



ACTIVITY 4: ANSWER

If you feel that your rights are not being respected or you are not being offered what you need to learn with confidence, talk to your practice teacher or tutor and together find ways of making the learning experience good for you.

1.5 Exploring learning styles

We have been looking at how, as adults, we are affected by our learning and how we were taught in the past and what we have the right to expect as adult learners. The next part of this session will look at the way we learn – at learning styles. We all learn differently and I would like you to think about how you learn so that you can identify the style of learning that suits you best.

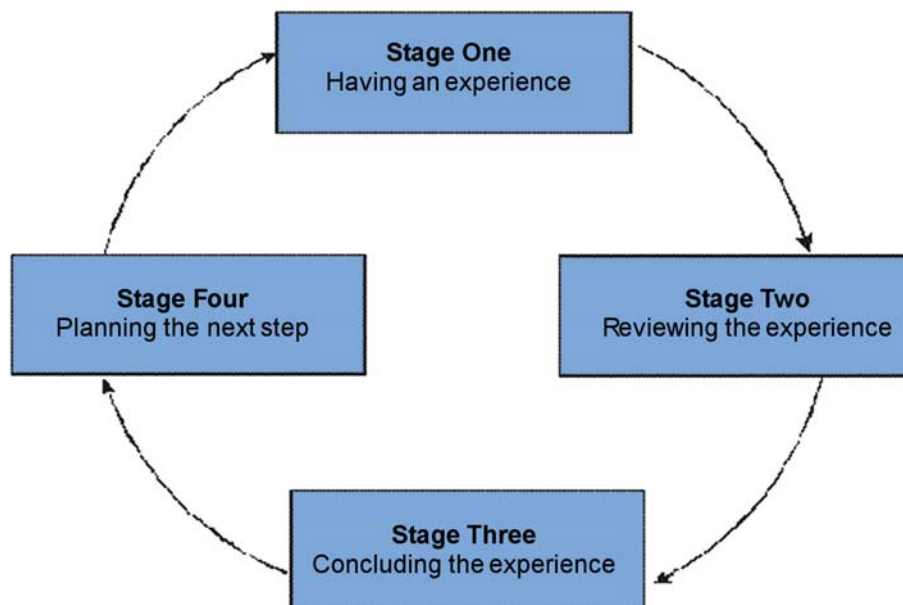
This section draws on the work of Honey and Mumford (1992) to help you develop your awareness of the different learning styles you may use in different situations. Kolb (1984) developed a somewhat different way of looking at learning styles and I will refer to his material. Neither approach is right or wrong. You may like to sample both and choose which you prefer.

It is important to be aware that:

- all ways of learning are equally good
- our learning styles may change at different points in our lives.

1.5.1 The learning circle

Honey and Mumford suggest that learning is a cycle that consists of four stages. Each stage impacts on the next and each cycle leads to new cycles. The process never stops.



1.5.1.1 Having an experience

In the first stage we have an experience. Honey and Mumford suggest that there are two different ways of having an experience. One way is to react to something which happens (reactive), the other is to seek out and deliberately make experiences happen (proactive). Clearly, we have more experiences if we are pro-active.

1.5.1.2 Reviewing the experience

If we are to learn from experience we need then to take time to reflect and to review what happened without making judgments. The difficulty is that if we are very busy, we may be trying simply to cope with all that we are doing and have little time to reflect and learn from our experiences.

1.5.1.3 Concluding the experience

The next stage involves thinking about what we have learned from reviewing the experience and coming to some conclusions. It is very tempting to ‘jump to conclusions’ without a proper review. The risk then is that the conclusions will be incomplete. Concluding involves scanning the review for all the lessons learnt.

1.5.1.4 Planning the next step

There is no point in reaching conclusions unless we do something better, or differently, next time. The final stage involves translating some of the conclusions into action for next time. This involves how we will do it differently next time.

Most people tend to focus on some parts of this cycle and pay less attention to others. Honey and Mumford suggest there are four learning styles each corresponding with one part of the cycle. Their research shows that about three-quarters of people tend to have one or two preferred ways of learning.

