

Lesson 1

Title: Breaking down socio-psychological barriers to learning


Time frame: 1 hour

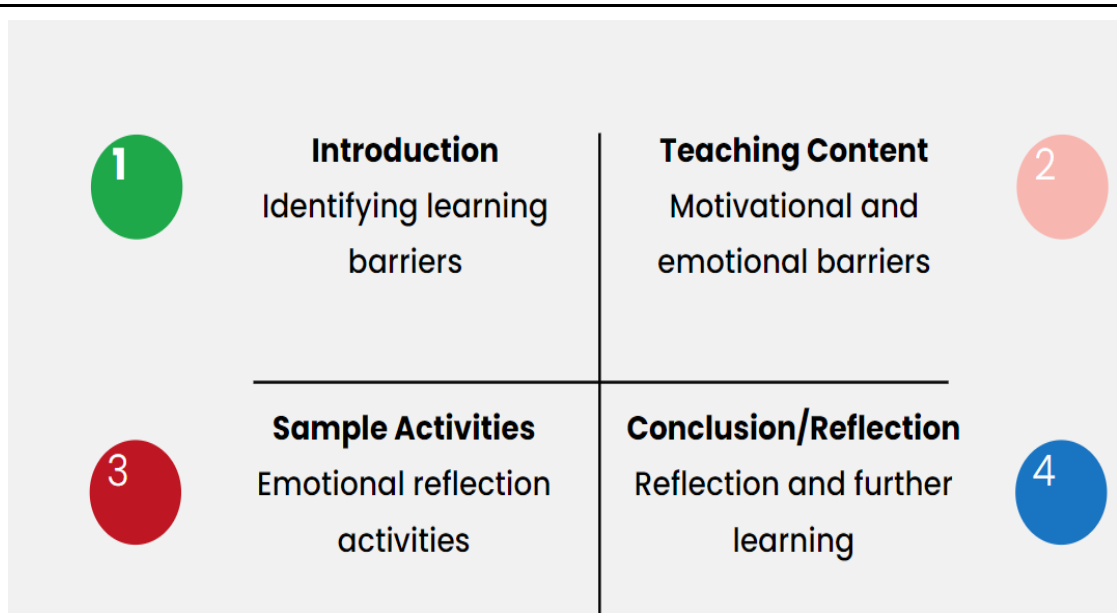
Number of participants: Ideally between 8 to 10 participants

Learning outcomes:

1. Knowledge of socio-psychological barriers to learning.
2. Knowledge of how socio-psychological barriers to learning can be removed.
3. Ability to remove barriers to socio-psychological barriers in the learning environment.

Lesson structure:

Introduction
<p>Slide 2: The facilitator welcomes the participants and introduces the session as, 'Breaking Down Socio-Psychological Barriers to Learning'.</p>  <p>Slide 3: The facilitator talks the participants through the structure of the presentation. Beginning with the introduction, moving on then to Teaching Content, followed by Sample Activities, and finishing the session with a Conclusion/Reflection.</p>



Slide 4:

The facilitator asks participants what socio-psychological barriers in learning means to them? Facilitators should also then ask what the biggest challenges with this are, in their experience. Participants should be given around 5 minutes to write answers down or discuss with others.

Introduction

Discussion:

- What do socio-psychological barriers in learning mean to you?
- In your experience, what are the biggest challenges with this?

Take 5 minutes to write it down or discuss with others.



Slide 5:

What Does Socio-Psychological Mean in Learning Environments?

Facilitator should explain that a positive psychosocial school environment helps to create an encouraging environment for teaching and learning. Also, it relates to 'the dynamic relationship between psychological aspects of our experience (our thoughts, emotions, and behaviours) and our wider social experience (our relationships, family and community networks, social values, and cultural practices)'.

