

The L.I.Y. Method: Reimagining Training Strategies for the AI Age

*From Knowledge Transfer to Curiosity Activation: A New
Framework for Learning Design in the 21st Century*

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"The goal of learning interventions should no longer be to teach content, but to ignite...activate...and translate curiosity into action."

ABSTRACT

The corporate training industry stands at a critical inflection point. Despite \$370 billion in annual investment, 70-90% of training content is forgotten within days and fewer than 25% of participants apply what they learn. Meanwhile, AI tools like ChatGPT and Claude now provide instant access to expert-level knowledge, personalized tutoring, and custom learning paths—24/7, at no cost. The scarcity that justified traditional information-transfer training has vanished. The bottleneck is no longer access to knowledge; it is motivation to learn. This white paper introduces the L.I.Y. Method (Learn It Yourself), a research-backed framework that reimagines training for the AI age. Rather than transferring comprehensive knowledge through long-form programs, the L.I.Y. Method uses compressed "SPARK Sessions"—emotionally resonant 2-hour experiences designed to ignite genuine curiosity and self-motivated learning. Drawing on behavioral psychology, neuroscience, and proven methodologies from The Challenger Sale, we present a complete system with SPARK Session choreography, AI-powered Learning Ignition Guides, and new success metrics. This paper provides L&D leaders with a practical roadmap for transitioning from obsolete information delivery to transformative curiosity ignition. The age of workshops is ending. The age of SPARK Sessions has begun.

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[This paper represents original thinking on the future of training and learning in the AI age. We welcome feedback, pilot partnerships, and collaboration with forward-thinking learning and development leaders.]

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The corporate training industry is at a breaking point. Organizations spend over \$370 billion each year on employee development, yet 70–90% of training content is forgotten within days, and fewer than 25% of participants apply what they learn. This is not just wasted investment—it reflects a deeper mismatch between traditional training design and the realities of how humans learn and change behavior.

At the same time, artificial intelligence has fundamentally altered the learning landscape. Large language models now provide instant, personalized access to expert-level knowledge on any topic. With information no longer scarce, traditional training—which prioritizes content delivery—has become increasingly obsolete.

| The real constraint today isn't access to knowledge; it's the motivation to learn.

This white paper introduces the L.I.Y.. Method (Learning Is Individual, You)—a reimagined approach designed for the AI age. Instead of long-form content transfer, the L.I.Y.. Method creates short, emotionally charged learning experiences—“**SPARK Sessions**”—that ignite genuine curiosity and trigger self-driven learning long after the session ends.

Core Principle

Learning is inherently individual. Traditional training assumes common needs, pace, and motivations across participants—assumptions proven false by decades of research.

| The L.I.Y.. Method reframes the facilitator as a “*curiosity architect*” whose role is to spark motivation, not deliver information.

Key Insights

- ◆ *Traditional Training Is Built on False Premises:* One-size-fits-all sessions overlook individual context, producing weak engagement and minimal behavior change.
- ◆ *The Forgetting Curve Dominates:* Humans forget up to 90% of new information within a week. More content simply accelerates forgetting.
- ◆ *Behavior Change Needs Motivation:* Research from BJ Fogg and Katy Milkman shows that lasting change requires prompt, ability, and motivation—yet conventional training focuses almost entirely on ability.
- ◆ *Breakthrough Learning Has Three Triggers:* True self-motivated learning emerges when Disruption, Urgency, and Possibility converge in a short window.
- ◆ *Emotion Fuels Retention:* Neuroscience shows that emotionally significant moments create stronger memory formation than extended information-heavy sessions.
- ◆ *AI Has Eliminated Information Scarcity:* With AI raising performance by 25–40% even for non-experts, training’s value lies not in content delivery but in catalyzing intrinsic motivation.

Component 1: “SPARK Sessions”

- ◆ Compressed 2-hour learning experiences using the proposed 5-stage session choreography to move participants from rational understanding through emotional engagement to personal commitment
- ◆ Purpose: Create the confluence of Disruption + Urgency + Possibility that ignites self-motivated learning

Component 2: Learning Ignition Guide

- ◆ Curated toolkit with 3 essential resources, quick-start action, pre-written AI prompts, optional community connection, and progress markers
- ◆ Purpose: Lower activation energy for self-directed learning and provide personalized pathways using AI assistance

Component 3: New Success Metrics

- ◆ Measurement focused on Learning Ignition Rate, Sustained Engagement, and Self-Reported Application rather than traditional completion rates or test scores
- ◆ Purpose: Track what actually matters: motivation to learn and real behavior change

The Bottom Line

The L.I.Y.. Method shifts training from teaching content to igniting curiosity. By compressing time, elevating emotional engagement, honoring individual learning paths, and harnessing AI for personalized exploration, this approach aligns with both human psychology and modern technology.

For L&D leaders, the mandate changes:

| The goal is no longer to deliver more knowledge, but to spark the desire to learn.

The essential question becomes: How do we design experiences that make people want to continue learning on their own?

The full paper provides the framework, research, implementation steps, and case studies to help organizations adopt this next-generation approach to learning and development.

PART I: THE CRISIS IN CORPORATE LEARNING

The \$370 Billion Question

According to Training Magazine's 2023 Industry Report, companies in the United States alone spent \$101.8 billion on training and development initiatives. When we expand our view globally, total investment in corporate learning and development exceeds \$370 billion annually. These are staggering numbers that reflect the widespread recognition that continuous learning is essential for organizational success in our rapidly changing world.

Yet despite this massive investment, the return on training expenditure tells a troubling story. Research from the Corporate Executive Board (now part of Gartner) found that the average employee forgets approximately 70% of training content within 24 hours of the training session, and a staggering 90% within one week. This is not a new finding—it aligns with over a century of research on human memory and learning, dating back to Hermann Ebbinghaus's pioneering work on the "forgetting curve" in the 1880s.

But the problem extends beyond retention. A comprehensive study by the Association for Talent Development revealed that only 12% of employees actually apply the skills they learn in training programs to their day-to-day work. Think about that for a moment:

Despite significant investment of time, money, and effort, nearly 9 out of 10 participants leave training programs and continue doing things exactly as they did before.

