

UNIT 7. Creating an Inclusive Learning Environment



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1. Aim and Objectives

The aim of Unit 7 is to empower adult trainers to cultivate a psychologically safe and socially supportive environment that reduces digital anxiety and encourages learners to apply computational thinking principles to real-world challenges like disinformation.

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- By the end of this unit, adult trainers will be able to:
1. Establish “Classroom Learning Agreements” that foster trust when discussing sensitive topics like online truth and lies;
 2. Use plain language to explain technical CT concepts to older adults;
 3. Implement peer-support structures (buddy systems) specifically designed for collaborative disinformation verification.



2. Outcomes

Adult trainers are able to:

1. Create an inclusive and psychologically safe learning environment that empowers learners to apply CT principles to identify and challenge disinformation without fear of making mistakes;
2. Establish "Class Agreements" that foster trust when discussing sensitive topics like online truth and lies;
3. Use plain language effectively during training sessions;
4. Establish peer-support structures designed for collaborative disinformation verification.



3. Main CT Principles Applied

- **Abstraction:** Focusing on the "core truth" of a news story rather than getting lost in technical website details.
- **Pattern Recognition:** Identifying the emotional triggers (fear, anger) that disinformation creators use to bypass our logic.
- **Decomposition:** Breaking down feelings of being overwhelmed into small, manageable questions about a source's credibility.
- **Algorithmic thinking:** creating step-by-step procedures for verifying information.





4. Link to WP2 Modules

Unit 7 operationalises the WP2 principles of Andragogy and Universal Design for Learning (UDL). It builds on WP2 Module 5 by supporting inclusive learning environments for disadvantaged adults. It complements Module 3 through accessible resources and activities adapted to diverse learning needs. It also links to Module 4 through peer support, communication and collaboration.



5. Challenges

Inadequately adapted resources

Dense text, small print and unfamiliar examples can create barriers. Use plain language, readable layouts and relevant examples, adapting resources to learners' needs.

Acceptance and belonging

Stereotypes or exclusion may prevent learners from feeling accepted. Challenge discriminatory behaviour, value each person's experience and ensure everyone can contribute.

Fear of mistakes or judgement

Fear of embarrassment may discourage questions or participation. Clear, respectful group rules, a welcome for questions and treating mistakes as learning opportunities may reduce these fears.

Unequal participation

Confident learners may dominate while others remain silent. Use turn-taking, paired activities and varied ways to contribute. Respect each learner's pace.



6. Justification

Inclusion is one of the foundational principles for the learning process of adult learners. If a learner feels excluded or overwhelmed in the first hour, they are likely to drop out. For vulnerable groups, psychological safety is not a "soft skill"—it is a cognitive requirement.

The focus on a **culture of mutual respect, psychological safety, and active participation** is fundamental to building trust and engagement among vulnerable groups.

To earn adult learners' trust, use plain language and explain the benefits and expected learning outcomes.

It is also important to create a positive, encouraging environment where **participants support each other** and see their progress. Emotional well-being and inclusion are essential foundations before introducing new content.





7.1 Activity: The “Classroom Learning Agreement”

Entering into a “Learning Agreement” with a group is important for adult learners, especially older adults and those with few qualifications:

Establishing Psychological Safety

The primary aim is to cultivate a psychologically safe environment that fosters trust and reduces digital anxiety.

Ensuring Mutual Respect

It establishes clear shared rules to ensure mutual respect and open sharing among participants.

Empowering the Learner

Instead of imposing rules, the trainer should ask learners directly what will help them to feel comfortable even when they make mistakes.

Building a “Digital Safety Net”

It creates a culture where all questions are welcome, everyone waits for others to finish, and successes are celebrated.

Reducing the Fear of Failure

Defining the learning environment together helps learners move from fear towards curiosity and belonging, where mistakes are treated as valuable learning opportunities rather than failures.





7.2 Activity: The Digital Safety Net Learning Agreement

Trainer Introduction Script

"In this room, we are not just learning; we are building a community. To make sure everyone feels comfortable, let's agree on how we will treat each other. Instead of me giving you rules, I want to ask: What do you need from me and this group to feel comfortable making a mistake today?"

Ways to Formalise the Agreement

To ensure this agreement is inclusive and accessible to all literacy levels, use one of the following methods:

1. **Print** the agreement and have every learner sign it or place a sticker next to it. Hang it prominently in the classroom.
2. **Record the final agreed points** as an audio file or a short video. Share this in the group chat or platform so learners can "hear" the safety rules whenever they feel anxious at home.
3. **Post** the agreement on the main page of the digital learning platform used for the course.

The Agreement Points

- **No "Stupid" Questions.** We recognise that every question helps the whole group learn. If you are thinking it, someone else probably is too.
- **The "Slow Down" Rule.** We wait for everyone to finish a task before moving to the next one. No one gets left behind.
- **Mistakes are Data:** We treat a "wrong" click not as a failure, but as a "data point" to help us understand how the system works.
- **Celebrate Moments.** When someone discovers something new or solves a problem, we take a moment to celebrate that success.
- **The Jargon-Free Zone.** We promise to use plain language. If the trainer or a peer uses a word that sounds like "tech-talk," anyone can ask for a "Benefit Translation".



7.3 Activity: Computational Thinking in Daily Life

Topic: "Managing Health Appointments and Medication"

Create a flexible activity scenario suitable for older adult participants.

