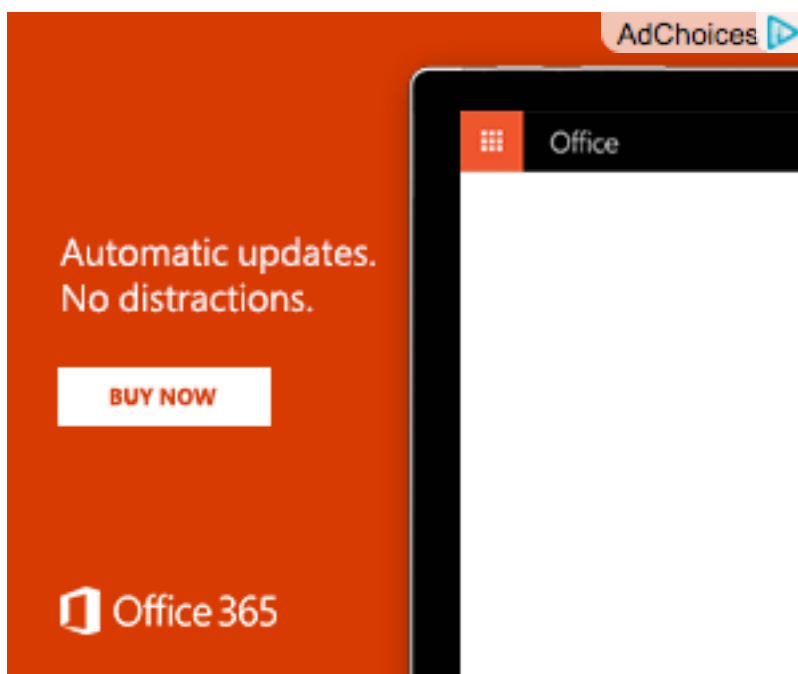




The Adult Learning Theory - Andragogy - of Malcolm Knowles



What **Andragogy** means and which are Knowles' 5 assumptions of **Adult Learners**? Are you familiar with Knowles' 4 **Principles Of Andragogy**? At the following post I will answer the above questions and you will find several highly recommended resources on **Malcolm Knowles' Adult Learning Theory**.



Thursday 9 May 2013

The Adult Learning Theory - Andragogy

Malcolm Shepherd Knowles (1913 – 1997) was an American educator well known for the use of the term **Andragogy** as synonymous to the **adult education**. According Malcolm Knowles, **andragogy** is the art and science of [adult learning](#), thus andragogy refers to any form of **adult learning**. (Kearsley, 2010).

The term **andragogy** can be supposedly equivalent to the term pedagogy. [Andragogy](#) in Greek means the man-leading in comparison to pedagogy, which in Greek means child-leading. However, it should be noticed that the term pedagogy is used since the Ancient Greek times while Alexander Kapp, a German educator, originally used the term **andragogy** in 1833.

Knowles' 5 Assumptions Of Adult Learners

In 1980, **Knowles** made 4 **assumptions** about the characteristics of [adult learners](#) (andragogy) that are different from the assumptions about child learners (pedagogy). In 1984, **Knowles** added the 5th assumption.

1. Self-concept

As a person matures his/her self concept moves from one of being a dependent personality toward one of being a self-directed human being

2. Adult Learner Experience

As a person matures he/she accumulates a growing reservoir of experience that becomes an increasing resource for learning.

3. Readiness to Learn

As a person matures his/her readiness to learn becomes oriented increasingly to the developmental tasks of his/her social roles.

4. Orientation to Learning

As a person matures his/her time perspective changes from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediacy of application, and accordingly his/her orientation toward learning shifts from one of subject- centeredness to one of problem centeredness.

5. Motivation to Learn

As a person matures the motivation to learn is internal (**Knowles** 1984:12).

