

We all teach in different ways. We all have preferences for how we tackle new experiences. Understanding the learning cycle, and how you go through it, can help explain how you deal with problems, people and new situations. And understanding the differences between yourself and others can give insights into your personal

**HayGroup®**

## Kolb Educator Role Profile

Interpretive report

and professional relationships. Knowing the style of teaching or educating we

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## What is the Kolb educator role profile (ERP)?

The educator role profile offers a holistic typology of educator roles based on experiential learning theory (ELT—Kolb 1984). ELT draws on the work of prominent 20th century scholars who gave experience a central role in their theories of human learning and development—notably John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, William James, Carl Jung, Paulo Freire, Carl Rogers and others—to develop a dynamic, holistic model of the process of learning from experience and a corresponding model of adult development.

## What does the ERP workbook cover?

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## Experiential learning theory (ELT)

Experiential learning theory (ELT) defines learning as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience” (Kolb, 1984, p.41). The ELT model portrays two opposing modes of grasping experience—concrete experience (CE) and abstract conceptualization (AC) -- and two opposing modes of transforming experience—reflective observation (RO) and active experimentation (AE).

Experiential learning is a process of constructing knowledge that involves a creative tension among the four learning modes. This process is portrayed as an idealized learning cycle or spiral where the learner “touches all the bases”—experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting—in a recursive process that is responsive to the learning situation and what is being learned. Immediate concrete experiences (experiencing) are the basis for observations and reflections. These reflections are assimilated and distilled into abstract concepts (thinking) from which new implications for action can be drawn. These implications can be actively tested and serve as guides in creating new experiences (see figure 1).

## Educator roles

The Educator Role Profile (ERP) describes four role positions—Facilitator, Expert, Evaluator and Coach. Educators play these roles as they help learners maximize learning by moving through the four stages of the experiential learning cycle.

- **The Facilitator Role.** When facilitating, educators help learners get in touch with their personal experience and reflect on it. They adopt a warm affirming style to draw out learners’ interests, intrinsic motivation and self knowledge. They often do this by facilitating conversation in small groups. They create personal relationships with learners.
- **The Expert Role.** In their role as subject expert, educators help learners organize and connect their reflections to the knowledge base of the subject matter. They adopt an authoritative, reflective style. They often teach by example, modeling and encouraging critical thinking as they systematically organize and analyze the subject matter knowledge. This knowledge is often communicated through lectures and texts.

