



**Tools Training Strategy Facilitation**

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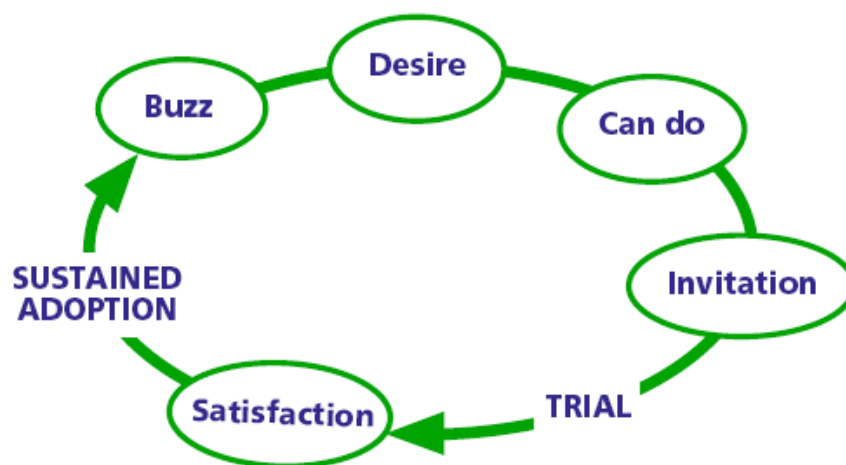
## Five steps to create motivation

I wrote this as part a guide to starting parents' self-help groups, but it's so universally applicable, so I thought I'd publish it as a short article. Although it focuses on parent's groups you can easily extrapolate the ideas to almost any activity or behaviour.

Five factors are guaranteed to motivate participation in any new group, activity or behaviour.

The principle is: for sustained participation or behaviour, all five of these factors need to be present in the situation, even if you, the change agent, are not personally responsible for them.

Those of you who are into cognitive psychology and diffusion will instantly recognise the provenance of these ideas: Diffusion of Innovations; discrepancy; self-efficacy; and a whole bunch of ideas from motivational psychology and social psychology.



*Illo:* This sketch shows how the five factors form a virtuous circle. When a new activity or behaviour generates satisfaction, people talk about it, creating more buzz, increasing desire, and so on.

**1) Connect-to-the-buzz.** The meeting, activity or behaviour should be about an issue that parents are already talking to each other about. As you listen to parents, or question other community workers, you'll start to hear the kinds of child learning/health/development issues they are already buzzing about. Connecting-to-the-buzz naturally creates interest and attention for your invitation.

**2) Connect-to-hopes.** Listen for parent's fears, worries, frustrations and dissatisfactions. Frame your activity as a solution to them. For instance, if you hear that young parents are fearful and worried about loneliness and being out of their depth with young babies, then frame the activity as being a solution to exactly those fears. Beware of negative talk however, always frame your solution in positive terms. So, instead of "isolation" you'd talk about "making friends". Instead of "poor growth" you'd mention "healthy thriving, happy babies".

**3) Respect comfy zones.** When people's comfy zones are challenged, denial and resistance follow, so gently expand those comfy zones by hands-on learning and modelling ("modelling" = seeing how others do it and get rewarded for success). Giving parents as much control over the activity as possible (ie when, where, how, for how long) is especially essential for excluded, risk-risk or vulnerable individuals. The barrier to motivation is often a fear of failure, embarrassment, humiliation, or losing certainty or control. So choose familiar, comfortable "soft-entry" activities, goals and venues. Perhaps start a cooking class or a social chat. Once trusting relationships are built, many parents will be comfortable with more challenging activities - storytelling skills, parenting skills or a TAFE course.

**4) The right inviter.** *Who* issues an invitation is as important as the invitation itself. Known, respected faces, from the same cultural background, should always issue or endorse the invitation. Familiar, similar, respected faces lower fears and reduce the natural distrust all of us have for government or welfare programs.

**5) Satisfaction.** At each stage of involvement, parents should experience satisfactions. Of course it's important that the activity is enjoyable and the new behaviour generates satisfactions as advertised. But it's just as vital to publicly acknowledge parents' successes, celebrate their achievements and reward their efforts, no matter how small. Most people are self-doubting, so unless attention is drawn to their successes, then often discount them.

Never let a chance to celebrate a success go by! Name the person, make sure their peers are listening, and tell them exactly what they did well. If possible make it more real with a round of applause or a simple gift. Remember that small, frequent satisfactions are better than big infrequent satisfactions.

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