

Complimenting Teaching and Learning Styles

As instructors it becomes important for us to understand our own learning style and how this may interact with that of our students. Research on education suggests that there are three primary styles of learning (Bandler & Grinder, 1979; Dunn & Dunn, 1978; Reiff, 1992; Rose, 1985; Wislock, 1993).

Visual Learners

- Learn best from information they can see or read
- Prefer written instructions as they remember information they read
- Prefer visual aids to accompany verbal instructions
- Learn how something is done through the observation of others
- Enjoy information that is presented visually

Auditory Learners

- Need to hear information to retain it
- Prefer verbal instructions over written materials
- Remember information through verbal repetition
- Prefer to discuss ideas aloud in order to further process information
- Enjoy group discussions and activities

Kinesthetic Learners

- Prefer to learn through experience
- Obtain the greatest benefit by participation in an activity
- Remember information that they experience directly
- Enjoy acting out or recreating situations, such as role playing
- Enjoy hands-on activities that involve active, practical participation

Teaching Strategies for Different Learning Styles

Given the above, the following strategies may reduce barriers to the learning process.

Strategies for the Visual Learner

- Provide a variety of visual materials to facilitate the learning process.
- Visual learners will appreciate reading materials about the agency, including information on the agency's history, the client population, and intervention methods.
- Demonstrate to students how something is done, rather than telling them.
- Visual learners prefer to learn by observation before they feel comfortable performing the task independently.
- Allow students many opportunities to observe others.

- Provide written instructions and encourage students to take notes during supervision sessions.
- Try to find a quiet place for students to work and keep the environment quiet during supervision sessions.
- Visual learners are easily distracted by noise.

Strategies for the Auditory Learner

- Rephrase important points to increase understanding.
- Ask students to discuss in their own words their understanding of the information being addressed.
- Processing information and instructions aloud will increase the students' understanding and retention of the information.
- Encourage discussion and invite questions.
- Remember that students may not initially indicate that they do not understand.
- Provide students with opportunities to talk to other social workers and staff members about their job functions and responsibilities.

Strategies for the Kinesthetic Learner

- Provide opportunities for students to be involved in agency activities quickly.
- Use role plays to act out potential client scenarios.
- Kinesthetic learners prefer to learn by doing and role plays are an effective way to facilitate learning prior to client interactions.
- Provide early opportunities for students to have client contact.
- Kinesthetic learners will be anxious to begin experiencing agency practice on their own and may become frustrated with continued observation. However, be sure to assess students for readiness and provide adequate supervision.
- Develop assignments that will be interactive. For example, to learn agency policies and procedures, have the student develop a presentation to be given during a staff meeting.