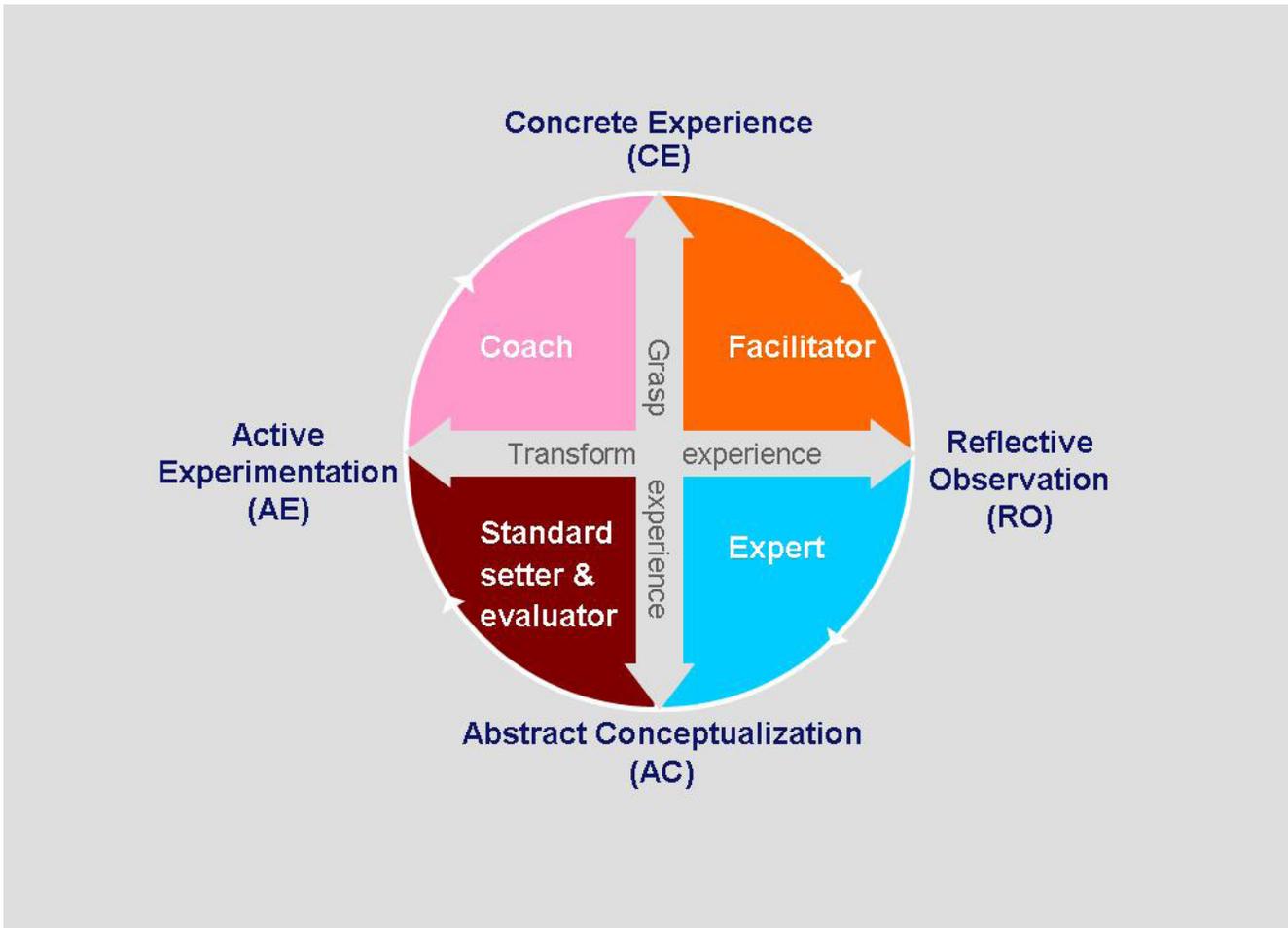
- **The Evaluator Role.** As a standard setter and evaluator, educators help learners master the application of knowledge and skill in order to meet performance requirements. They adopt an objective results-oriented style as they set the knowledge requirements needed for quality performance. They create performance activities for learners to evaluate their learning.
- **The Coaching Role.** In the coaching role, educators help learners apply knowledge to achieve their goals. They adopt a collaborative, encouraging style, often working one-on-one with individuals to help them learn from experiences in their life context. They assist in the creation of personal development plans and provide ways of getting feedback on performance.

Most of us adopt each of these roles to some extent in our educational and teaching activities. This is in part because these roles are determined by the way we resolve fundamental dilemmas of teaching. Do we focus on the learner’s experience and interest or subject matter requirements? Do we focus on effective performance and action or on a deep understanding of the meaning of ideas? All are required for maximally effective learning.

Individuals, however, tend to have a definite preference for one or two roles over the others; because of their educational philosophy, their personal teaching style, and the requirements of their particular educational setting including administrative mandates and learner needs. The ERP is designed to help you sharpen your awareness of these preferences and to make deliberate choices about what works best for you in your specific situation.

## Educator roles and the experiential learning cycle

Figure 1



## Your ERP scores

The ERP asked you to choose the item in a pair that best represents your role preference paralleling the role choices you must make in an actual educational situation. The attached pie chart shows your results from the ERP. It shows the relative preference you indicated for each of the four educator roles.

If your top priority role is:

**Expert Role**, you prefer item choices like:

- modelling by demonstration how an expert thinks about a topic
- requiring learners to read the literature about a subject critically
- relating to learners on an intellectual level
- believing it is important to be logical.

**Evaluator Role**, you prefer item choices like:

- creating a challenging environment where learners need to demonstrate quality work
- learners adhering to rules and procedures
- advising learners about the performance requirements of their chosen career
- believing it is important to be an objective evaluator.