The ROI crisis in corporate learning is not a matter of debate—it is a documented, measurable reality. And yet, year after year, organizations continue to invest in the same approaches, hoping for different results. The question we must ask is not "How can we make traditional training more effective?" but rather "*Why are we still using approaches that demonstrably don't work?*"

The False Premises of Traditional Training

To understand why traditional training fails so consistently, we must examine the foundational assumptions upon which it is built. Traditional corporate training—whether delivered in person or virtually, whether lasting hours or weeks—operates on three core premises that, upon examination, are demonstrably false:

False Premise #1: Everyone Has the Same Learning Needs

Traditional training programs are designed for cohorts—groups of people who are assumed to share similar knowledge gaps, skill deficiencies, and learning objectives. A

"Sales Excellence" program brings together salespeople from various backgrounds, experience levels, and contexts, and attempts to teach them all the same content, in the same way, at the same time.

This one-size-fits-all approach ignores the reality that each participant brings unique prior knowledge, different contextual challenges, varying learning preferences, and distinct motivations. What is revelatory to one person may be redundant to another. What is immediately applicable in one context may be irrelevant in another. Yet traditional training proceeds as if these differences don't exist or don't matter.

False Premise #2: More Content Equals More Learning

There exists a persistent belief in learning and development circles that comprehensive coverage is inherently superior to selective focus. Multi-day workshops are valued over shorter sessions. Extensive curricula are seen as more "thorough" than targeted interventions. The logic seems intuitive: if employees need to know 100 things, surely teaching them all 100 is better than teaching them 10.

But this "coverage model" fundamentally misunderstands how human learning works.

Cognitive science has repeatedly demonstrated that humans have severe limitations on working memory capacity, attention span, and information processing bandwidth.

Attempting to teach more than these capacities can handle doesn't result in proportionally more learning—it results in less retention of everything.

As Daniel Kahneman explains in "Thinking, Fast and Slow," the human brain is remarkably efficient at filtering out information that doesn't seem immediately relevant or emotionally resonant. When we attempt to "cover everything," we virtually guarantee that nothing will be retained, because the brain cannot process, consolidate, and store that much information in a compressed timeframe.

False Premise #3: Learning is a Team Sport

Perhaps the most pernicious assumption underlying traditional training is that learning happens best in groups, through shared experiences, at a synchronized pace. This premise is baked into nearly every aspect of how we structure corporate training: scheduled class sessions, cohort-based programs, group discussions, team exercises, and collective assessments.

While social learning certainly has value, and human beings are undeniably social creatures, the assumption that everyone should learn the same content at the same time in the same way ignores the deeply individual nature of how learning actually occurs. True learning—the kind that results in sustained behavior change—happens when an individual makes personal connections between new information and their existing knowledge, when they see relevance to their specific challenges, when they feel intrinsically motivated to explore further.

Learning is not a team sport. It is an individual pursuit that happens within each person's mind, at their own pace, driven by their unique motivations and applied to their specific context. Traditional training's insistence on collective, synchronized learning experiences works against this fundamental reality.

The AI Inflection Point: The End of Information Scarcity

Even if traditional training could somehow overcome its foundational flaws, there is a more fundamental reason why the old model has reached its expiration date:

The emergence of artificial intelligence has eliminated information scarcity.

For thousands of years, access to knowledge was limited by geography, economics, and social hierarchy. Books were rare and expensive. Experts were few and their time was costly. Education was a scarce resource that required significant investment to obtain. The entire edifice of formal education—from ancient apprenticeship systems to modern universities to corporate training programs—was built on the premise that accessing knowledge was difficult and therefore valuable.

The internet began to change this dynamic, making information more accessible. But large language models like ChatGPT, Claude, and others represent a quantum leap beyond even the internet's impact. These AI systems don't just provide access to information—they provide personalized, on-demand tutoring that adapts to individual learning needs.

What AI Enables for Today's Learner

Instant Expert-Level Explanations: Any concept, no matter how complex, can be explained at exactly the right level of detail for the learner's current understanding. Need quantum physics explained to a 10-year-old? Done. Need the nuances of corporate tax strategy? Done. Need both on the same topic? Done.

Unlimited Personalized Examples: Rather than relying on generic case studies that may or may not relate to their work, learners can request examples specific to their industry, role, company size, geographic market, or any other relevant dimension.

Custom Practice and Application: AI can generate practice scenarios, quizzes, role-play scripts, and application exercises tailored to the individual's specific learning objectives and context.

24/7 Availability: Unlike human experts or scheduled training sessions, AI tutoring is available whenever the learner is ready to learn—whether that's 3 PM on a Tuesday or 11 PM on a Sunday.

Patience and Repetition: AI will answer the same question 100 different ways without judgment, frustration, or impatience. It will go as slowly as needed, repeat as often as necessary, and provide as many examples as helpful.

Multi-Modal Learning Support: AI can provide text explanations, generate code examples, create visual diagrams, suggest videos, recommend books, and compile resources—whatever combination of modalities best supports the individual's learning style.

A groundbreaking 2024 study by researchers at MIT and Boston Consulting Group provided empirical evidence of AI's impact on professional capability. The study gave consultants access to GPT-4 for their work and measured performance across a variety of complex tasks. The results were striking: consultants using AI showed performance improvements ranging from 25% to 40%, with the most significant gains occurring in areas where consultants had previously lacked expertise.

The study's conclusion was unambiguous: *"The availability of AI assistance fundamentally changes what skills organizations need to teach versus what employees can learn on-demand."*

The implication for corporate training is profound and unavoidable:

If employees can access expert-level knowledge, personalized tutoring, custom examples, and unlimited practice scenarios instantly and for free, then training programs should not focus on delivering information.

Information is no longer scarce. Motivation to learn is the new scarcity. And yet, traditional training continues to operate as if its primary purpose is information transfer. This misalignment between training's traditional purpose and the modern reality is not a minor inefficiency—it is a fundamental obsolescence.

PART II: THE SCIENCE BEHIND THE L.I.Y. METHOD

What Actually Drives Behavior Change?

If the goal of training is not merely to transfer information but to change behavior—to help people do their jobs better, make different decisions, adopt new approaches—then we must understand what actually drives behavior change. Fortunately, there is substantial research on this question from the fields of behavioral psychology, neuroscience, and motivation science.

