

Kolb's Learning Cycle and Experiential Learning

Simple as it may seem, our greatest learning comes from doing an activity. We can be told something or read something, but for deep-rooted learning to take place we must experience an approach or situation for ourselves. This idea is captured in the Kolb Learning Cycle.

Kolb based his work on the principle that people will learn through a continuous cycle of experience, reflection and application of lessons learnt. The experiential learning cycle he developed is based on the stages involved in us learning, growing and developing and helps people to make sense of what's happening in their lives.

Group activities are a great way of bringing this model alive and learning essential skills as you go. During many activities the learning cycle naturally occurs and the key is to bring it to people's attention and facilitate people through each of the stages.

You can use Kolb's Learning Cycle to underpin your approach to delivering sessions and programmes to help establish a pattern of learning. It's about helping people to learn direct from experience, to learn how to learn, and not get stuck in ruts in unhelpful patterns of behaving. It is good to explicitly teach and sell this process to your group. Kolb's learning cycle is central to the learning process in development training at Developing Youth Practice.

Kolb's learning cycle (1984)