**Facilitator Role**, you prefer item choices like:

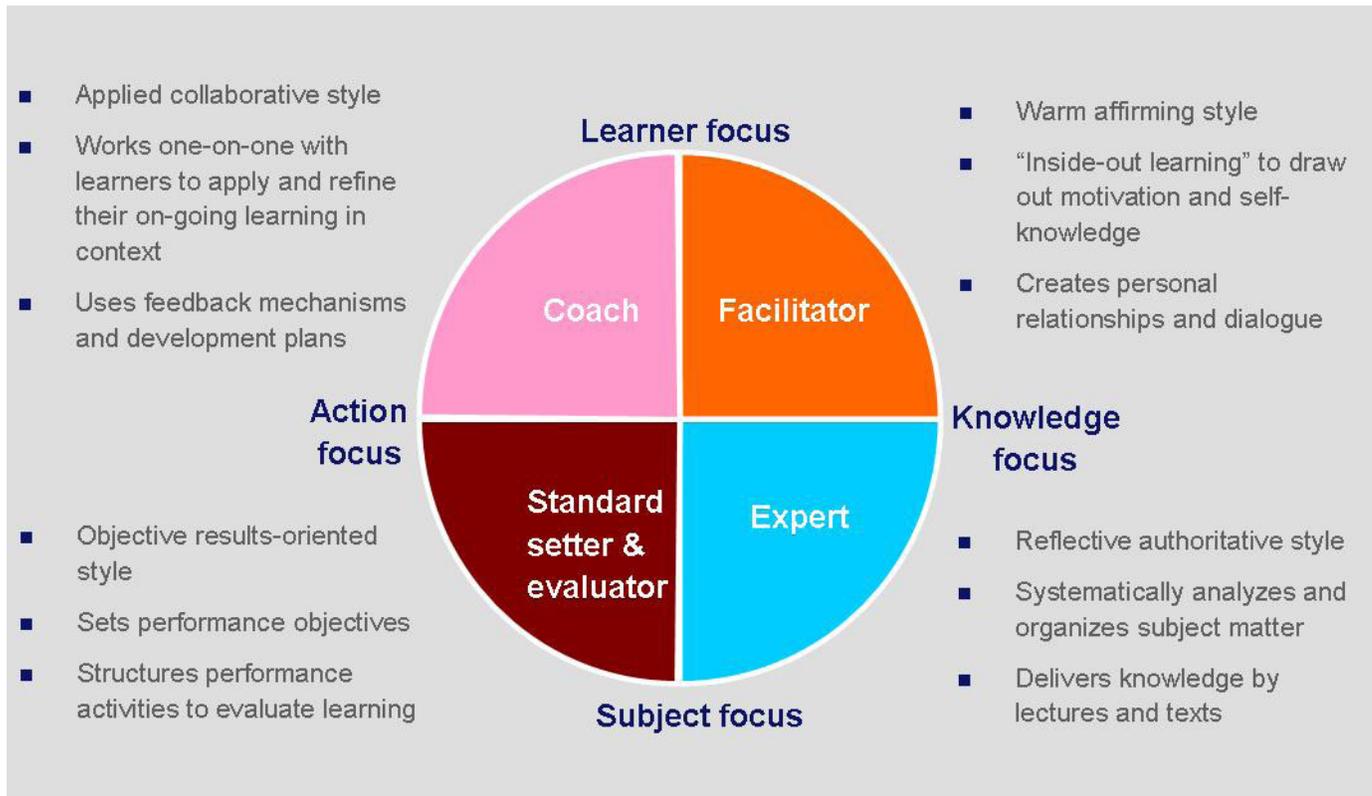
- encouraging learners to pursue the development of their interests
- providing a safe space for learners to talk about their thoughts and feelings
- aiming for learners to develop a lifelong love of learning
- developing learners' ability to be creative

**Coach Role** you prefer item choices like:

- believing that learning occurs best in a real life context
- developing learners' commitment to personal achievement
- giving learners ongoing opportunities for practice and feedback
- developing learners' ability to apply learning in their life and work

## Educator role profile

Figure 2



## Understanding your role as an educator

As you reflect on your survey results here are some questions to think about.

Do your ERP results fit with the way you currently see yourself as an educator? Would you like to change your emphasis on any of the four roles?

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Do you tend to specialize on one particular role or are you relatively balanced among the roles?

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What factors determined your Educational Role Profile? Your learning style and personality? Your educational philosophy? Your years of teaching experience? The demands and requirements of your situation?

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How would you like to change your emphasis on any of the four role (If at all)s?

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How do you integrate the role preferences in your profile in your educational activities? Are you able to change roles without learners becoming confused about “where you are coming from”?