Stage 1 (Review):

Review how we decomposed a shopping list last week.

Stage 2 (Implementation):

Use a modular worksheet.

Task A: List all medications.

Task B: Identify patterns (e.g. medications taken in the morning).

Task C: Create an algorithm (step-by-step schedule).

Stage 3 (Accessibility):

Provide the schedule as a colourful printable chart (Visual/Offline) and a voice-recorded reminder template (Audio/Digital).





7.4 Activity: The "Digital Safety-Net" Buddy System

This activity operationalises the unit's objective to "implement peer-support structures" and build a socially supportive community.

- **The aim is to reduce** "digital fear" and move adult learners towards a state of "curiosity and belonging" by ensuring no one feels alone when facing a technical challenge.
- **Target Principles.** Pattern Recognition (identifying shared challenges) and Algorithmic thinking (creating a step-by-step support sequence).

Step 1. The "Strength-Spotting" Match (10 Minutes):

Based on the "Life Experience Map" (from Unit 6), the trainer pairs learners with complementary strengths.

Example: Pair someone who is particularly patient with someone who has a bit more technical confidence.

Step 3. The "Benefit Script" Exchange (5 Minutes):

Buddies practise explaining the purpose of the day's task using a Benefit Script.

Example Script: "We are learning to use folders (Task) so you can keep your grandchild's drawings organised and never lose them (Benefit)".

Step 2. Creating the Buddy Agreement (10 Minutes):

- Pairs discuss: "What is one thing that makes you nervous about today's lesson?" and "How can I help you when that happens?"
- They agree on a "Buddy Signal" (e.g., placing a specific coloured card on the desk) to indicate they need a 2-minute peer consultation before asking the trainer for help.





8. Additional Resources



8.1 Tips for Adult Trainers



8.2 Resources for Building Psychological Safety



8.3 Real-Life Case Example: Silver Gaming





8.1 Tips for Adult Trainers

When working with diverse learners—particularly seniors or vulnerable groups—the goal is not only to transmit information but to reduce the "digital friction" that often leads to frustration. These practical strategies focus on empathy, accessibility, and immediate feedback to ensure every participant feels capable and heard.

How can trainers ask supportive questions?

Use "Open-Ended Benefit Questions": "If this digital task were as easy as making coffee, how would your daily routine change?"

Simple Audio/Video Conversion:

Use the "Record & Reflect" method. Use your smartphone's voice memo app to record the lesson summary. This allows seniors to listen while at home without needing to read complex manuals.

Assessment Recommendation

Use emoji polls for quick emotional checks (How do you feel about this task? 😊 😐 😞). This approach accommodates different literacy levels.





8.2 Resources for Building Psychological Safety

These resources are designed to help trainers build psychological safety, peer support, and cultural relevance in their digital skills workshops for adult learners.

Video Resources

This video demonstrates how to create an inclusive atmosphere and reduce anxiety.

"Managing Anxiety in a Digital World": Although general, the strategies (Setting Boundaries, Digital Detox) are perfect "Benefit Scripts" for seniors overwhelmed by 24/7 connectivity.

Downloadable Activity Templates

"Jargon Buster" Flashcards:

Create a simple template where one side has the technical term (e.g., "Browser") and the other has the "Benefit Script" translation (e.g., "The window to the world").

Real-Life Case Examples

- **Connect Hackney (@online clubs):** A project that replaced "training" with "social clubs." They found that tea, biscuits, and unstructured social time were just as important as the tablet instruction for reducing isolation.
- **Digital Mentors (Be Connected):** Uses a "train-the-trainer" model where older citizens teach their peers. This removes the power dynamic of a "young expert" teaching an "old novice".



8.3 Real-Life Case Example: Silver Gaming

Silver gamification 2.0

<https://gaming.fundacjamis.org.pl/>

The Silvergaming initiative uses digital games (**Digital Games-Based Learning**) to familiarise seniors with new technologies.

The Silvergaming initiative effectively illustrates how to create an inclusive and stress-free learning environment.

- **Principle:** Gamification instead of lectures.
- **Application:** Instead of a traditional “Introduction to Computers” course, seniors learn how to use a mouse and keyboard and navigate menus through engaging games.

Effect: Fear of technology (“I’ll break something”) is replaced by curiosity and a desire to compete (“I want to move on to the next level”).

Tip for the trainer: Use simple browser games as “icebreakers” at the beginning of the class to create a relaxed atmosphere before moving on to more difficult topics.

Silver Gaming-inspired activity idea:

Name: “The 5-Minute Gamer”

- **Objective:** To show that mistakes in the digital world do not cause harm (building mental resilience).
- **Activity:** The trainer launches a simple, safe game (e.g., online solitaire or a simple arcade game). Seniors play in pairs.
- **Key moment:** When a senior “loses” (e.g., time runs out), the trainer and the group reward them with applause for trying. This teaches that “Game Over” is not the end of the world, but an opportunity to press “Try Again” – just like learning online banking or email.



9. What is the value of this unit?

The value of this unit lies in providing guidance on how adult trainers can empower adult learners.

This unit transforms the training from a technical chore into a social community. By prioritising emotional well-being and plain language, the trainer removes the "exclusion barrier".



Learners stop seeing CT as "something for young people" and start seeing it as a tool they are entitled to use, backed by a group that supports their progress.



End of the Unit