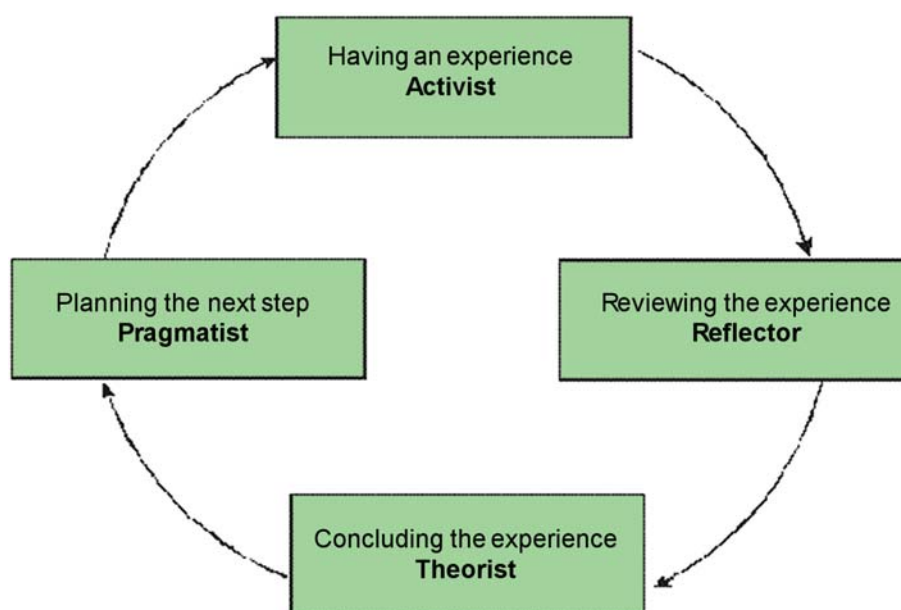
Activists – most enjoy having the experience

Reflectors – focus on reviewing experiences

Theorists – emphasise the conclusion

Pragmatists – prefer planning what to do next.

In fact all four stages are important.



Activity Six offers two brief tasks to enable you to begin thinking about your preferred learning style.



ACTIVITY 5: QUESTION

This activity involves two tasks.

Task one

Imagine you are undertaking a history assignment. You have the opportunity to meet with a group of older people in order to collate some oral history of society during WW2. How would you do this? Choose which of the four options below is closest to the approach you would tend to use.

1. Get quickly involved in working with the group; making changes as you find out what works or does not work.
2. Take your time reflecting and discussing the possible pitfalls and the different ways the group discussion could be organised.
3. Read around the subject; perhaps seeking out articles in order to understand society in WW2 better, perhaps finding out what reminiscence is and how it helps.
4. Find a reminiscence pack developed for work with older people and identify the activities which have been found useful.

Task 2

Think of a decision you have made, or a new activity with which you have recently become involved. Use the four options in the first task as a guide and note down your approach.



ACTIVITY 5: ANSWER

You may have wanted to tick all four approaches! But most people do have one or two areas they tend to focus on most. The following list indicates how each of the four options in Activity 6 correspond with one learning style:

1. Activist
2. Reflector
3. Theorist
4. Pragmatist

Here is a brief description of the meaning of each of these terms.

Activist

- Activists involve themselves fully in new experiences.
- They are open-minded, not sceptical, and this tends to make them enthusiastic about anything new.
- Their philosophy is: 'I'll try anything once'.
- Their days are filled with activity.

- They like to quickly get down to work.
- As soon as the excitement from one activity has died down, they are busy looking for the next.
- They tend to thrive on the challenge of new experience, but may become bored with the longer-term consolidation.

Reflector

- Reflectors like to stand back to ponder experiences and observe them from many different perspectives.
- They collect information, both first hand and from others, and prefer to think about them thoroughly before coming to any conclusion.
- They tend to put off reaching conclusions for as long as possible.
- They are thoughtful, cautious, people who like to consider all possible angles and implications before making a move. They enjoy observing other people in action.
- They listen to others and get the drift of the discussion before making their own points.
- When reflectors act, it is part of a wider picture which includes the past as well as the present and other people's observations as well as their own.

Theorist

- Theorists think problems through logically in a step-by-step logical way.
- They bring together different facts and make them into coherent theories.
- They tend to be perfectionists who won't rest easy until things are tidy and fit into a rational scheme.
- They are keen on basic assumptions, principles and theories.