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In your educational activities how do you decide which role to play? Do you consciously shift roles based on the situation requirements?

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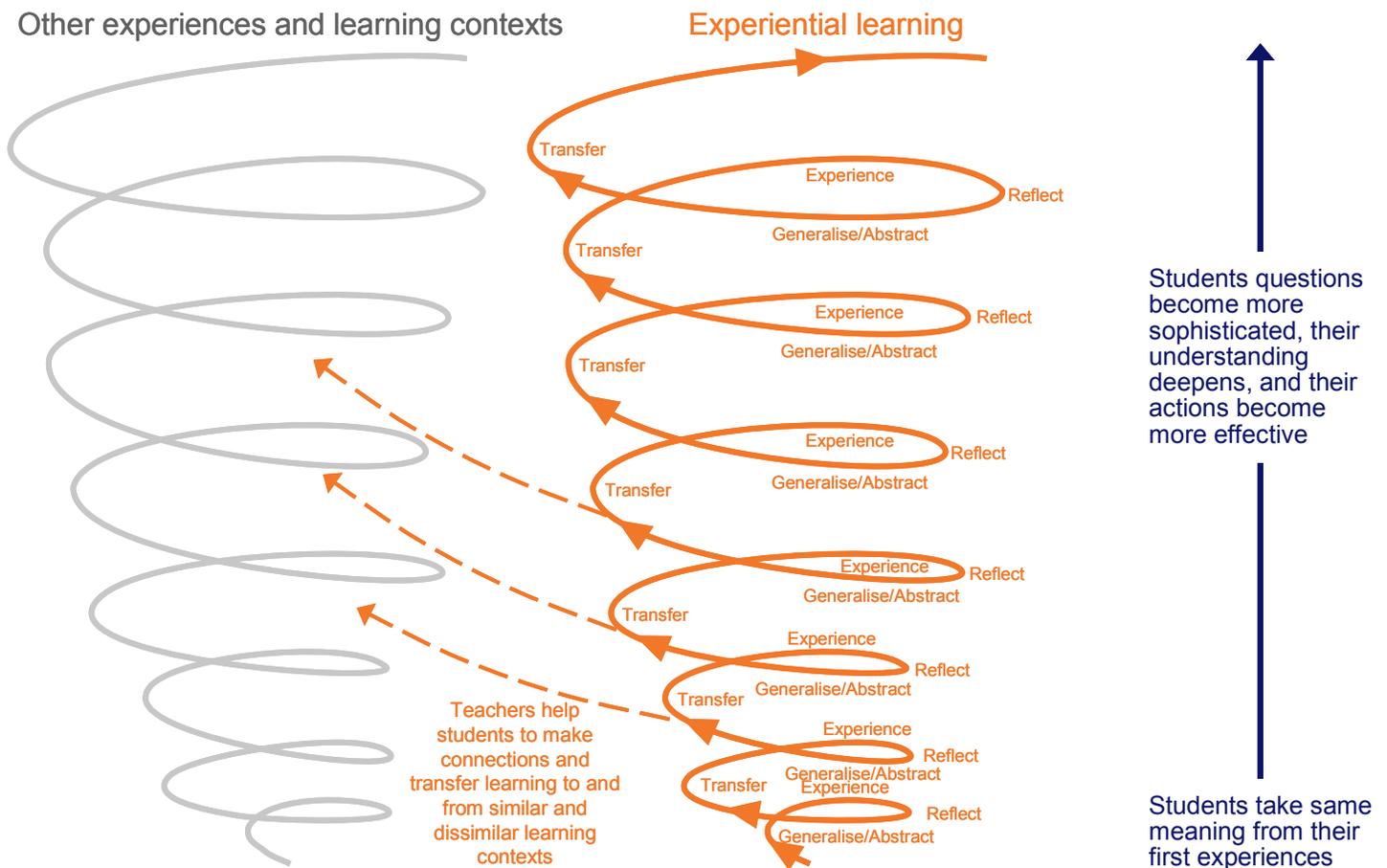
## Educator roles and teaching around the learning cycle

In our interviews and observations of highly successful educators we find that they tend to “teach around the learning cycle”. They organize their educational activities in such a manner that they address all four learning modes—experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting. As they do this, they lead learners around the cycle; shifting the role they play depending on which stage of the cycle they are addressing. In effect the role they adopt helps to create a learning space designed to facilitate the transition from one learning mode to the other as was shown in Figure 1.

