Masters athletes (MAs) have specific preferences for coach behaviours, attributes, and tactics (Callary, Rathwell, & Young, 2015), that link to:

Andragogy: the art and science of helping adults learn (Knowles et al., 2012).

The purpose of the study was to explore and describe how elements of the andragogy in practice model (Knowles et al., 2012) might inform “best practice” strategies for coaches when working with MAs.

Given that:

- Masters athletes (MAs) have specific preferences for coach behaviours, attributes, and tactics (Callary, Rathwell, & Young, 2015).

Methods & Participants

Participants:

- One female dragon boat athlete, aged 58, engaged competitively in the sport as a youth and MA, with 25 years of training.
- One female dragon boat coach, aged 22, engaged competitively in the sport as a youth, has 6 years of experience coaching MAs competitively, and an undergraduate degree in kinesiology and graduate training in sport psychology.
- Both compete internationally but with different clubs in different cities.

Data collection & analysis:

- Data were collected using semi-structured interviews (Creswell, 2014) with each of the two participants, each two hours in duration and conducted one year apart. Data were analyzed by organizing quotes into categories representative of the andragogy in practice model’s six core principles.

Background & Purpose

From these data and in accordance with other studies of coaching MAs (e.g., Callary et al., 2015; Rathwell et al., 2015), we note that:

- It is important to have a practice plan, but coaches may allow their athletes to exercise autonomy in navigating their training. The coach may provide alternate workout times and work with the athletes to ensure that objectives are met.
- MAs are often driven by different participatory motives and prefer coaching approaches that are tailored to the individual athlete.
- In line with MacDonald et al.’s (2009) work, MAs’ successful character beyond the confines of sport means that life experiences warrant patient and respectful coaching approaches.
- MAs need explanation of training procedures and decision, and seek out rationale if it is not forthcoming.
- As evidenced in the application of the principles, the andragogy in practice model may provide “best practice” strategies to deliver effective coaching for MAs.
- More research is needed to further consider the psychosocial coaching approaches that address the unique profile of MAs. Such research could help inform the CAC’s handbook on coaching MAs in better understanding the art of coaching this fast growing cohort of athletes.

What do we know & where are we going?

- We do practices where I go out with a video camera and video the whole boat, and individuals within the boat. Then we sit down either individually or as a whole team and talk about what we’re seeing and what they can improve.
- The coach is always conscious that everyone is an adult and many have children. He’s offering suggestions and being supportive so that the athletes don’t feel like they’re short-changing any of their roles in their lives.
- We were working on our finishes because our finishes weren’t as strong as the other parts of our race. It wouldn’t be the whole focus (of practice) but that was part of it. And we actually came up with a different plan. Right? So if the plan is not working, [the athletes and coach together] come up with a different plan that does work.
- We made a conscious decision (to train) whereas younger athletes, maybe their parents have them going. Masters athletes made a conscious decision: I love doing this sport. I want to excel doing this sport and I want to do everything I can to achieve that.”

Andragogy in practice model

- The learners’ need to know
- Self-concept of the learner and self-directed learning
- Prior experiences of the learner
- Readiness to learn
- Orientation to learning and problem-solving
- Motivation to learn

Further Reading