Knowles' 4 Principles Of Andragogy

In 1984, **Knowles** suggested **4 principles** that are applied to [adult learning](#):

1. Adults need to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction.
2. Experience (including mistakes) provides the basis for the learning activities.
3. Adults are most interested in learning subjects that have immediate relevance and impact to their job or personal life.
4. Adult learning is problem-centered rather than content-oriented. (Kearsley, 2010)

Application of Andragogy in Personal Computer Training

Knowles (1984) provide an example of applying **andragogy principles** to the design of personal computer training:

1. There is a need to explain the reasons specific things are being taught (e.g., certain commands, functions, operations, etc.)
2. Instruction should be task-oriented instead of memorization -- learning activities should be in the context of common tasks to be performed by the others.
3. Instruction should take into account the wide range of different backgrounds of learners; learning materials and activities should allow for different levels/types of previous experience

with computers.

4. Since adults are self-directed, instruction should allow learners to discover things and knowledge for themselves without depending people, will be provided guidance and help when mistakes are made.

I highly encourage you to read the [9 Tips To Apply Adult Learning Theory to eLearning](#). In this article I'll discuss how Knowles' 5 adult learning theory assumptions can be translated to modern day eLearning experiences, so that you can integrate the 4 principles of Andragogy into your eLearning course for maximum learner engagement and motivation.

You may also find useful:

- [8 Important Characteristics Of Adult Learners](#)
- [17 Tips To Motivate Adult Learners](#)
- [The Adult Learning Theory – Andragogy – Infographic](#)

Highly recommended resources on Malcolm Knowles' Theory of Andragogy

- [ThEORY NAME: Andragogy](#)
- [Adult Learning Theory and Principles](#)
- [Andragogy \(PatrickK Mendelsohn\)](#)
- Smith, M. K. (2002) 'Malcolm Knowles, informal adult education, self-direction and andragogy', the encyclopedia of informal education, www.infed.org/thinkers/et-knowl.htm
- [Adult Learning Theory \(Andragogy\)](#)
- [Moving from Pedagogy to Andragogy](#)
- [Andragogy From Wikipedia](#)

References:

- Knowles, M. S. (1950) Informal Adult Education, New York: Association Press. Guide for educators based on the writer's experience as a programme organizer in the YMCA.
- Knowles, M. S. (1962) A History of the Adult Education Movement in the USA, New York: Krieger. A revised edition was published in 1977.
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[The Adult Learning Theory of Malcolm Knowles](#)



The Adult Learning Theory

ANDRAGOGY

of Malcolm Knowles

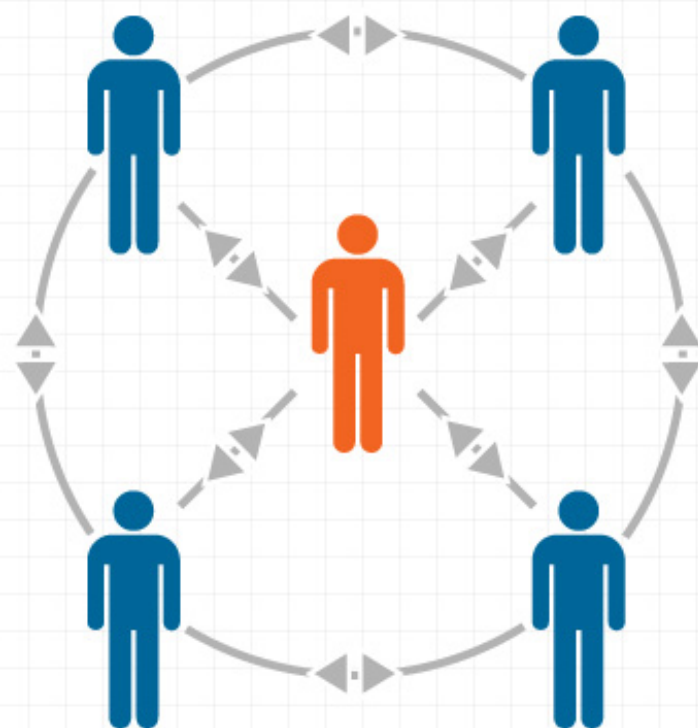


Malcolm Shepherd Knowles (1913 – 1997)

