Phases of Learning & Assessment of Learning Styles

Module 7
Learning Objectives

- Understand the impact of learning styles on the supervisory relationship.

- Understand and apply the characteristics of different learning styles.

- Develop strategies for adapting participants’ learning styles to meet the needs of students.
Please Take the Learning Styles Quiz!
Types of Learners

Visual Learners
- Learn best from what they can see or read
- Prefer written instructions
- Prefer visual aids
- Learn how something is done through observation of others

Teaching Strategies
- Visual Materials
- Demonstrate how something is done
- Allow opportunities to observe before doing
- Provide written instruction
- Encourage student to take notes
- Minimize noise, easily distracted
Types of Learners

### Auditory Learners
- Need to hear information in order to retain it
- Prefer verbal instructions over written materials
- Prefer to discuss ideas aloud in order to process information
- Enjoy group discussions and activities

### Teaching Strategies
- Rephrase important points to increase understanding
- Have student paraphrase
- Encourage discussion & invite questions
- Remember that students may not tell you they don’t understand
- Have student discuss roles with other colleagues
Kinesthetic Learners

- Prefer to learn through experience
- Obtain greatest benefit by participation
- Remember information that they experience directly
- Enjoy acting out or recreating situations, i.e. role playing
- Enjoy hands-on activities that involve active, practical participation

Teaching Strategies

- Quickly engage student in agency activities
- Use role plays
- Allow client contact early on as it will reduce anxiety
- Develop assignments that are interactive, i.e. have student give presentation
Reflection Questions

- Reflect on your own learning style, how have you learned best in the past?
- Why might your preferred learning style be important to discuss with your field instructor?
Creating a conducive adult learning environment

- Adult learning theory ("andragogy") is the art and science of helping adults learn.
- A conducive learning environment is connected to the quality of learning achieved.
- Essential conditions for learning: "a climate that promotes informality, mutual respect, physical comfort, collaboration rather than competition, openness, authenticity, trust, non-defensiveness, and curiosity’ (Knowles, 1972, cited in Hendricks, Finch, & Franks, 2005)."
Structuring the Optimum Learning Environment

1. **Time** – are field instruction times scheduled, consistent, private, uninterrupted?

2. **Space** – the physical setting for field instruction

3. **Title/Status** – how do we choose to be addressed? How do we choose to address to students?

4. **Information sharing and access to resources**

5. **Decision making** – What is the decision making process like around assignments? Are self-monitoring and self-evaluation encouraged? Is reflexive discussion occurring? How realistic are goals that are set? Are expectations discussed openly? Is open discussion about student and agency expectations encouraged?
Learning Theory

- Reynolds (1985) Five Stage Model of Learning
Based on the assumptions that people learn from their experiences.

The four stages of experiential learning involve a unidirectional circular process that moved from:

- **Concrete Experience**
- **Reflective observation**
- **Abstract conceptualization**
- **Active experimentation**

### The Learning Circle
1. Concrete Experience
2. Reflective observation
3. Abstract conceptualization
4. Active experimentation

### Learning Style
- Reflective learner (the Observer)
- Operational learner (the Doer)
- Conceptual learner (the Thinker)
- Intuitive learner (the Feeler)

An individual learner may enter the learning cycle from any one of four distinct positions. These entry points are associated with a corresponding learning style, as noted above.
Kolb’s Learning Cycle (1984)

Concrete Experience → Reflective Observation
Active Experimentation → Abstract Conceptualization
Kolb’s Learning Styles

Reflective learner (the Observer)
Takes everything in, looks at many pts. Of view, organizes material into a meaningful order. Strategy: allow these students to shadow or sit in on sessions as a way of beginning.

Operational learner (the Doer)
Learns best through direct action Anxious to get busy right from the start May need help to deal with the slow process of change
Kolb’s Learning Styles, Cont.

- **Conceptual learner** (the Thinker)
  - Learn through literary and informational sources
  - Thrive on learning theoretical approaches to problem solving
  - Tend toward a Q & A probing format in sessions; benefit from practicing open-ended questions and interventions that promote exploration
  - It may take time to discuss feelings

- **Intuitive learner** (the Feeler)
  - Learn best through the use of their senses, particularly their feelings and emotions
  - Need to move from personalized experience to reflection and conceptualization of the meaning of the experience
  - Strength: ability to connect with people, prefer to learn in the “here-and-now.”
    May find themselves feeling along with their clients.
Five Stage Model of Learning (Reynolds, 1985)

“Awareness of these stages provides guideposts to the potential stumbling blocks along the way (Fredericks et al., 2005).”
Stage of acute consciousness of self
High anxiety, feel they cannot succeed, fight or flight, feelings of inadequacy

The stage of understanding a situation without the power to control one’s own actions or activity in it

The sink or swim stage
Approval seeking, dependence
Provide support, constructive criticism
Progress and disillusionment when there are setbacks
Characterized by the integration and practice

The stage of relative mastery
Can both understand and control activity required
Called in to offer consultation and teach others

The stage of learning to teach what one has mastered

New students in field
Normal, short lived
Prior to graduation
2-3 yrs. after graduation
Reflect on your development as a professional social worker, what stage do you see yourself at?

What can you apply from Kolb’s description of learning to your own learning process?

What are some ways your supervision hour can be structured to provide optimal learning?