Socio-Psychological Elements in Learning Environments

- A positive psychosocial environment helps to create an encouraging atmosphere for teaching and learning.
- It relates to 'the dynamic relationship between psychological aspects of our experience (our thoughts, emotions, and behaviours) and our wider social experience (our relationships, family and community networks, social values, and cultural practices)'. (The Psychosocial School Environment)

Slide 6:

Facilitator then can move on to explain what a learning barrier is. They can discuss how a learning barrier is anything that interrupts or prevents learning. It impedes the way students engage with learning, stores knowledge and retrieves it during practice. Participants should be told how learning barriers can be physical, mental, emotional, cultural, or social elements that can obstruct a student from achieving their learning goals. Just like no two students learn exactly the same way, socio-psychological barriers exist and impact people in different ways. Students often face multiple barriers to learning at the same time.

Identifying Learning Barriers

- Identifying learning barriers can be difficult because they are unique to each student
- Could be as simple as getting distracted checking their phone during class, or more complex like socio-economic challenges that mean someone shows up to class hungry and tired.



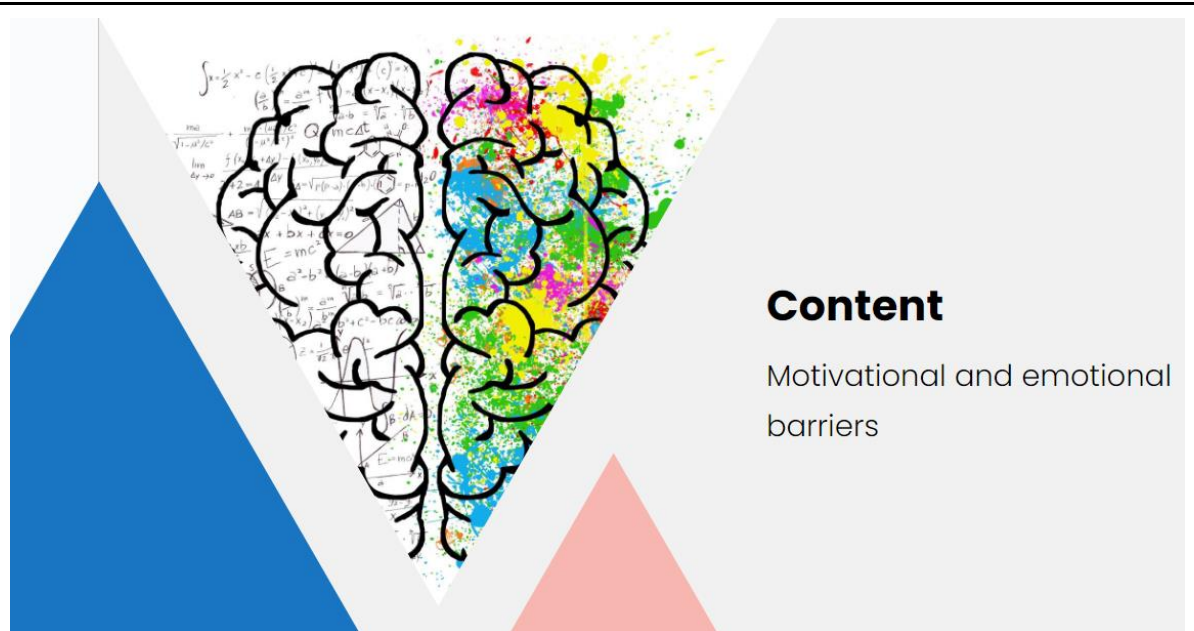
Content

Slide 7, 8, 9 & 10:

Here facilitators should explain how to identify different kinds of learning barriers such as motivational emotional barriers.

Identifying learning barriers can be difficult because they are all so different, and unique to each student. They might be as simple as a student getting distracted checking their phone during class, or more complex like socio-economic challenges that allow someone to show up to class hungry and tired.

Learning barriers harm student outcomes. By trying to identify and understand the most common barriers facing students, we can try to prevent them from getting in the way in the first place. Every student has a history and unfortunately even though this history may impede learning, a teacher may not even be aware of it. By trying to identify and understand the most common barriers facing students, we can try to prevent them from getting in the way in the first place.



Content

Motivational and emotional barriers

Motivational Barriers

Learning is a two-way thing. Both students and teachers need to work at it. Students may feel unmotivated when:

- The lesson isn't connected to something they're interested in or relevant to their lives.
- They don't see a purpose in learning what you're teaching.
- They have no say in how their learning journey progresses.

