

Teaching Styles and Learning Styles... An Overview

Effective clinical teaching requires flexibility, energy and commitment amidst a busy background of patient care. Being a great CI also requires that teachers are able to address learner's needs and understand the variations in learner's styles and approaches. CI's can accomplish this by using a variety of teaching methods and styles, exposing learners to **both familiar and unfamiliar** ways of learning which provides both **comfort and tension** during the process, ultimately giving learners multiple ways to excel.

The decision regarding what teaching style to use with each student and/or in each clinical situation is commonly dependent on several factors including (1) student factors: is the student ready and capable of handling this method of teaching? What is the student's preferred learning style? Would the student benefit (or suffer) from being challenged to learn in a new/unfamiliar way? (2) CI factors: is the CI flexible and willing to try new teaching methods? Does the CI place importance on developing rapport with

students and listening to student needs? Does the CI prefer to maintain control over the parameters of the learning task? (3) Demands of the situation: Does the complexity or details of a clinical scenario dictate that a particular teaching style be used?

Consider taking the **“What is your teaching style”** quiz at <http://longleaf.net/teachingstyle.html> and having your students take the **“What is your learning style”** quiz at <http://longleaf.net/learningstyle.html>

The following are descriptions of each type of teaching and learning style and common “clusters” found in research (which teaching styles facilitate particular learning styles).

Article written by Kim Cox, based on excerpts from “The Dynamics of One-on-One Teaching” by A. Grasha and “Teaching in the Medical Setting: balancing teaching styles, learning styles and teaching methods” by L. Vaughn & R. Baker

TEACHING STYLE	DESCRIPTION	ADVANTAGE	DISADVANTAGE
Expert	Has knowledge and expertise; oversees, guides and directs learners; gains status through knowledge; focuses on facts	Knowledge and information which preceptor possesses	Knowledge and information can be overused and intimidating; may not always show underlying thought process
Formal Authority	Possesses status among learners because of knowledge and authority/position; follows traditions and standards of practice; focuses on rules and expectations for learners; supervises learners closely with critical eye toward standard practices and procedures	Focus on clear expectations and acceptable ways of doing things	Potentially rigid and less flexible ways of managing learners and their concerns
Personal Model	Leads by personal example; suggests prototypes for appropriate behavior; shows learners how to do things; wants learners to observe and emulate approach	“hands on”; emphasis on direct observation; emphasis on mentor relationship	May want to “clone” learners in own image; may believe that own approach is only/best way to practice
Facilitator	Emphasizes personal nature of teaching-learning relationship; asks questions; explores options with learners; focuses on learner responsibility, independence and initiative	Personal flexibility; focus on learner needs and goals; openness to alternatives and options	Time consuming; sometimes more direct approach is needed; can make learner uncomfortable
Delegator	Encourages learner responsibility and initiative when appropriate; goal is to have learner function autonomously; a “resource person” who answers questions and periodically reviews learner performance	Contribute to learners professional development and confidence; two-way trust	Learners may not be ready to function in an autonomous manner; some learners become very anxious when given this much freedom too soon

Most clinical instructors use a variety of these teaching styles depending upon the student and the clinical situation... but which is your most common method/approach?

STUDENT LEARNING STYLE	DESCRIPTION	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Competitive	Students learn material to perform better than others; like to be the center of attention and receive recognition for accomplishments	Motivates students to keep up and set goals for learning	<p>May turn less competitive people off; difficult to appreciate and learn new collaborative skills; may struggle with interpersonal communication</p> <p>May benefit from periodic use of teaching style that emphasizes recognizing needs of others and collaboration with peers</p>
Collaborative	Students feel they can learn by sharing ideas and talents; cooperate with teachers and like to work with others	Students develop skills for working in groups and teams	<p>Students not as well prepared for handling competitive people; depend too much on others and not always able to work as well alone</p> <p>May benefit from periodic use of teaching style that requires them to problem solve independently</p>
Avoidant	Appears unenthusiastic about learning content; doesn't participate in discussions; overwhelmed by the content to be learned; hopes that CI doesn't ask them to perform skills that they are weak in	Students able to avoid tension and anxiety (but otherwise there are no real "pro's" to this style)	<p>Performance poor; negative feedback from teachers; students do not set productive goals</p> <p>Be alert for underlying causes of avoidance.. Is student overwhelmed? Did you give them too much/too soon? Do they feel safe to attempt answering questions/try skills or is your teaching style potentially threatening/ intimidating? Student may need a more guided teaching style (demonstration, observation, role modeling) with more emphasis on teacher-student rapport with gradual transition to more independence</p>
Participant	People-pleasers; enjoy learning activities and participates actively in discussions; eager to do as much of the required and optional course requirements as possible; craves positive feedback	Students strives to get the most out of every learning experience and make the CI happy	<p>May be overly focused on approval and fail to ask for what they need or want</p> <p>May benefit from being prompted to generate their own learning goals and taking more of a lead in problem solving/creativity</p>
Dependent	Show little intellectual curiosity and learn only what is required; view teacher and peers as sources of structure and support; look to authority figures for specific guidelines on what to do	Helps students manage their anxiety and obtain clear direction	<p>Difficult to develop skills for exhibiting autonomy and self-direction as a learner; student does not learn how to deal with uncertainty</p> <p>May benefit from real or role-play scenarios in which things don't go according to structure/plan</p>
Independent	Students like to think for themselves and are confident in their learning abilities; prefer to learn content that they feel is important; prefer to work alone	Students develop skills as self-initiated, self-directed learners	<p>May become somewhat deficient in collaborative skills; might fail to consult with others or to ask for help when it is needed</p> <p>Would benefit from occasional situations in which collaboration is a must and needs of others come before individual needs</p>

Common Teaching Style "Clusters"	Facilitates Learning Style of:	Examples of teaching methods:
Expert/Formal authority	Dependent/Participant/ Competitive	Giving student "mini lecture" on content; teacher-centered questions (content based-closed questions); strict standards & expectations for performance; student given specific tasks to do without much prompting for creativity or unique approaches
Personal Model/ Expert/ Formal Authority	Participant/Dependent/ Collaborative	Role modeling (demonstrating ways of thinking/doing things); coaching/guiding student to think and perform like CI; illustrating acceptable alternatives; sharing personal viewpoints; "thinking out loud" during eval/treatment; having students emulate/duplicate your methods
Facilitator/ Personal Model/ Expert	Collaborative/ Participant/ Independent	Case based discussions ("read her eval and tell me what you would do"); role plays ("I'll be the patient... practice giving me instructions"); guided readings ("read research on shoulder special tests and come back tomorrow with ideas for which are appropriate for patient"); open ended questions that assess student "processing" more than knowledge of content
Delegator/ Facilitator/Expert	Independent/ Collaborative/ Participant	Student generates goals for learning; student journals "what they learned today"; student prompted to think outside the box and come up with ideas different than CI; Student must problem solve situation on own and use CI as resource only when needed; Student encouraged to work with others (teach others and use others as resource)