Dr. BJ Fogg, founder of the Stanford Behavior Design Lab and author of "Tiny Habits," has developed one of the most practical and validated models for understanding behavior change. The Fogg Behavior Model states that for any behavior to occur, three elements must be present simultaneously:

- ◆ **Prompt (or Trigger):** Something that serves as a cue for the behavior. This could be an external reminder, an environmental cue, or an internal prompt like an emotion or thought pattern. Without a prompt, the behavior won't happen even if the person has ability and motivation.
- ◆ **Ability:** The person must be capable of performing the behavior, and the behavior must be sufficiently easy to do in the moment. Ability is influenced by factors like time, money, physical capability, and cognitive load. The easier something is to do, the more likely it is to happen.
- ◆ **Motivation:** The person must want to do the behavior. Motivation can come from seeking pleasure, avoiding pain, seeking social acceptance, avoiding social rejection, seeking hope, or avoiding fear. The stronger the motivation, the more difficult a behavior someone is willing to attempt.

Fogg's crucial insight is that these three elements must converge at the same moment. High motivation without ability won't lead to behavior change—people will feel frustrated. High ability without motivation won't lead to change—people simply won't bother. And even with both motivation and ability, without a prompt at the right moment, the behavior won't occur.

The critical problem with traditional training: it focuses *almost exclusively on ability (building skills and knowledge) while largely neglecting prompts and motivation.*

Training programs assume that if people know how to do something, they will do it. But this assumption is contradicted by both research and everyday experience. Knowing how to exercise doesn't mean we exercise. Knowing how to eat healthily doesn't mean we do. Knowing how to give better feedback doesn't mean we give it.

Katy Milkman's Research on Change

Complementing Fogg's work, Professor Katy Milkman of the Wharton School has conducted extensive research on what enables people to make lasting changes in their behavior. In her book "How to Change," she identifies several key barriers to behavior change and evidence-based strategies for overcoming them.

One of Milkman's most relevant findings for our purposes is the power of what she calls "fresh starts"—moments when people feel motivated to make changes because they represent new beginnings (new year, new job, new project, birthday, etc.). These fresh start moments are particularly powerful for behavior change because they create psychological distance from past failures and help people see themselves differently.

The L.I.Y. Method leverages this insight by creating an artificial "fresh start" moment—a SPARK Session that disrupts existing thinking patterns and makes participants feel like "before this session" and "after this session" represent different eras in their learning journey.

The Three Confluences Required for Self-Motivated Learning

Through our research analyzing hundreds of self-reported learning breakthroughs—moments when people described experiencing genuine, sustained learning that led to real behavior change—we identified a consistent pattern. True learning, the kind that results in lasting change, occurs when three specific elements converge within a compressed timeframe:

Confluence #1: DISRUPTION

Disruption is the realization that the current approach isn't working or isn't optimal. It's the moment when existing assumptions are challenged, when mental models are questioned, when people recognize that their current way of thinking or doing things is insufficient or outdated.

Disruption has several key characteristics:

- ◆ It creates **cognitive dissonance**—an uncomfortable state where new information contradicts existing beliefs
- ◆ It **opens the mind to alternatives**—once people recognize the current approach is flawed, they become receptive to new approaches
- ◆ It is often triggered by **new data, perspectives, or compelling narratives** that reframe the situation

- ◆ It must be significant enough to overcome the powerful force of **status quo bias**—the tendency to prefer current states of affairs

Example: A manager who has always believed that "good employees should figure things out on their own" is shown data that their team has the highest turnover rate in the company and learns that exit interviews consistently cite "lack of guidance" as the primary reason for leaving. This disrupts their existing mental model.

Confluence #2: URGENCY

Urgency is the emotional recognition that inaction has real, personal costs. It moves beyond intellectual understanding to emotional discomfort with the status quo. Urgency answers the question "Why should I care?" and more specifically, "Why should I care enough to do something about this now?"

Urgency has several critical features:

- ◆ It makes the status quo feel **untenable**—staying the same becomes more uncomfortable than changing
- ◆ It creates a **personal connection**—the issue affects not just the organization but the individual's own success, reputation, or well-being
- ◆ It involves **emotional engagement**, not just intellectual understanding—people feel the cost of inaction
- ◆ It often requires **future projection**—helping people viscerally imagine where they'll be if nothing changes

Example: That same manager realizes that their approach isn't just causing turnover—it's damaging their own reputation as a leader, limiting their career advancement opportunities, and creating stress in their personal life as they constantly scramble to replace and retrain team members. The cost is now deeply personal.

Confluence #3: POSSIBILITY

Possibility is the "aha moment" that reveals a different path forward. It's the realization that "there's another way" combined with evidence that this way actually works. Possibility provides hope that change is not just necessary (disruption + urgency) but actually achievable.

Possibility creates several important conditions:

- ◆ It provides **concrete examples** of others who have successfully made similar changes
- ◆ It offers a **clear framework** or approach (without overwhelming detail)

- ◆ It makes the **first steps visible and manageable**—the path forward seems achievable, not overwhelming
- ◆ It creates **intrigue and curiosity**—there's clearly more to learn, and that learning seems valuable

Example: The manager learns about a specific framework for effective delegation and coaching that takes only 15 minutes per week per team member. They hear a story from a peer who was in exactly the same situation and successfully changed their approach, resulting in better team performance and less personal stress. Suddenly, change seems not just necessary and urgent, but possible.

The Critical Element: Compressed Timeframe

Here is what makes these three elements particularly powerful: **they must occur within a compressed timeframe**, ideally within the same learning session or experience. When disruption, urgency, and possibility are spread across weeks or months, their power dissipates. The cognitive dissonance created by disruption fades. The emotional urgency gets rationalized away or forgotten. The sense of possibility gets crowded out by daily urgencies.

But when all three elements converge within a 2-hour window, they create what we call a

"learning spark"—a state of heightened curiosity, emotional engagement, and motivation that drives immediate and sustained self-directed learning.

This is the foundational design principle of the L.I.Y. Method: *deliberately engineer the convergence of Disruption + Urgency + Possibility within a compressed experience, then provide tools that make self-directed learning easy and rewarding.*

The Neuroscience of Emotional Learning

Why does emotional engagement matter so much for learning and retention? The answer lies in how the human brain processes and stores memories.

