

Different Learning Styles

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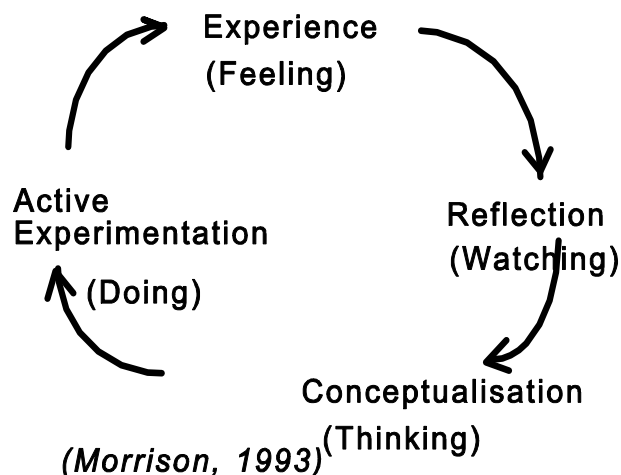
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Another way to understand adult learning is through Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle. The adult learning dimensions focus on the components used within group exercises that support learning. The Learning Cycle focuses on the processes that occur within the individual that enable learning.

In 1984, David Kolb developed what became known as Kolb's Learning Cycle (Figure 3.3). It was a profile that allowed educationalists to better understand the steps in experience based learning. His basic framework is that:

- people change through learning
- people learn in 4 ways -
 - through the immediate experience (feeling)
 - through observation and reflection (watching)
 - through conceptualization (thinking)
 - through active experimentation (doing)
- effective learning is cyclical and involves all four styles
- learning is developmental. People go through the following stages in their life:
 - Acquisition: birth to adolescence.
 - Specialization: young adulthood, adulthood.
 - Integration: later in life.
- learning is social. Life's experiences mean that we develop a dominance in one of the learning styles (feeling, watching, thinking, doing)
- learning is interactive. It involves feedback from other people.
- learning involves people acting on and reacting to their environment (Foley, 1995).

Kolbs Experiential Learning Cycle



Experience Being open to, aware of and valuing experience.

Reflection Making use of and investigating experience, use of feelings and intuition, ideas and options.

Conceptualisation Analysing and creating meaning. Asking “why?”

Active experimentation Preparing for action, and trying things out

Every individual and group uses a mixture of the above learning styles. To be an effective leader, it is important that they create a group experience that is likely to contain a collection of processes that address all of the above styles. If the group process is dominated by only one or two styles, then the group members, who learn through the other styles, are likely to become restless or bored.

Ways to support learning using each learning style

Feeling

- Need to feel validated
- Provided with choices and options
- A good group atmosphere
- Feeling secure and safe
- Opportunity to share with others in small groups, dyads or triads.
- Acceptance of the unknown
- Be stimulated with new ideas and perspectives
- Feelings and emotions are valued as okay
- The use of humour and levity
- Time and space to reflect and tune in to feelings

Watching

- Diverse, varied and flexible activities.
- Energetic
- Organisation
- Modelling of techniques, examples, and role-plays
- Discussions
- Opportunities to put ideas into practice
- Develop confidence first, before practicing
- Demonstrations of skills and ideas

Thinking

- Start out with a plan
- Guidelines
- Outlines
- To be able to question
- Useful reading material
- Handouts, but not too many
- Like time to think about what has been said
- Like to be able to clarify ideas
- The use of practical examples

Doing

- Tasks and activities to complete
- Warm up games
- Variation in the type of group exercises
- Experiential learning exercises
- Practical focus
- Clear opportunities for involvement
- Demonstrations
- Use of art, collage, drama, sculpture, games, role-play, video, drumming, small groups, puppets, guided meditation
- Integration
- Clear aims and objectives
- Enjoyable