Often they do this in a recursive fashion, repeating the cycle many times in a learning program. In effect the cycle becomes a spiral with each passage through the cycle deepening and extending learners’ understanding of the subject. When a concrete experience is enriched by reflection, given meaning by thinking and transformed by action the new experience created becomes richer, broader and deeper.

Further iterations of the cycle continue the exploration and transfer to experiences in other contexts. The New Zealand Ministry of Education (2004) has used this spiraling learning process as the framework for the design of middle school curricula. Figure 4 describes how teachers use the learning spiral to promote higher level learning and to transfer knowledge to other contexts.

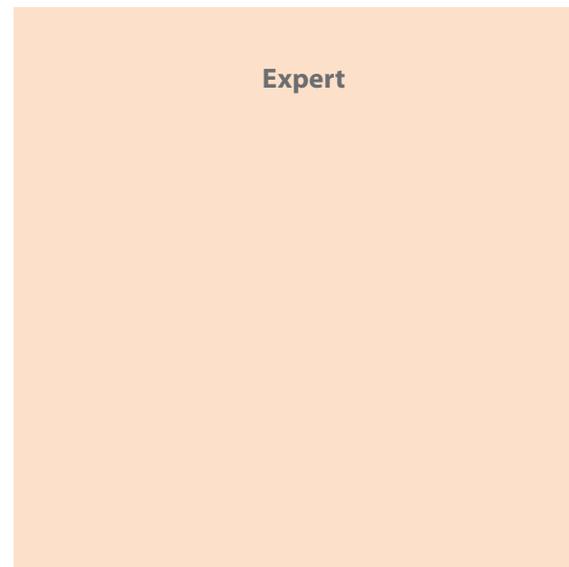
### Teaching and the learning spiral



Source: NZ Ministry of Education 2004



## Personal case analysis of your educator roles



How does your mapping relate to your ERP percentages? How does your mapping match your perception of the learner(s) needs? How could you expand to underutilized roles?

## Strategies for developing your ERP

Educators define their role based on their mindset - beliefs and goals about learning and education – and behaviors – styles and practices. You will find some of these mindsets and behaviors in the list below. You can use them as a starting place to devise strategies to expand into new educator roles.

### Coach

- Tell yourself learning occurs best when connected to the learner's life.
- Create a goal to help learners develop life skills.
- Provide learners with personalized feedback.
- Take time to work one-on-one with learners.
- Create opportunities for knowledge to be applied in the learners' life context.
- Assist learners in practicing new behaviors and applying learning.

### Facilitator

- Tell yourself that the learner's experience is the starting point of all learning.
- Create a goal to develop learners' appreciation of others' points of view.
- Ask about learners' thoughts and feelings regarding their experience.
- Share personal examples to help learners understand a concept.
- Create a feeling of safety among a community of learners.
- Encourage group discussion and elicit diverse views on a topic.
- Use journaling exercises to help learners reflect on their experiences.

### Subject expert

- Tell yourself that learning occurs best when learners integrate new concepts into their existing mental frameworks.
- Create a goal to develop learners' analytic and conceptual abilities.
- Assist learners in connecting new material to previous knowledge.
- Use written assignments for learners to organize their thoughts.
- Encourage learners to analyze and build models.
- Deliver content in a clear and organized manner.
- Encourage learners to establish their own theories.

### Standard Setter and Evaluator

- Tell yourself that it is important to set and measure objective performance standards.
- Create a goal to develop learners' problem solving skills.
- Communicate clear standards for evaluation.
- Measure learner performance against established criteria and provide feedback.
- Assist learners in creating a plan for action or developing learning goals.
- Monitor learner's progress toward learning goals.
- Clarify procedures and processes.

## Applying the educator roles in your life

When we think of educators we immediately think of teachers and educational institutions, but educating is an activity that occurs in nearly all life situation. Erik Erikson goes so far as to say that we humans are a “teaching species”, distinguished by the fact that we parent and teach our young for a long period of time and create societies that share knowledge and cultural values through education.

We play educational roles in educational institutions as teachers and administrators, in organizations as leaders, managers and human resource specialists, and in our personal lives as parents, spouses and friends. While the items in the ERP were created with more formal educator roles in mind, it can be useful to think about your results more generally in the light of all of your relationships at work and in your personal life. Below are some things to think about in these different situations.

