



## SESSION 2

# HOW ADULTS LEARN

### Learning Objectives

As a result of this training experience, each participant should be able to:

- ◆ Explain the principles of adult learning.
- ◆ Be able to use adult learning principles to achieve the key learning objectives of a trainer conference.
- ◆ Make training appealing to participants at each stage of the adult learning cycle.

### Methods

Discussions, activities, and talks

### Faculty Preparation

- ◆ Recruit three staff members to be group leaders. Have two of the group leaders become familiar with the American Sign Language phrase from the “Let Me” exercise. Specific guidance is given below for the three group leaders.
- ◆ Review “[Training Methods](#)” for tips on discussions and talks.
- ◆ Review the “[Training Technology](#)” session for tips on using an overhead projector.

### Facilities

Be sure a breakout room is available for each of the three groups.

## Materials

- ◆ Two flipchart pads with easels
- ◆ Felt-tip markers
- ◆ Prizes, one for each participant (can be something as simple as pieces of candy)
- ◆ [Directions sheets](#) for the three group leaders
- ◆ Three “Tell Me” [description sheets](#) (one for each group leader)
- ◆ A “Show Me” [Illustration Sheet](#) for each member of Group 3, and one for each group leader
- ◆ Overhead projector and screen
- ◆ [BSA 500 Answers sheet](#) for each steward

## Overheads

[“Learning Methods”](#)  
[“Adult Learning Cycle”](#)  
[BSA 500 Questions](#)

## Handout

[“Adult Learning Model”](#)

## Time

45 minutes

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## Learning Experiences

Introduce the session by saying something like this:

The more you try to anticipate the needs of your participants, the more successful you will be as a trainer. Try to put yourself in your audience when you think about their needs.

Take a moment again and think about yourself as a participant in a training event. Think about what made that a great training experience. What did the trainer do that made it a great experience for you as a learner?

Here are some possible discussion starters:

- ◆ At the time you attended the training, how did you feel about attending?
- ◆ How were your needs recognized by the trainer?
- ◆ What activities in the session helped to meet your needs?

List the participants' responses on a flipchart.

Expand upon methods that involve the audience through application and practice.

## Exercise

### The 'Let Me' Exercise

**Purpose:** To demonstrate and describe the principles of adult learning

**Time:** 15 minutes

**Materials:**

- ◆ Three rooms
- ◆ Two flipcharts and felt-tip markers
- ◆ Three "Tell Me" Description Sheets (one for each group leader)
- ◆ A "Show Me" Illustration Sheet for each member of Group 3, and one for each group leader
- ◆ Prizes, one for each participant

Through this exercise, participants will validate the Confucius saying, "Tell me and I will forget. Show me and I will remember. But let me and I will understand."

The proof for this saying will be demonstrated by teaching the three participant groups to sign the Confucius saying in American Sign Language. But each of the groups will be taught by different methods. The first group will learn by being told; the second group will learn by being shown; and the third group will learn by letting them actively participate in experiential learning.

Before dividing into groups, ask if any participants know American Sign Language. If there is one, ask him or her to assist the group leader of Group 3. If there are more than one, ask them to help with Groups 2 and 3.

**Group 1.** Tell them how to sign the phrase; don't share the handout; then spend the other 10 minutes killing time. Use the Directions for Group Leader 1 and the "Tell Me" Description Sheet.

**Group 2.** Tell and show them how to sign the phrase; show them the handout. Use the Directions for Group Leader 2 and the "Tell Me" Description Sheet.

**Group 3.** Tell and show them how to sign the phrase; share the handout; and have them practice signing the phrase. Use the Directions for Group Leader 3 and the "Tell Me" Description Sheet.

**Note:** If you only have enough participants for two groups, use the methods for groups 1 and 2.

**Breakout Session.** In whatever manner you wish, separate the participants into three groups, assign each a group leader, and send them to the breakout rooms. Ask them to return in 15 minutes.

**Note:** You can expect the “told” group to fail, and only a few folks from the “shown” group will succeed. This exercise is not a competition for the staff.

## Processing

When all of the groups have returned, ask them to demonstrate what they have learned. Ask Group 1 to stand up and demonstrate what they have learned. As you say the phrase, the group should sign as much as they are able. Repeat with groups 2 and 3.

The expected outcome is that Group 1 will demonstrate little ability to perform the appropriate signs. Group 2 will demonstrate greater ability to perform the correct signs. Group 3 will demonstrate the greatest ability to perform the correct signs.

If the outcome is as expected and Group 3 is better than the other two groups, be sure to award their prize. Then award prizes to everyone else for participating.

Say,

Let’s talk about what happened in each room.  
Something different happened in each group.

**Note:** If Group 3 does the best, use “Outcome As Expected” below to help them process the exercise. If another group does better, or all perform poorly, use “Outcome Not As Expected.”

### Outcome As Expected

Ask:

Group 1, describe your learning experience. How were you taught the phrase?

After Group 1 responds, summarize their answers and point out that Group 1 participants listened to a lecture on how to form the signs and were not permitted to practice.

Ask:

Group 2, describe your learning experience. How were you taught the phrase?

After Group 2 responds, summarize their answers and point out that Group 2 participants observed the instructor demonstrating the signs, but they were not permitted to practice.

Ask:

**Group 3, describe your learning experience. How were you taught the phrase?**

After Group 3 responds, summarize their answers and point out that, unlike groups 1 and 2, Group 3 participants were actively involved in their learning:

- ◆ They began practicing signing along with the instructor, which raised their curiosity and demonstrated that the assignment could be done.
- ◆ They were told that they could win prizes based on their performance; the other two groups didn't have this incentive.
- ◆ Sign language was demonstrated.
- ◆ They were encouraged to practice.

