A few years ago, I asked a good friend for book recommendations and she replied, “you need to listen to podcasts—they will change your life.” I excitedly took notes on her top picks and started listening that day. She was right, listening to podcasts and learning about topics outside of my normal interests has been life-changing. As a person trying to balance family, career and life, I didn’t list “Lifelong Learner” as one of my titles. However, when I listen to podcasts, I can use the time I already spend on daily activities to learn.

Do you consider yourself a lifelong learner? If not, perhaps you think it is too overwhelming to give yourself one more title. Hopefully the following information will convince you that “lifelong learner” belongs at the end of your name and credential.

**BENEFITS OF LIFELONG LEARNING**

A survey of 2,752 adults found that 73 percent describe themselves as lifelong learners. Almost 90 percent of adults identify with the phrase “I often find myself looking for new opportunities to grow as a person.” (Pew Research Center) Once we have earned our credential, what benefits does learning for life provide?

Continued on page 2
As professionals, we are obligated to continue our education and stay current in our field. There are tracking systems to help us as well as, let’s be honest, keep us accountable and focused on a goal. The challenge is to ask ourselves, “what else, besides professional continuing education hours, am I gaining from this?” Challenge yourself to think beyond the required 45 CE hours every three years in order to maintain your credential. It can be as small as one tool that you implement into your kitchen’s workflow, or as big as a major career or position change that improves your self-confidence, quality of life, or job satisfaction.

Other benefits of lifelong learning include:

- **Lifelong learning makes you happy and happiness helps you learn.** Adult learning can have positive effects on self-perception and happiness. Happier people are 12 percent more productive than unhappy people. (Revesencio) Also, you learn better when you are happy. Happiness and positive emotions release serotonin and dopamine, the “feel good hormones.” These hormones not only increase your information processing skills, they help you memorize new information.

- **Lifelong learning makes you marketable and competitive in the field.** As a CDM, CFPP, maintaining your credential not only keeps you focused on staying current, it provides opportunities for networking and skill-sharing. It is easy to get wrapped up in day-to-day operations, but when we attend workshops or conventions, we see our role through a different lens and market ourselves and our skills at the same time. Many of our consumers are looking for the best experience possible and it is our job to provide that for them. Even if the time you spend learning doesn’t offer CE hours or apply to your job, the new knowledge you acquire provides the aforementioned benefits.

- **Lifelong learning promotes stress-reduction.** No one needs more on their to-do list, but research shows that if you are learning, you are reducing tendencies to internalize stress and improve perspective while solving problems. (Mayer et al.)

- **Lifelong learning benefits the workplace, employers, employees, and customers.** If you engage in conversations, teach others what you learn or implement change based on your new knowledge. Everyone around you will benefit.

- **Lifelong learning reduces your risk of developing chronic diseases like Alzheimer’s.** In the groundbreaking National Institutes of Health ACTIVE Study, older adults who received as little as 10 sessions of mental training improved their cognitive function and showed improvements for 10 years. It is recommended that you set aside a few minutes each day to learn or practice something new. (Tennstedt et al.) Jacquelyn B. James, PhD at Boston College says: “As we get older, it is more important to find things to do that light up our lives. Whether it’s acquiring a new skill or language, joining a new group and meeting new people, or finding ways to continue using existing skills, successful aging and longevity are built upon patterns of lifelong learning.”

Continued from page 1
IS LIFELONG LEARNING THE SAME AS CONTINUING EDUCATION?

It is easy to think of our required continuing education (CE) as enough learning. However, the focus is turning away from the concept of CE. Yes, we still need to use a unit of measure to quantify maintaining our credential (continuing education or CE hours), but the shift is turning towards Continuing Competencies (CC) vs. Continuing Education (CE). The difference is engaging in education and learning that is action-based and results in change either in belief or action.