Research in neuroscience, particularly studies using functional MRI scanning, has revealed that emotionally significant events create stronger, more durable memories than emotionally neutral events. This occurs through enhanced memory consolidation involving two key brain structures: the amygdala (which processes emotions) and the hippocampus (which is critical for forming new memories).

Here's how it works: When we experience something emotionally significant—whether through fear, excitement, curiosity, or personal relevance—the amygdala becomes activated.

This activation triggers the release of stress hormones and neurotransmitters that enhance the hippocampus's ability to consolidate memories. Essentially, the emotional significance of an experience tells the brain "This is important—remember this."

A seminal 2019 study published in *Nature Neuroscience* demonstrated that emotional arousal during learning significantly enhances both immediate recall and long-term retention. The researchers found that emotionally arousing information was retained at rates 2-3 times higher than emotionally neutral information, even weeks after the initial learning experience.

The implication for training design is clear: If we want people to remember what they learn, we must create emotional engagement, not just intellectual understanding.

A 16-hour training program that is emotionally neutral will be forgotten more quickly and completely than a 2-hour experience that creates genuine emotional resonance.

Traditional training's emphasis on comprehensive content coverage and information transfer works directly against this neurological reality. By trying to teach "everything," traditional training ensures that nothing feels particularly significant or emotionally resonant. Everything is treated with equal importance, which neurologically means nothing is important.

The L.I.Y. Method, by contrast, deliberately creates moments of high emotional significance—the disruption that creates cognitive dissonance, the urgency that makes the issue personally relevant, the possibility that generates hope and excitement. These emotional peaks are what make the learning experience memorable and, critically, what make participants want to learn more.

PART III: THE SPARK FRAMEWORK

From Workshops to SPARK Sessions: A Paradigm Shift

The L.I.Y. Method introduces a fundamentally different approach to learning—one designed for an era in which information is abundant, attention is scarce, and genuine transformation requires emotional ignition rather than volume of instruction. The centerpiece of this approach is the **SPARK Session**: a structured learning activation designed to shift mindsets, challenge assumptions, and propel learners into self-directed exploration.

Traditional workshops operate on an outdated premise: that delivering more information results in more learning. SPARK Sessions operate on a different premise entirely—

that real learning begins when formal teaching ends, and that the primary role of the facilitator is to ignite curiosity, not to transfer knowledge.

The Fundamental Differences

Dimension	Traditional Workshops	SPARK Sessions (L.I.Y. Method)
Duration	Half-day to multiple weeks	5 minutes to 2 hours
Primary Objective	Knowledge transfer	Curiosity ignition + self-driven learning
Facilitator Role	Instructor/expert	Curiosity architect
Content Approach	Broad coverage	Minimal content » maximum provocation
Format	Lecture + activities	Emotionally resonant choreographed journey
Success Metric	Retention, tests, completion	Exploration, reflection, application
Deliverable	Concepts and frameworks	Spark + Learning Ignition Guide
Follow-up	Optional	Essential, structured handoff
Learning Model	Group instruction	Individualized exploration
Emotional Arc	Mostly flat	Designed activation peak

SPARK Sessions are not shorter workshops—they represent a **new learning architecture** for the generative AI era.

The 5-Stage SPARK Session Choreography: Overview

Every SPARK Session follows a deliberate five-stage emotional and cognitive journey:

1. **Surface** – Bring existing beliefs and assumptions into the open
2. **Provoke** – Challenge the default frame with a targeted disruption
3. **Activate** – Create emotional relevance and personal resonance
4. **Reveal** – Introduce a clearer, more empowering mental model
5. **Kickstart** – Provide the immediate path for self-directed exploration

This sequence creates the arc of recognition » disruption » emotional ignition » possibility » momentum. Below is the detailed breakdown of each stage.

SPARKSHOP SESSION CHOREOGRAPHY

The L.I.Y. Method™ Framework



Sparkshops uses the above SPARK session choreography to transform traditional knowledge transfer to curiosity ignition and activate self learning pathways

THE FIVE STAGE CHOREOGRAPHY OF A SPARK SESSION

Stage 1: SURFACE

Purpose: Expose existing assumptions, beliefs, and prior knowledge—without judgment—so participants feel seen and psychologically safe before being challenged.

Why This Stage Matters: Learners reject new ideas when they feel misunderstood. Surface dissolves defensiveness by validating participants' starting point and building the trust required for meaningful disruption.

Key Activities:

- ✦ Simple prompts (“Define X in one sentence”)
- ✦ Polls that reveal common assumptions
- ✦ Brief facilitator acknowledgment of shared beliefs
- ✦ Light narrative demonstrating similar starting points

Stage 2: PROVOKE

Purpose: Introduce a surprising insight, contradiction, or counterintuitive example that destabilizes the default way of thinking.

Why This Stage Matters: Provocation creates cognitive dissonance—the spark that shifts the learner from passive listening to active questioning.

Key Activities:

- ✦ Contradictory data
- ✦ Unexpected demonstrations
- ✦ “What if your assumption is backwards?” questions
- ✦ Old vs. new model contrasts

Stage 3: ACTIVATE

Purpose: Translate intellectual disruption into emotional relevance—urgency, curiosity, surprise, or discomfort.

Why This Stage Matters: We learn when we feel. Emotional activation creates the internal shift required to pursue answers independently after the session.

Key Activities:

- ✦ Personal impact scenarios
- ✦ Short stories revealing hidden consequences
- ✦ Reflection exercises surfacing emotional patterns
- ✦ Future-self thought experiments

Stage 4: REVEAL

Purpose: Present a reimagined frame or mental model that resolves the earlier tension and unlocks a new way of understanding the topic.

Why This Stage Matters: After provocation and emotional ignition, learners need clarity and possibility—not dense content. Reveal provides the “aha” that reorganizes their thinking.

Key Activities:

- ✦ Clean diagram or framework
- ✦ Before/after reframing
- ✦ Simple principle explaining a complex issue
- ✦ Examples of the new model in action

Stage 5: KICKSTART

Purpose: Convert momentum into action by removing friction and handing the learner a clear path for immediate next steps.

Why This Stage Matters: Curiosity fades quickly unless directed. Kickstart ensures the learner leaves with both energy *and direction*.

