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Powerful communication through basic graphics: use graphic facilitation to deepen understanding, build cognitive skills, expand educational equity, and add an element of play to learning environments in healthcare

Judy Richardson, MD, MBA; Jessica Walter, EdD, MA; Megan McGhean, MA
School of Medicine, Division of Management, Oregon Health & Science University, Portland, OR., United States

Active Learning Connection

Interactive by nature, the presenters will demonstrate active graphic facilitation, engaging the participants in a co-creation of two posters that outlines the argument for use of visuals in academic settings (Creating the Why). Participants will practice drawing basic icons on small- and large-scale paper and sharing images with co-participants for feedback. Finally, participants will play a "rapid-draw" game and participate in a gallery walk of their own large-scale work.

Abstract

Graphic facilitation is a technique using a common visual language: Icons, shapes, and colors, to communicate and collaborate on a creative level with others. Use of live graphics in fields of design thinking (Sibbet 2018), change theory (Espiner 2016), business development (Roam, 2023) and change management (Baastrup 2019) are common, but are rare in higher education or healthcare settings. The untapped potential is vast: Visuals can be used to illustrate health conditions, diagram treatment plans and to map patient journeys through the health system. The translation of spoken word by a facilitator to icon and metaphor is emotionally evocative. It communicates value and lasting impact through co-creation of a shared concept.

Contextualizing learning within images and metaphors inspires knowledge sharing and supports memory (Mirzoeff, 2002). Adding humor to images and use of metaphor invites a playful approach to interpreting and discussing key concepts. And as an educator- it's fun! This workshop will provide participants with basic skills of visual language they can use to create deeper understanding of complex concepts with their students through active practice. They will leave with a sketch book of their initial shapes, with an action plan to further develop their skills.

Objectives: After attending this workshop, attendees will:

Learning Objectives

1. Practice a basic visual vocabulary by learning to transform basic shapes into icons, icons into metaphor
2. Begin to add visual graphics to their pedagogical toolkit
3. Understand how to expand access to difficult concepts to primary visual learners
4. Develop skills for drawing a live picture using metaphor to explain an idea, both on paper and digitally.

Methods

Workshop participants will participate in live graphic facilitation outlining the scientific underpinnings of visual language, use and settings. They will practice icons and images in a take-home notebook and markers. Finally, participants will partner with each other and commit to practice and future collaboration with a thought partner join during the workshop.

Graphic Skills to Expand Educational Equity

Visual techniques expand learning to neurodivergent learners "individuals who process with photo-realistic pictures rather than words" (Grandin 2023). Many of these learners carry diagnoses of learning disorders, autism, dyslexia, or ADHD, and struggle in academic settings based on verbal communication alone. Use of graphic facilitation in academic settings expands content access to neurodivergent learners. What's more, those who are primary visual thinkers can help us expand our own thought processes to be more holistic and less linear, opening up worlds of innovation and creativity.

References

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