

The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health is a professional, awarding and campaigning body at the forefront of environmental and public health and safety. They have an impressive average pass rate of 95% for their Level 1 manual handling and Level 2 health and safety courses; but some trainers have pass rates of 100%.

Mike Smythe is a qualified CIEH trainer with a 100% pass rate on **all** his CIEH courses which he attributes to applying brain friendly learning principles to his workshops, which he says has also given him a 'real confidence boost'.

Mike illustrates with a story about delivering a mandatory H&S course to sceptics. One person was particularly negative and robustly suggested that training was "a **** waste of time." Mike requested that he just stay for a while with an open mind and within a short time the sceptic was enjoying being immersed in what was going on. And at the end of the session, he did the exam, shook hands and thanked Mike for a useful day.

Testing is one of the key steps in the brain friendly process and Mike recognised that BFL techniques give him the confidence and scope to test understanding without embarrassment so when people complete the formal qualification test they are already confident with the material – leading to a 100% pass rate. The impact on learners and their organisations is huge as there is no time or resources wasted on relearning and retesting

So what sort of techniques does Mike use?

It is easier to absorb familiar material so Mike sends out the Level 2 booklet three weeks early and asks people to read it, highlight any areas that are unclear or they want to ask questions about. At the workshop they can then focus particularly on those areas that people want more help with, taking notes and reinforcing understanding.

Using the principle that people are more motivated when the learning starts immediately Mike keeps his introductions brief. He found at our 3 day Train the Trainer workshop that we often don't do formal introductions (sometimes known as creeping death) and icebreakers but start people learning as soon as they enter the room and encourage them to introduce each other as they meet. The first exercise is designed so everyone gets to meet at least 4 other people, with the next exercise

ensuring they meet everyone else informally. People prefer the informal approach, it relaxes them, creates the appropriate environment and has the added advantage that learning starts immediately as time is not wasted on lengthy introductions – a benefit to individuals and their organisations.

Mike was aware that H&S law was his own weakest area and decided to apply the brain friendly techniques to his own learning. So he followed our 6 step process; used music, took visual notes, taught others and found H&S law became his 'easy to teach' topic.

We asked Mike what he'd say to anyone thinking of applying brain friendly techniques. 'Give it a go' he says as it helps get round some of the challenges of delivering training that is often mandatory and sadly not always popular.

To find out more about introducing brain friendly learning into your technical training visit www.braininbusiness.com where you can find out about upcoming events and download a free report with immediately applicable tips 'Use your Brain: 9 compelling reasons for brain friendly learning.'