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ANDRAGOGY

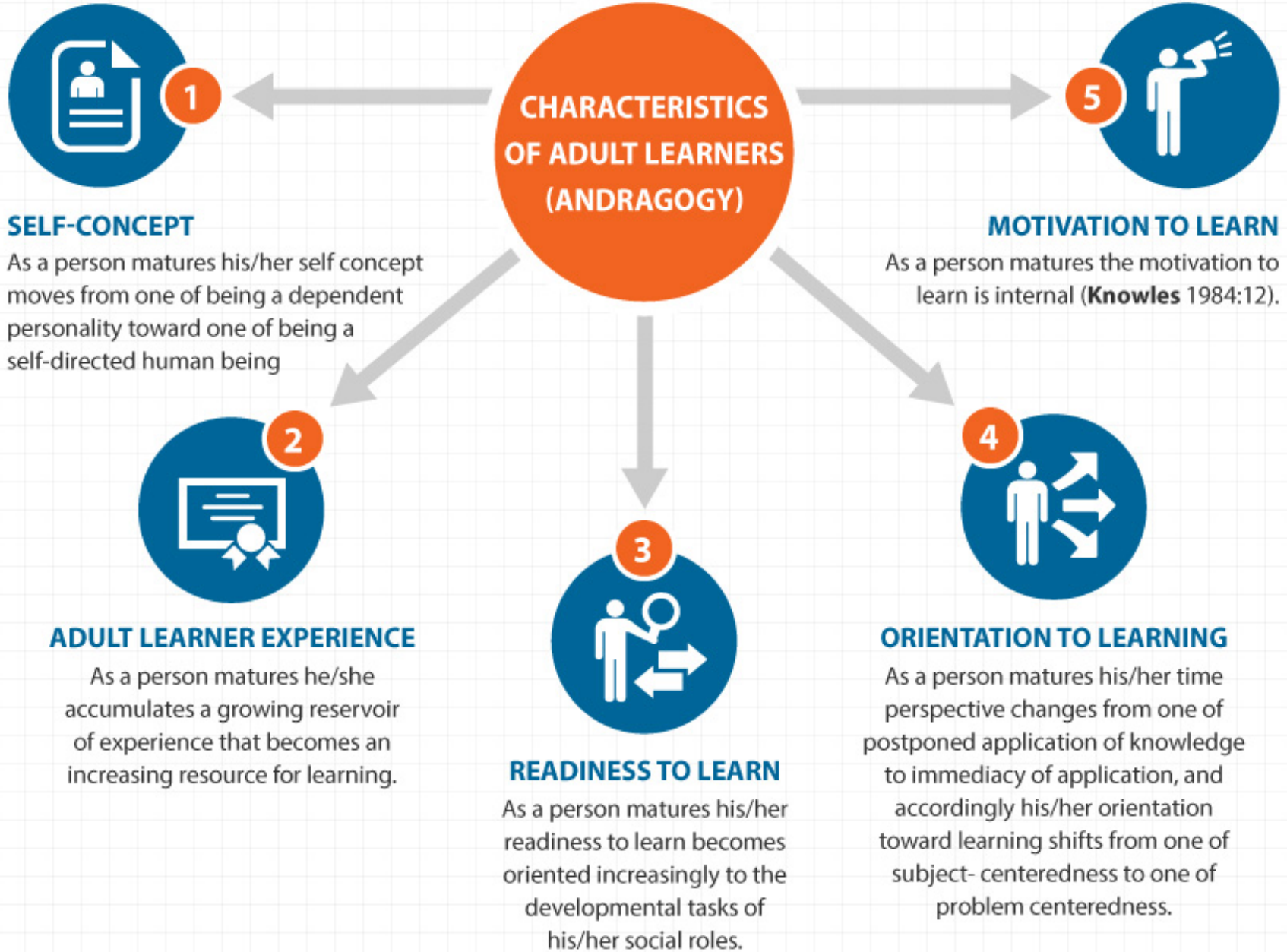


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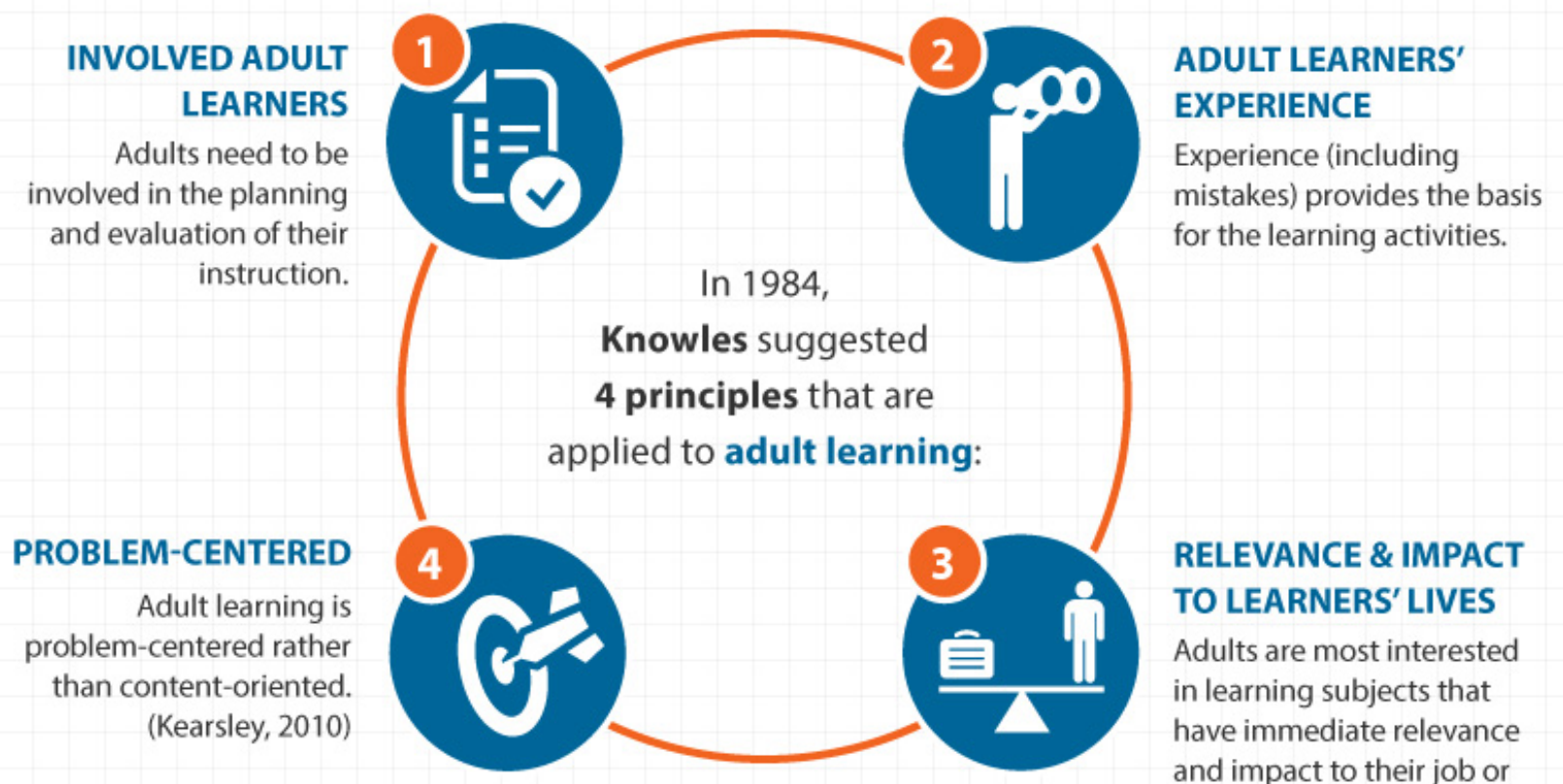
5 ASSUMPTIONS OF ADULT LEARNERS

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4 PRINCIPLES OF ANDRAGOGY



References:

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