Motivational Barriers

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Educational Disadvantage

Educational disadvantage is defined as "a situation whereby individuals in society derive less benefit from the education system than their peers".

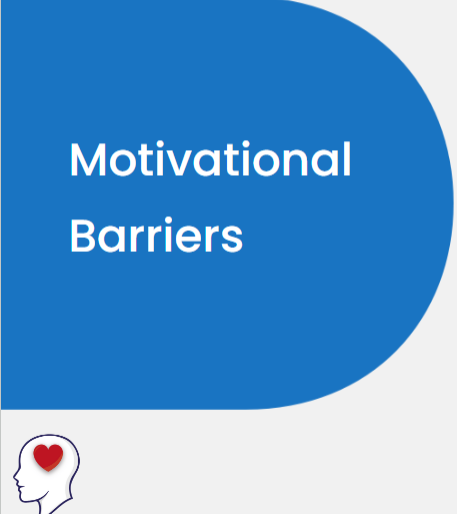
Some groups of students don't do as well as others, notably boys, students from some ethnic backgrounds, and students from poorer families.

Poverty

Research shows that “children living in poverty often have worse health, start school behind their peers developmentally, and do less well once they get there.”

Family Educational Background

There is a lot of evidence to suggest that children are directly affected by their parent’s level of education, and “There is a strong association between parents’ levels of literacy and numeracy and the cognitive outcomes of young children, even when other factors are taken into account.” This includes a lack of role models when students don’t see people like them doing well educationally.



Educational disadvantage – Some students may face situations which cause them to derive less benefits from the education system

Poverty – Poverty is a factor of educational disadvantage, causing some students to not do as well

Family educational background – how someone was raised affects their educational attainment and cognitive outcomes

Lack of role models – This can affect how academic achievement is viewed

Emotional Barriers

Emotion can influence how much enthusiasm students show in the classroom, how much knowledge they take in and how much effort they put into their work. Some emotions can be productive, while others suppress learning. Some of these emotional barriers include:

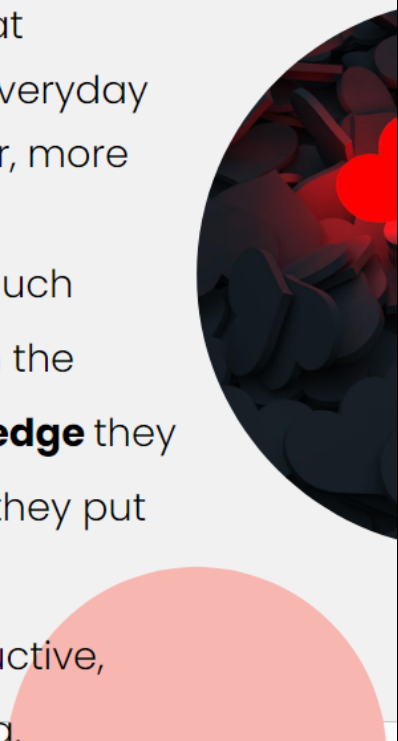
- Fear of failure can lead to anxiety or apprehension to learn new things.
- Low self-esteem can lead students to believe they can’t learn or do something, so they may not even try.
- Fear of change can make students resistant to new methods or approaches to teaching.
- Fear of failure can lead to anxiety or apprehension to learn new things.
- Low self-esteem can lead students to believe they can’t learn or do something, which leads to a vicious cycle leading to lower performance and further reduced expectations.
- Fear of change can make students resistant to new methods or approaches to teaching.
- Lack of praise from the teacher which leads to the student not trying as hard.
- Other socio-psychological issues include issues with attention and poor retention skills or learning difficulties such as ADHD or dyslexia.

Solutions to Barriers to Learning

To overcome barriers, teachers need to reward the learner's effort and celebrate their success even for a simple achievement. This helps the learner gain confidence and overcome negative emotions.

- Reframe failures and setbacks as opportunities for growth.
- Try to relate lessons to a student's life or experience.
- Consult students regularly about what they are learning and what would help improve their experience.
- Make students feel valued in their learning experience.
- Provide learning materials in a variety of formats to assist different learning styles.