Key Activities:

- ✦ Quick-start task
- ✦ Curated resource pathway
- ✦ 24-hour follow-up micro-action
- ✦ AI prompts for deeper exploration
- ✦ Learning Ignition Guide

Applying the SPARK Framework: Topics and Session Formats

The SPARK Framework is highly adaptable. While the underlying choreography remains constant, its expression varies depending on time, context, and the depth of change required. To support these needs, the L.I.Y. Method uses four distinct SPARK formats:

- ◆ **SparkShops – 2-hour mindset transformation**
- ◆ **SparkTalks – 30-minute high-voltage provocation**
- ◆ **SparkPods – 15–30 minute conversational discovery**
- ◆ **SparkPlugs – 5-minute ultra-short ignition**

Below are four expanded examples—one for each format—showing exactly how the five-stage framework comes alive in real topics.

1. SparkShops (2 Hours)

Example Topic:

What Is Money, Really?

Domain: Financial Literacy / Behavioral Economics

This SparkShop redefines participants' relationship with money by dismantling inherited assumptions and revealing a transformative new mental model.

How the SPARK Framework Comes Alive

SURFACE

Participants attempt to define money. Responses expose ambiguity, emotional associations, and contradictory beliefs—setting the stage for disruption.

PROVOKE

The facilitator presents a shell, gold coin, banknote, mobile banking app, and Bitcoin QR code:

“Which of these is money—and why?”

The contradiction destabilizes the belief that money's power comes from physical form.

ACTIVATE

A narrative illustrates two people with identical incomes making opposite financial decisions based on different “money stories.” Participants suddenly see their own patterns—fear, guilt, impulse, scarcity—in a new light.

REVEAL

Money is reframed as **stored human energy and time**, not a physical object. This opens up an entirely new way to interpret:

- ✦ inflation as energy leakage
- ✦ investing as energy multiplication
- ✦ spending as energy conversion
- ✦ saving as energy storage

KICKSTART

Participants receive a Money Ignition Guide containing:

- ✦ a personal money story reflection
- ✦ curated resources on money psychology
- ✦ prompts for designing a new money identity
- ✦ a 10-minute micro-action: “Rewrite your definition of money and revise one financial behavior accordingly.”

2. SparkTalks (~30 Minutes)

Example Topic:

“Stop Looking for Your Purpose—You’re Asking the Wrong Question.”

Domain: Personal Development / Identity / Meaning

This SparkTalk reframes the widespread, anxiety-inducing belief that purpose must be *found* somewhere “out there.”

How the SPARK Framework Comes Alive

SURFACE

Participants reflect on how they've sought purpose—career pivots, personality tests, mentors, self-help content. Everyone recognizes the emotional fatigue.

PROVOKE

The facilitator delivers the core disruption:

“Purpose isn’t lost or hiding. The problem is the question—not the answer.”

This challenges decades of cultural conditioning.

ACTIVATE

A powerful story reveals how someone spent years chasing an externally defined, inherited sense of purpose—leading not to clarity, but exhaustion. Participants feel the discomfort and recognition in their own lives.

REVEAL

Purpose is reframed as:

“A constructed identity built from values, energy, contribution, and repeated choices—not a hidden treasure waiting to be discovered.”

A simple model shows how purpose evolves through action, not searching.

KICKSTART

A QR-linked Purpose Activation Guide helps learners:

- ✦ map their energy sources
- ✦ identify inherited vs. authentic purpose drivers
- ✦ design “purpose experiments” using AI prompts

3. SparkPods (15–30 Minutes)

Example Topic:

“Why Smart People Make Predictable Mistakes.”

Domain: Behavioral Science / Decision-Making

A SparkPod episode uses conversation to model real-time curiosity, exploration, and insight around a counterintuitive truth.

How the SPARK Framework Comes Alive

SURFACE

The host poses a simple question:

“Why do intelligent people—experts, leaders, professionals—make mistakes they should logically avoid?”

PROVOKE

The guest introduces a counterintuitive insight:

“Intelligence doesn’t protect you from bias—it often deepens it because you become better at rationalizing your decisions.”

ACTIVATE

The host shares relatable examples—overconfidence, selective evidence, narrative fallacy. The listener inevitably recognizes themselves.

REVEAL

The conversation reframes decision-making as a product of **environment, constraints, emotional state, and design**—not intelligence.

This opens a door to a new mental model: building decision environments instead of relying on willpower.

KICKSTART

Listeners are directed to show notes containing:

- ✦ a five-element decision environment checklist
- ✦ recommended readings
- ✦ two scenario-based AI prompts
- ✦ a micro-experiment to test in the coming week

4. SparkPlugs (5 Minutes)

Example Topic:

“You Don’t Control Time—You Control Energy.”

Domain: Personal Effectiveness / Productivity

This SparkPlug challenges one of the most entrenched assumptions in modern work culture: that productivity is a function of time.

How the SPARK Framework Comes Alive

SURFACE

“Ever notice how two hours of energized work outperforms eight hours of drained effort?”

PROVOKE

“What if your productivity problems have nothing to do with time management—and everything to do with energy mismanagement?”

This flips the conventional narrative instantly.

ACTIVATE

A rapid story contrasts two identical days with opposite energy levels. Viewers feel the truth immediately.

REVEAL

A simple model appears:

Energy = focus × emotion × recovery.

This redefines productivity from a scheduling problem to a biological and emotional one.

KICKSTART

A QR code links to:

- ✦ a two-minute Energy Audit
- ✦ an AI prompt to identify top energy multipliers
- ✦ a simple experiment for the next morning

Choosing the Right Format

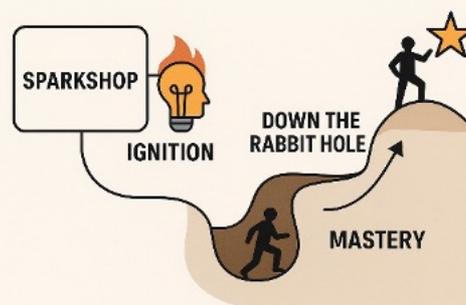
Different learning contexts require different ignition strategies.

