Understanding learning styles is key to working with others

By Dennis J. Tartakow, DMD, MEd, PhD
Editor in Chief

Communication ...

Learning how to communicate with one another is the first step in all relationships. All educational programs must adhere to basic principles of learning in order to enhance a student’s educational experience. It is important for educators and administrators to understand and recognize that not all students use the same learning modalities. For the clinician, it may be helpful for each of one to recognize which modality of learning serves us best.

Seven learning styles

First, and foremost, be aware that there is a minimum of seven recognized styles of learning for all individuals.

In “Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences” (1993), Dr. Howard Gardner, a respected authority on higher education and learning, established another way of grouping learning styles, suggesting that there are at least seven modalities or intelligences linking our individual styles.

While Gardner's work encourages the consideration of new and creative ways to educate students, a solid grasp of core modalities apply immediately to every aspect of your education and practice.

Adult learners typically rely on learning modalities that process information at an unconscious level, but the adult may be consciously aware of which modes he or she prefers. Most learners retain a dominant and an auxiliary learning modality, and access information through all the senses but generally one or two. Most learners are clearly aware of which mode they prefer. Gardner suggested the following basic learning styles:

1) Verbal and linguistic: Sensitive to the meaning and order of words.
2) Musical: Sensitive to pitch, melody, rhythm and tone.
3) Logical and mathematic: Able to handle reasoning and recognize patterns and order.
4) Spatial: Perceives the world accurately and tries to re-create or transform an aspect of that world.
5) Bodily and kinesthetic: Able to use the body skillfully and handle objects adroitly.
6) Interpersonal: Understands people and relationships.
7) Intrapersonal: Possesses access to one’s emotional life as a method to understand oneself and others.

Second, develop better communication skills and lines with others, while providing individuals, i.e., fellow orthodontists, dentists, physicians, attorneys as well as a patient’s nuclear family.

Third, gain a better understanding of behavior and interactions between individuals from different cultures.

Fourth, extend respect, compassion, empathy and concern for the needs of others.

Fifth, create an environment to develop greater leadership skills.

Sixth, and last, be considerate of the social justice and human rights afforded to all individuals.

Learning may be defined as useful changes in behavior by reflecting upon past experience. The past leaves much to reflect upon when contemplating the future.

Today’s answers will lead to tomorrow’s questions. “Tell me and I forget. Show me and I remember. Involve me and I understand,” says one Chinese proverb (source unknown). Hindsight so often provides an individual with an unequal opportunity to review and reflect upon one’s experiences. According to Dr. Wayne Dyer (2004), inspiration is not reserved only for high-profile creative individuals in the arts and sciences, it is for everyone and is the force behind humanity’s greatest achievements.

When the secrets to cultivating inspiration are discovered in every moment of one’s life, that individual will enjoy an unimagined experience of enlightenment, abundance and extraordinary achievement in an effortless manner.

In summary, do to others as you would do to yourself. One of the most important goals for all orthodontic educators is to encourage students to work on becoming more sensitive to the needs of others.

A top priority for this orthodontist has always focused on developing greater understanding of an individual’s behavior when alone as well as in group interaction. Sensitivity to the needs of others is of extreme importance and significance, and vital for the orthodontist: compassion, understanding, empathy and consideration are some of the salient and foremost attributes we all must strive to develop.

References


Do you have general comments or criticism you would like to share? Is there a particular topic you would like to see more articles about? Let us know by e-mailing us at feedback@dental-tribune.com. If you would like to make any change to your subscription (name, address or to opt out) please send us an e-mail at dat@dentaltoday.com and be sure to include which publication you are referring to. Also, please note that subscription changes can take up to six weeks to process.