Emotional Barriers

- Social and cultural factors that students experience in their everyday environment can create other, more subtle, psychological barriers.
 - Emotion can influence how much **enthusiasm** students show in the classroom, how much **knowledge** they take in and how much **effort** they put into their work.
 - Some emotions can be productive, while others suppress learning.
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Sample Activities

Facilitators should provide the following two short, engaging activities.

Slide 12:

Activity 1:

Facilitator should explain that people can hold different beliefs about themselves and their abilities and this can affect their learning. In this exercise, participants will examine some of the basic emotions, thoughts, and feelings that a student/learners may feel about themselves. This activity allows participants to put themselves in the place of someone who has psychosocial barriers to demonstrate how it can impact learning.

Learner one: Theresa

Theresa is a learner who comes from a middle-class background whose immediate family has a high level of education. She has always loved learning and has just started to learn a new language and is picking it up quickly. She thinks the following things about herself:

- I can do this.
- I hate asking questions in class, but it will help me learn.

- I am motivated to learn a new language.
- I want to do my best.

Profile 2: John

John is a man whose family has a low level of education. He didn't like school and had dyslexia. He has small children and is working a full-time job with long hours. He is struggling to grasp learning a new language. He thinks the following things about himself:

- I should be able to do this.
- If I tell the teacher I am struggling they will think I'm stupid
- If I ask questions, I will look foolish.
- I'll never be good at this.
- I want to do my best, but I will never be any good.

Questions:

1. How will the learners' background and thoughts about themselves impact their learning experience? Think about/ discuss this. (10 mins)
2. Having this knowledge of the learners, how can the teacher support each learner better? Come up with five things the teacher can do to support each learner. (10 mins)

(Total 20 minutes)

A Learner's Self-Belief is Important

This activity presents scenarios from 2 different people and allows you to put yourself in the place of someone who has psychosocial barriers to demonstrate how it can impact their learning. (See handout)

After analysing the two scenarios, you will need to reflect on the following questions:

- How will the learners' background and thoughts about themselves impact their learning experience? Think about/ discuss this. (10 mins)
- Having this knowledge of the learners, how can the teacher support each learner better? Come up with five things the teacher can do to support each learner. (10 mins)

Slide 13:

After activity 1 the facilitator can then provide the second activity for the participants to take part in.

Activity 2:

Every student faces different barriers to learning, but some of them are common.

1. Create a list of the most common barriers to learning that your students face.
2. Discuss ways to prevent or reduce the impact of these barriers on student success. How can you better support your students in overcoming these obstacles?

3. Come up with creative solutions to the barriers that your students face. Consider how you can use technology, resources, and strategies to support your students in overcoming these barriers. (15- 20 minutes)

- Create a list of the most common barriers to learning that your students face.
- Discuss ways to prevent or reduce the impact of these barriers on student success. How can you better support your students in overcoming these obstacles?
- Come up with creative solutions to the barriers that your students face. Consider how you can use technology, resources, and strategies to support your students in overcoming these barriers. (15- 20 minutes)

Barriers and Solutions

Every student faces different barriers to learning, but some of them are common.

Conclusion

Slide 15:

The facilitator can begin to conclude the session by discussing the following possible solutions with participants.

Possible Solutions

The following tips should help learners gain confidence and overcome negative emotions:

- Reframe failures and setbacks as opportunities for growth.
- Try to relate lessons to a student's life or experience.
- Consult students regularly about what they are learning and what would help improve their experience
- Make students feel valued in their learning experience
- Provide learning materials in a variety of formats to assist different learning preferences

Slide 16:

This should be a wrap-up activity, ideally the facilitator should ask some reflection questions to make the teachers think about what they have learned and how it applies to their own teaching.

The quote **"You win not by chance but by preparation."** by the American baseball player Roger Maris sums up teaching. You will not succeed in being a good teacher through chance, but it is with preparation that you will help to support your students overcome learning barriers, the facilitator can end the session with this thought.

Facilitators thank participants for taking part in the session and ask if there are any follow questions or reflections before concluding.

