe" "probably" or "definitely" in labor.
- Card Sort: You write out cards or post-its which they sort into categories: signs of onset of labor, breastfeeding myths and truths, things that speed up /slow down labor.
- Grab Bag: You pass around a container of props (e.g. things that are healthy / unhealthy in pregnancy, things to take to the hospital, or things that are helpful in the postpartum). They pick an object out of the container, say what it is, and why they think it would or would not be helpful.

- Demonstrations: Doing demonstrations (e.g. of breastfeeding positions, or of the open-knee-chest position) helps to clarify what you are saying, and also is helpful to the visual and kinesthetic learners to help them remember what was covered.
- Demonstration-return demonstration: It's even better if you demonstrate, then have them do what you had done, with you offering feedback. Great for teaching counterpressure and double hip squeeze.
- Pop Quizzes: A quiz can be done as a small group activity, or homework, or a worksheet handed out in class. Good for reviews of information already covered, especially really concrete info like "where do you go in the building when you arrive at the hospital in labor." Also good for things that are nice to know but that they don't *have* to know the answers to, like breastfeeding advantages.
 - Advantage: Gets them to think about whether they know the information, may stimulate some good questions (can help you evaluate how effectively you taught)
 - Disadvantage: "Tests" can be stressful, so it's important to present it in a way that reduces potential stress. You could read the question out loud, and whoever answers it first gets a piece of candy tossed to them.
- Diagrams: Some information is most easily presented in diagrams or charts, like length of labor, stages of labor, and so on.
- Small group discussions: Dividing the class up into groups, either randomly, or by gender, or by first-time moms versus experienced moms, etc. Sometimes it makes sense to keep the couple together, sometimes it's better to split them up so they gain the advantage of hearing two different conversations.
 - Advantages: Informal, interactive, gets group members connecting, fun.
 - Disadvantages: You can't be with all the groups, and there's a chance a misconception will get passed around when you're not there to correct.
- Teachbacks: One of the best ways to make sure students really understood the information is to have them teach it. After you have demonstrated breastfeeding positions, have them "teach" you how to do it. After you teach dads to diaper, have them teach the moms. You can also assign homework to students one week, then the next week have them present what they have learned.
- Reflective writing: Good for feelings questions ("list some fears you have about labor and birth") or questions where each person's answers will be unique ("list some of the activities you enjoy that are really important to you to continue after baby is born, think about how your partner could help you make this happen, and write them a nice note asking them to do so.") You hand out papers and pencils, and give students a few minutes to write things down.
- Games: There are many different styles of games, from dice games, to "Jeopardy" to trivia games, Pictionary, charades, and so on.
 - Advantages: Fun, interactive, people solve problems and retain the memory
 - Disadvantages: take up a lot of time for how much information gets covered.
- Homework: Worksheets to take home, lists of skills to practice, reading assignments.
 - Advantages: Gets them thinking about things between classes, and integrating things into their day to day lives.
 - Disadvantages: Many students won't actually do the homework.