The concept of passively listening to a lecture or clicking through a program to receive CE hours should be replaced with targeting our learning experiences and actively engaging in our learning to continue or improve competence. One might argue that if you are continuing in your competencies you are a lifelong learner. If you are merely gathering CE hours to meet criteria, learning may or may not have taken place. A concept called “Growth Mindset” by Carol Dweck compares a “Fixed Mindset” to a “Growth Mindset.” Which one are you?

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

Our field is made up of hard-working, caring individuals who most likely fall into the Growth Mindset category. You may look at these characteristics and think, “yes, this is me—but I can’t add one more thing to my life.” I encourage you to think outside of the traditional learning box and see how you can be a Lifelong Learner with a Growth Mindset. In 1922, Thomas Edison prophesied: “I believe that the motion picture is destined to revolutionize our educational system and that in a few years it will supplant largely, if not entirely, the use of textbooks.” Today, we might substitute the word Internet where he said motion picture. Here are some ideas to consider:

Study or Book Clubs

If you are a person who tends to put off reading or studying unless someone else is holding you accountable, committing to a person or group might be for you. Set meeting dates and deadlines, written in ink so you stay on task.

Podcasts

With more than 800,000 active podcasts and over 54 million podcast episodes available for download, you most certainly will find one that interests you. Gretchen Rubin, author and podcaster, has a “Gift of Podcast” document that will help guide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEFINITIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>LIFELONG LEARNING</strong> is the “ongoing, voluntary, and self-motivated” pursuit of knowledge for either personal or professional reasons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>COMPETENCE</strong> is the ability to perform a task, function, or role at a level that meets or exceeds prescribed standards in the work environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>COMPETENCIES</strong> are observable behaviors that encompass the knowledge, skills, and personal characteristics that are at or above acceptable levels of performance in the work environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CONTINUING COMPETENCE</strong> is demonstrating specified levels of knowledge, skills, or abilities not only at the time of initial certification, but also throughout an individual’s professional career.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**CONTINUING EDUCATION VS. CONTINUING COMPETENCE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CE</th>
<th>CC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quantity Outcomes</td>
<td>Quality Outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet Requirements</td>
<td>Lifelong Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receive Credit/Passive</td>
<td>Engage/Earn/Active</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Accountability</td>
<td>Identify Gaps in Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; Met</td>
<td>Individual Learning Needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; Not Met</td>
<td>Internal and External Accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; Performance/Skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; Productivity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

Continued from page 2

Continued on page 4
you through choosing the right ones for you. Listen on your commute or while doing dishes or housework to feel a sense of accomplishment and boost your brain power while doing mundane tasks.

**Webinars**
Sign up for a webinar with colleagues and discuss it over coffee. ANFP offers more than 30 online courses and 15 webinars. In addition, more than 90 articles are available. You may also want to use the CBDM’s Gap Analysis Tool to target your learning experiences (https://www.anfponline.org/docs/default-source/legacy-docs/docs/gap-analysis-tool.pdf).

**Apps**
The gamification of learning, especially for adults, is trending now. Wikipedia defines gamification as “the use of game thinking and game mechanics in non-game contexts to engage users in solving problems.” One example is Duolingo, a language app that makes learning a new language competitive and fun. The trend of microlearning is emerging as well. Microlearning gives you small doses of information followed by a few questions about the topic. This caters to our busy lives and for some, short attention spans, to take in new information. One example is the *Word of the Day* app.

**KNOW YOURSELF AND WHAT MOTIVATES YOU**
Lifelong learners are people who display an attitude and ability that prompts them to learn across their life span. One key attribute of a lifelong learner is positive attitude and the motivation to learn. *(Bath and Smith)* Motivation can come internally or externally.

People that are internally motivated get a surge of energy and strong positive emotion from accomplishing a task or goal. On the other hand, people that are externally motivated work at a goal in order not to let others down, or feel accomplishment by earning praise, financial or personal gain. To find out what motivation factor drives you, check out: https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR.57.htm.

*Continued on page 5*
WHO HOLDS YOU ACCOUNTABLE?