	SparkPlug	SparkPod	SparkTalk	SparkShop
By Time Available	5 minutes	15-30 minutes	~30 minutes	2 hours
By Audience Readiness	Skeptical	Curious	Engaged	Committed
By Learning Goal	Awareness	Interest	Motivation	Mindset Transformation
By Delivery Environment	Asynchronous & Scalable	Asynchronous & Scalable	Live Events & Large Groups	Facilitated Deep Learning

A Rabbit Hole Dive is Proof of a Successful Sparkshop

The “rabbit hole” is where genuine learning, intrinsic motivation, and individual mastery actually occurs. Sparkshops exist to create the emotional spark that makes entering that rabbit hole inevitable—and AI makes navigating it transformational.

We usually talk about “going down a rabbit hole” as a bad thing—distraction, wasted time, lost focus. But in learning, the rabbit hole is sacred. It is the moment a learner stops consuming content because they were told to...and starts exploring because something inside them ignited.



A rabbit hole dive is the purest signal of intrinsic motivation. It is the learner saying: “I need to understand this. Not someday. Right now.”

In a Sparkshop, the goal isn't to escort learners through the entire rabbit hole. It's to take them to its edge, spark a sense of disruption, urgency, and possibility—and then hand them the tools to explore it on their own. And today, for the first time in history, learners descend with a personalized guide: AI. This is not chaos; it is precision. Not distraction, but direction. It doesn't overwhelm but shows the path towards mastery.

When someone chooses to go deep on their own, that is not a failure of training. That is the definition of learning.

PART IV: THE L.I.Y. ACTIVATION GUIDE

Beyond Traditional Resource Lists

At the conclusion of traditional training programs, participants typically receive a list of "additional resources"—books to read, articles to review, videos to watch, courses to take. These lists suffer from several critical problems that render them largely useless:

- ◆ **Overwhelming Length:** Resource lists often include 10, 20, or even 50 items, creating decision paralysis rather than action
- ◆ **Lack of Curation:** Items are included for comprehensiveness rather than quality or relevance, forcing participants to evaluate each resource themselves
- ◆ **No Prioritization:** Everything is presented as equally important, providing no guidance on where to start
- ◆ **Significant Time Investment:** Most resources require hours or days to consume, creating a high barrier to getting started
- ◆ **Generic Recommendations:** Resources are one-size-fits-all, not personalized to individual needs, contexts, or learning styles

The predictable result: participants save the list, intending to review it later, and never look at it again. The resource list becomes digital clutter rather than a catalyst for learning.

The L.I.Y. Ignition Guide is fundamentally different. It's not a comprehensive list of everything participants might want to know. It's a carefully curated, strategically minimal toolkit designed specifically to lower the activation energy for self-directed learning and leverage AI to personalize the journey.

Every L.I.Y. Ignition Guide should include four core components:

Component #1: The Essential Three

Provide exactly three core resources—no more, no less. Three is enough to offer variety and depth, but not so many as to create decision paralysis or overwhelm.

Rules for the Essential Three:

- ◆ **One Primary:** The single best resource for going deeper into the core concept—a book chapter, article, or video that directly extends the SPARK Session content
- ◆ **Two Supplementary:** Resources that approach the topic from different angles or provide complementary perspectives

- ◆ **Different Formats:** Vary the media types (e.g., one article, one video, one interactive tool) to accommodate different learning preferences
- ◆ **Digestible Length:** Total time investment should be under 1 hour for all three resources combined
- ◆ **Immediately Accessible:** All resources should be available online, free or widely accessible, requiring no special accounts or purchases

Example for a Sparkshop on "What is Money": (1) Selected chapters from "The Psychology of Money" by Morgan Housel (primary), (2) "The Price of Tomorrow" by Jeff Booth—Chapter 2 on inflation (supplementary), (3) Interactive inflation calculator tool (supplementary)

Component #2: The Quick Start

A single, specific action that participants can complete within 24 hours of the SPARK Session. This action should require less than 15 minutes, produce a tangible output, and create early momentum that encourages continued engagement.

Characteristics of an effective Quick Start:

- ◆ **Highly Specific:** Not 'think about X' but 'calculate your X using this tool'
- ◆ **Produces Output:** Results in a number, document, decision, or other concrete artifact
- ◆ **Builds on SPARK Session:** Directly applies a concept from the session
- ◆ **Creates Curiosity:** The output raises questions that drive further exploration
- ◆ **Takes Less Than 15 Minutes:** Low enough barrier that 'I don't have time' is not a valid excuse

Examples of Quick Starts:

- ◆ *Financial literacy: "Calculate your current savings' projected value in 10, 20, 30 years using this inflation calculator"*
- ◆ *Leadership: "Identify the one conversation you've been avoiding and draft opening sentences for three different approaches"*
- ◆ *Data analysis: "Apply the framework to your current project's data and identify the top 3 insights"*

Component #3: AI Learning Prompts (The Revolutionary Element)

This is where the Learning Ignition Guide becomes truly transformative. Rather than hoping participants will figure out how to use AI tools for learning, we provide them with pre-written, tested prompts that make AI-powered personalized learning effortless.

The power of AI prompts lies in a simple insight: **most people underutilize AI for learning because they don't know what to ask or how to ask it effectively.** By providing carefully crafted prompts, we remove this barrier and give participants immediate access to personalized tutoring.

Each Learning Ignition Guide should include 3-5 AI prompts designed for specific purposes:

- ◆ **The Personalization Prompt:** Helps learners adapt the general concepts to their specific role, industry, and challenges
- ◆ **The Deep-Dive Prompt:** Guides learners to explore core concepts more deeply with explanations at the right level of complexity
- ◆ **The Application Prompt:** Helps learners identify specific ways to apply concepts in their work
- ◆ **The Custom Learning Path Prompt:** Creates a personalized learning plan based on the individual's goals and constraints
- ◆ **The Practice Scenario Prompt:** Generates relevant practice scenarios, case studies, or exercises

Example: The Personalization Prompt for Financial Literacy Sparkshop

"I just attended a Sparkshop on understanding money as stored human energy and the impact of inflation/debasement. I'm a [AGE] year old [PROFESSION] making [INCOME RANGE]. My current financial approach is [BRIEF DESCRIPTION].

Based on this context: 1. What are the biggest financial risks I'm facing by not understanding money better? 2. Which 2-3 financial literacy topics should I prioritize learning first given my situation? 3. Give me a realistic 30-day learning plan to build financial literacy, spending no more than 30 minutes per week. 4. What's one specific action I can take this week that will make a measurable difference?