### Educational institutions

The culture of an educational institution can have a big influence on the educational role you adopt. Education has traditionally emphasized the Subject Matter Expert Role. As educators, you have the challenge to balance the institutional demand for high performance learning, the particular learning needs of your students, and awareness of your own educational values and teaching preferences.

Becoming aware of the different educational roles you can adopt will help you design courses and curricula that maximize student learning by helping them develop a rich array of learning strategies they would not have been able to obtain with a single teaching approach. As a result, you will more likely be able to bring the institutional demand for high performance and student optimal learning into a closer alignment.

### Consulting and training

There are some unique challenges and constraints in organizational education. As a consultant or trainer, you need to be aware of your clients’ organizational culture, nature of their business environment, and their specific educational goals. For example, some client may want you to focus on improving creativity of his/her employees, while others may want to develop strong customer orientation in their sales representatives. As a result, you may need to shift your educational roles to meet your client’s specific

learning goals and outcomes. Understanding your different roles as an educator may help you develop a rich repertoire of consulting and training strategies and offer your clients greater insights in understanding their own learning process.

### Leading and managing

Whether leading an organization or a team, as a leader you have the power and opportunity to help your members achieve visions and goals set by the organizations or teams. You can maximize your effectiveness as a leader or manager by adopting the role of an educator. You can encourage them to see the big picture, help them finding their strengths, develop their core competencies and create conditions that promote high level of performance. Your stance as an educator will foster a learning orientation in your members, a key competency of a successful and thriving organizations and teams.

### Parenting

Guiding and helping your children grow may be the most challenging and fulfilling aspects of parenting. As a parent, you are the best person to know your child’s personality, talent, dispositions, strengths and weaknesses. When you adopt a mindset of an educator, you can put the rich array of information you have about your child to a greater use in ways that benefit your child’s growth and development. For example, you will understand what role to take when your child is deeply intrigued by a particular discovery, or when she is struggling in the face of a setback. Awareness of different educational roles you can take as a parent may help you approach your child’s development more holistically and ultimately draw her learning potentials to her fullest.

### Marriage partners

As partners in life, couples can approach their marriage as learning relationships. Becoming aware of different educational roles you can take as partner, you can help each other develop and grow by supporting and challenging one another, by giving each other constructive feedback, and learn to nurture a long lasting and fulfilling relationship.

### Friends

Friendship can offer a rich source for learning in many different ways. For example, it is widely known that in college, students learn the most from their friends and classmates. Not only do they teach each other about classroom subjects, they exchange information about life in general and serve as a strong support system to one another and create a long lasting learning relationship that continues

beyond their college careers. Whether you are helping your friend to succeed in a math test, or supporting her deal with a crisis, an awareness of different roles you can take in different learning situations can greatly enrich your friendship.







## Other useful resources

For the **LSI online**, or for information on any of the following, contact the Hay Group or visit our web site at **[www.haygroup.com/tl](http://www.haygroup.com/tl)**

### *Facilitator's Guide to Learning*

© 2000 Experience Based Learning Systems, Inc.  
A manual for teachers and trainers.

### *The Kolb Team Learning Experience: Improving Team Effectiveness through Structured Learning Experiences*

© 2004 Experience Based Learning Systems, Inc.  
A practical guide to experiencing the learning cycle as a team. Modules cover Team Purpose, Membership, Roles, Context, Learning and Action.

### *The Kolb Adaptive Style Inventory*

© 1993 Experience Based Learning Systems, Inc.  
An inventory to assess your adaptability in different learning situations.

### *The Kolb Learning Skills Profile*

© 1993 Experience Based Learning Systems, Inc.  
An instrument to compare your learning skills to your job skill demands.

### *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*

By David A. Kolb. © 1984 Prentice Hall  
The theory of experiential learning, with applications for education, work, and personal development.  
Contains information on the validity of the Learning Style Inventory.

**The following are available from the Kolb website at [www.learningfromexperience.com](http://www.learningfromexperience.com)**

*Bibliography of Research on Experiential Learning and the Learning Style Inventory*  
Updated regularly.

*The Kolb Learning Style Inventory-Version 3.1 Technical Specifications*  
Updated regularly.

**Additional information on Experiential Learning is also available from the Kolb website.**

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