You may also want to ask yourself what, or who, holds you accountable? Many frameworks are available to assist you in knowing yourself better. One example is Gretchen Rubin’s 4 Tendencies Framework. You can take the quiz at www.quiz.gretchenrubin.com.

Knowing yourself well can set the path to be a Lifelong Learner. For example, if you are externally motivated and hold yourself accountable to others, you may benefit from paying for a course and taking it with a study buddy. The fact that you paid for something and that someone else is expecting you to be engaged, may motivate you to stay engaged and complete the course.

Other tips to get on the Lifelong Learning path include:

- **Schedule it.** Use a time block system or digital planner to help you validate the importance of your learning experience. Schedule your learning time as if it is an important appointment.

- **Set SMART goals.** SMART goals are Specific, Measurable, Action-oriented, Realistic, and Timely. For example: *I will read six leadership books this year.*

- **Engage others.** Enlist stakeholders or others who will also benefit or hold you accountable. Will your employer pay for your time or courses? Can your family pitch in to make one meal a week while you read or study? Can you delegate tasks at work and use the time to research or learn?

- **Use your resources.** Chances are, you will not need to obtain additional resources. What capabilities does your smartphone have that you are not using? Does your work computer calendar sync with your personal calendar? Do you utilize your library or free online lending programs (Libby, etc.)? Is there an area of your home that you can set up a speaker, desk, or mini library with a comfortable reading chair? Does your employer offer webinars or in-services? Do you put professional journals, like Edge, in a location where you can grab them for a quick 10-minute power reading session? The options are endless if we think outside of our normal framework for learning.

Now is the time to start (or continue) being *You, CDM, Lifelong Learner.* You may have read this article and thought “I should look into that…later” about one idea or resource. Start now! Grab a pen, circle that thought, and leave this page open to take that step on the Lifelong Learning path. It might be life-changing for you!

---

**RESOURCES**

CE Questions: Management Connection

This Level I article assumes that the reader has entry level knowledge of the topic. The desired outcome is to ensure a foundation of basic concepts of the subject matter.

Reading *Lifelong Learning: Your CDM, CFPP Credential and Beyond* and successfully completing these questions online has been approved for 1 hour of continuing education for CDM, CFPPs. CE credit is available ONLINE ONLY. To earn 1 CE hour, access the online CE quiz in the ANFP Marketplace. Visit www.ANFPonline.org/market and select “CE Articles.” If you don’t see your article title on the first page, then search the title “Lifelong Learning: Your CDM, CFPP Credential and Beyond.” Once on the article title page, purchase the article and complete the CE quiz.

1. Which of the following is an example of a Growth Mindset?
   A. I avoid completing care plans because I am not good at them
   B. I put a lot of effort into care planning as it isn't my strongest skill
   C. I hired a tech to complete care plans as they are a waste of my time

2. Which of the following is not a benefit of Lifelong Learning?
   A. Increased happiness
   B. Increased productivity
   C. Increased stress

3. Which of the following is an example of a SMART goal?
   A. I will listen to more podcasts
   B. I will sign up for three ANFP online courses with my assistant manager and complete them by Sept. 1, 2020
   C. The Policy & Procedure handbook should be updated

4. Demonstrating specified levels of knowledge, skills, or abilities not only at the time of initial certification, but also throughout an individual’s professional career is the definition of:
   A. Continuing Education (CE)
   B. Continuing Competence (CC)
   C. Lifelong Learning

5. Which of the following are resources for Lifelong Learning and Continuing Competence?
   A. Webinars and podcasts
   B. Edge CE articles and ANFPOnline
   C. All of the above

6. If you cannot earn Continuing Education (CE) for a book you read, it is not worth your time.
   A. True
   B. False

7. Coordinating a gameshow-type quiz between participants during a workshop to enhance learning is an example of:
   A. Gamification
   B. Hands-on learning
   C. Competency testing