Then, ask me 3 follow-up questions to better understand my specific situation and customize your guidance."

Designing Effective AI Prompts:

- ◆ Include placeholders [IN BRACKETS] for personalization—this prompts users to add their specific details
- ◆ Structure prompts with numbered questions or requests—this makes responses more organized and actionable

- ◆ Ask AI to follow up with questions—this creates a conversation rather than one-way information transfer
- ◆ Be specific about desired output format—tell AI what kind of response would be most helpful
- ◆ Include context from the SPARK Session—reference specific concepts or frameworks covered in the session
- ◆ Test prompts before distribution—run them through AI tools yourself to ensure they produce high-quality responses

Component #4: Progress Markers

The final component helps learners recognize their own growth and maintains motivation over time. Rather than external assessments or completion certificates, Progress Markers are self-assessment questions and observable milestones that signal transformation.

Progress Markers should be framed as "You'll know you're making progress when..." statements that describe observable changes in thinking or behavior:

Examples of Progress Markers for Financial Literacy Sparkshop:

- ◆ *You start thinking about purchases in terms of 'future value' rather than just 'current cost'*
- ◆ *You can explain inflation to a friend in one clear sentence*
- ◆ *You've calculated your personal 'financial freedom number'*
- ◆ *You're making financial decisions with a 10-year time horizon*
- ◆ *You've opened an investment account (even if starting small)*
- ◆ *You find yourself reading financial news with genuine curiosity rather than obligation*
- ◆ *You can articulate the difference between currency and capital*

Good Progress Markers are:

- ◆ Observable by the learner themselves
- ◆ Focused on application and behavior, not just knowledge
- ◆ Specific enough to be recognized but flexible enough to appear in different ways
- ◆ Progressive—they suggest a journey with milestones, not a binary done/not-done
- ◆ Empowering—they celebrate growth rather than emphasizing gaps

Why the Learning Ignition Guide Works: The AI Advantage

The Learning Ignition Guide, particularly through its use of AI prompts, represents a quantum leap in learning design effectiveness. Here's why:

- ◆ **Removes Activation Friction:** The biggest barrier to self-directed learning is not knowing where to start. By providing three specific resources and clear prompts, we eliminate decision paralysis.
- ◆ **Enables True Personalization:** AI can adapt explanations, examples, and learning paths to each individual's context in ways no human facilitator or pre-written content ever could. The same SPARK Session can spawn dozens of completely different learning journeys.
- ◆ **Available On-Demand:** AI tutoring is available whenever the learner is ready—2 AM, during commute, between meetings—matching learning to individual schedules and energy patterns.
- ◆ **Scales Infinitely:** One carefully designed Learning Ignition Guide can support thousands of learners simultaneously, each receiving personalized assistance.
- ◆ **Creates Immediate Value:** The Quick Start produces tangible results within 24 hours, creating momentum and demonstrating that the learning is practical, not just theoretical.
- ◆ **The Learning Ignition Guide transforms the SPARK Session from a one-time event into the beginning of a sustained learning journey.** It's the bridge between spark and flame, between curiosity and capability, between intention and application.

PART V: IMPLEMENTATION & MEASUREMENT

Designing Your First SPARK Session: A Step-by-Step Process

Step 1: Identify the Core Insight

What's the one idea that, if truly understood, would fundamentally change how participants think and act? This becomes the anchor of your Reveal stage.

Questions to ask:

- ◆ What assumption do most people make that is actually wrong or incomplete?
- ◆ What do experts understand that novices typically miss?
- ◆ What reframe would make everything else fall into place?

Step 2: Find the Emotional Hook

What makes this personally relevant? What's at stake for participants? What will they lose or miss out on if they don't learn this?

Questions to ask:

- ◆ What one book, article, or video extends the core insight most effectively?
- ◆ What resources have you personally found transformative?
- ◆ What's accessible, digestible, and immediately applicable?

Step 3: Curate Ruthlessly

Identify the single best resource for deeper learning. This becomes the foundation of your Learning Ignition Guide.

Questions to ask:

- ◆ What one book, article, or video extends the core insight most effectively?
- ◆ What resources have you personally found transformative?
- ◆ What's accessible, digestible, and immediately applicable?

Step 4: Write AI Prompts

Create 3-5 prompts that help participants personalize and deepen their learning using AI tools.

Questions to ask:

- ✦ What questions would someone naturally have after the SPARK Session?
- ✦ How can AI help them apply this to their specific context?
- ✦ What would make the learning journey easier and more personalized?

Step 5: Test and Refine

Run a pilot with a small, willing audience. Measure: Did participants engage with the Learning Ignition Guide within 72 hours? Are they pursuing self-directed learning?

Measuring Success: New Metrics for the L.I.Y. Method

Traditional training metrics (completion rates, test scores, satisfaction surveys) are irrelevant for SPARK Sessions. Instead, measure:

Primary Metrics:

Learning Ignition Rate: Percentage of participants who engage with Learning Ignition Guide within 72 hours of the SPARK Session

- ✦ Target: 60-75%
- ✦ How to track: Email opens, resource downloads, AI prompt usage, Quick Start completion

Sustained Engagement: Percentage still actively learning 30 days later

- ✦ Target: 40-50%
- ✦ How to track: Optional check-ins, community activity, resource access logs

Self-Reported Application: Percentage who report applying concepts in their work within 30 days

- ✦ Target: 35-50%
- ✦ How to track: Brief survey, optional interviews, community posts

Secondary Metrics:

Spark Intensity: Post-session survey question: "How motivated are you to learn more about this topic?" (1-10 scale)

- ✦ Target: Average of 8+

Resource Quality Rating: Did participants find the curated resources valuable and relevant?

- ✦ Target: 85%+ say resources were helpful

AI Prompt Utilization: How many participants used the provided AI prompts?

- ◆ Target: 50-60%

Leading Indicators (Measured During Session):

- ◆ Emotional engagement observed during Stages 4-5 (facilitator notes)
- ◆ Quality and depth of questions during Stage 6
- ◆ Specificity of commitments during Stage 7

When NOT to Use the L.I.Y. Method

The L.I.Y. Method is powerful, but it's not appropriate for every learning need.

Understanding when NOT to use SPARK Sessions is as important as knowing when to use them.

SPARK Sessions Work Best When:

- ◆ The goal is behavior change or mindset shift (not just information transfer)
- ◆ The topic has sufficient depth worth exploring independently
- ◆ AI and digital resources can effectively support self-directed learning
- ◆ Learners have the motivation and capability for autonomous learning
- ◆ There's time for participants to learn at their own pace after the session

Do NOT Use SPARK Sessions For:

Compliance Training Requiring Certification

- ◆ When legal requirements mandate specific content coverage and verified comprehension
- ◆ When there are regulatory standards for training documentation
- ◆ Example: OSHA safety certification, anti-harassment training with legal requirements

Technical Skills Requiring Hands-On Practice

- ◆ When immediate feedback from an expert is essential for skill development
- ◆ When practicing incorrectly could be dangerous or create bad habits
- ◆ Example: Operating heavy machinery, surgical techniques, emergency response procedures

Crisis Situations Requiring Immediate Implementation

- ◆ When there's no time for self-directed learning
- ◆ When everyone must do exactly the same thing immediately
- ◆ Example: Emergency protocol changes, security breach response

Onboarding to Proprietary Tools/Systems

- ◆ When there are no external resources available
- ◆ When the system is unique to your organization
- ◆ Note: You CAN use SPARK Sessions for the "why" behind the tools, but not for the "how"

Topics Where Self-Directed Learning Could Create Safety/Legal Risks

- ◆ When incorrect understanding could lead to harm
- ◆ When there's no room for experimentation or error
- ◆ Example: Dosing medication, handling hazardous materials

Use Traditional Formats When:

- ◆ Synchronous practice with expert feedback is essential
- ◆ Group coordination and shared mental models are the primary goal
- ◆ Assessment and certification are legally or professionally required
- ◆ The learning window is extremely narrow (must be applied within days)
- ◆ There are no quality self-learning resources available

The Decision Matrix:

Ask yourself:

1. Is the primary goal behavior change or information transfer?
2. Can learners safely learn this independently with good resources?
3. Is there time for self-directed learning after the session?
4. Are there quality resources (including AI) to support the learning?
5. Is individual application more important than group coordination?

If you answered "behavior change," "yes," "yes," "yes," "yes" → Use the L.I.Y. Method

If you answered "information transfer" or "no" to multiple questions → Use traditional training

PART VI: THE FUTURE OF LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

Learning in the Age of Abundance

We stand at a pivotal moment in the history of human learning. For millennia, education has been constrained by scarcity—scarcity of books, scarcity of teachers, scarcity of access to knowledge. The entire architecture of formal education, from ancient apprenticeships to modern universities to corporate training programs, was built on the premise that knowledge transfer

From		To
Subject matter experts who teach content	→	Curiosity architects who design experiences
Comprehensive coverage of topics	→	Strategic provocation and guided discovery
Direct instructors	→	Facilitators of self-directed learning journeys
Gatekeepers of knowledge	→	Connectors to resources and tools
Measuring knowledge transfer	→	Measuring motivation and behavior change

was the central challenge.

That era is over. **The constraint is no longer access to information. The constraint is motivation to learn.**

The Evolving Role of L&D Professionals

The L.I.Y. Method requires L&D professionals to fundamentally reconceive their role:

This shift is profound. It requires letting go of the belief that our value comes from being the source of knowledge and embracing a new identity as designers of transformative experiences.

The Continued Evolution of AI in Learning

The AI capabilities available today are just the beginning. As AI continues to evolve, the L.I.Y. Method will evolve with it:

Near-term (1-2 years):

- ◆ AI can provide increasingly sophisticated personalized learning paths
- ◆ Voice-based AI tutoring becomes seamless and natural
- ◆ AI can assess learning progress and adjust recommendations in real-time
- ◆ Integration of AI directly into workflow tools reduces friction further

Medium-term (3-5 years):

- ◆ AI can simulate realistic practice scenarios for complex skills
- ◆ Emotional intelligence in AI improves, enabling better coaching conversations
- ◆ AI can proactively suggest learning based on detecting knowledge gaps in work output
- ◆ Virtual reality combined with AI creates immersive learning experiences

Long-term (5+ years):

- ◆ The line between learning and doing continues to blur
- ◆ Just-in-time learning becomes truly instantaneous
- ◆ AI becomes a lifelong learning companion that knows your complete learning history

The role of human facilitators won't disappear—but it will continue to shift toward the irreplaceable human elements: creating emotional connection, providing encouragement and belief, building community, and designing experiences that touch the heart as well as the mind.

The Opportunity for Early Adopters

Organizations that embrace the L.I.Y. Method now will gain significant advantages:

- ◆ **Talent Attraction and Retention:** Professionals increasingly value continuous learning. Organizations that offer effective, respectful learning experiences (not time-consuming, mandatory training) will attract and keep top talent.
- ◆ **Competitive Advantage:** When your workforce is genuinely motivated to keep learning and adapting, you can move faster and innovate more effectively than competitors stuck in traditional training cycles.
- ◆ **Cost Efficiency:** SPARK Sessions require significantly less facilitator time, venue space, and participant time-away-from-work than traditional training, while producing superior outcomes.
- ◆ **Cultural Transformation:** The L.I.Y. Method embeds a culture of curiosity, self-direction, and continuous learning—cultural attributes that drive organizational success in rapidly changing markets.
- ◆ **Future-Readiness:** As AI capabilities continue to expand, organizations practicing the L.I.Y. Method will already have the mindset, skills, and infrastructure to leverage each new advancement.

The Bottom Line

The research is clear: people don't need more content—they need compelling reasons to care. They don't need longer training—they need sparks that ignite sustained curiosity. They don't need to learn in groups—they need tools and motivation for their individual journeys.

The L.I.Y. Method delivers all three.

The age of workshops is ending. The age of SPARK Sessions —and the transformative power of the Learn It Yourself method—has begun.

For learning and development leaders willing to embrace this shift, the opportunity is extraordinary: to finally deliver training that works with human psychology and modern technology rather than against them, to create learning experiences that people actually want to engage with, and to build organizations where continuous learning is not a corporate mandate but a personal passion.

The question is not whether this shift will happen—it's already happening. The question is whether you will lead it or be left behind by it.

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