Before leading the next discussion, thank everyone for their participation.

Close with,

**As we saw through this exercise, those of you who engaged in experiential learning by being able to practice signing the phrase were more successful at demonstrating your new skills than the other two groups.**

### **Outcome Not As Expected**

Use this only if the “outcome is not as expected” (i.e., all three groups performed equally poorly when asked to demonstrate what they learned).

Explain that this is a particularly difficult skill and none of the groups were given very much time to learn it. It is understandable then that there is no distinct difference in performance. (You may mention how long it took you to sign the phrase correctly.)

Ask how many in the class are fluent in sign language. It is likely that no one is. Point out that this lack of foundation in the subject means they had nothing to build on, which makes learning difficult. Ask the groups,

**Who feels as if they are close to being able to sign the phrase correctly?**

Chances are Group 3 will feel significantly more confident than the other two groups, and they could demonstrate their skill with a little more practice.

Lead a discussion by asking questions such as the following:

Group 1, what was your reaction to trying to learn the signs by being told only what the signs look like?

Group 2, what was your reaction to having the signs demonstrated for you?

How many of you in Group 1 and Group 2 wanted to practice the signs even though you were instructed not to?

Group 3, how did your signing improve during the time you had to practice?

Before the next discussion, thank everyone for their participation.

End with,

As we saw through this exercise, those of you who engaged in experiential learning by being able to practice signing the phrase were more successful at demonstrating your new skills than the other two groups.

## **Experiential Learning**

Say,

The significant power of learning by doing has been demonstrated over the years. As you think about the experiential learning you just shared, how might the Confucius saying help us to capture much of what we just discussed?

The point you want to make is the power of learning by doing.

Show the “Learning Methods” overhead.

Read the overhead:

Education research shows that we retain:

10% of what we read

20% of what we hear

30% of what we see

50% of what we see and hear

70% of what we say

90% of what we say and do

## Adult Learning Principles

As you discuss the adult learning principles, ask the participants to share their understanding of the meaning of the principles. Here are some good discussion points:

**Adults are self-directing once they recognize a need.** They need to know, “What’s in it for me?”

**Adults come armed with related experience and knowledge.** They need opportunities to be involved; and it helps if adults draw on their own experiences. Discussions are richer when drawn on the diversity of experiences in the audience.

**Adults respond to a variety of teaching methods.** Look for ways to use a variety of techniques and media effectively to capture the attention of adults.

**Adults learn by doing.** Provide opportunities for adults to practice, take risks, and receive feedback to learn and correct their skills.

**Adults want immediate application of what they learn.** Adults need to practice to retain the skills and knowledge gained.

## Adult Learning Cycle

Show the “Adult Learning Cycle” overhead. Say,

Educational theorist David Kolb has researched adult learning and documented it in this model.

There are four phases in the adult learning cycle.

The first is *experiencing*. During the experiencing phase, learners use experiences they have had, or an experience provided to further their learning (in our case, the sign language activity or a similar experience). Learners discuss the facts of their experience; everyone is clear about what happened.

What are some of the examples of how learners engage in the ‘experiencing’ phase?

Suggested responses:

- ◆ Brainstorming examples of real life experiences
- ◆ Reading a case study
- ◆ Role playing
- ◆ Participating in an activity like the one we just completed

The second phase is *processing*. During the processing phase, learners discuss their experiences and share reactions, feelings, and the affects of those experiences.

What are some of the examples of how learners engage in the processing phase?

Suggested responses:

- ◆ Sharing feelings about real life experiences
- ◆ Sharing opinions of case study
- ◆ Debriefing an exercise

The third phase is *generalizing*. During the generalizing phase, learners identify general trends and truths about their experiences as well as the experiences of others. They reach conclusions and develop new concepts and theories from those experiences.

Generalizing addresses the “So what? What can I take from this activity?”

What are some of the ways we generalize in our training sessions?

Suggested responses:

- ◆ Lecture
- ◆ Explanation of models

The fourth phase is *applying*. During the applying phase, learners modify old behaviors or test new behaviors and practice the behaviors in everyday situations.

What are some examples of how learners engage in the “applying” phase?

Suggested responses:

- ◆ Modify old behaviors on the basis of what we have learned from our own experiences and the experiences of others.
- ◆ Suggest how the behaviors described in a case study should be modified to reflect what has been learned.
- ◆ Try out a new way of approaching a situation encountered in the role-playing.



Say,

Generally, learners need to experience all four phases. However, in some situations learners may have already experienced a phase because they have background in the subject matter or they grasp the concept quickly. In some situations learners may skip through a phase.

For example, in this conference we all have a variety of knowledge and experiences with the theory of adult learning.

Some participants are very familiar with the theory of adult learning, and some are not. Those who are very familiar with the adult learning theory may have tuned out for the last several minutes because we were in the generalizing phase.

But that same group is more likely to tune back in with greater interest when we enter the applying phase and maintain their interest throughout the rest of the course.

We all have experienced teaching a group and watching the attention of some people drift in and out on the material being covered. This varying degree of attention can be attributed to a variety of reasons. The most likely reason is that they have already experienced the phase of the adult learning cycle that class is currently discussing.

Another reason is that people have differing learning style preferences.

Some thrive on group discussions of experiences. Others learn best through reflective thinking. Still others learn best when they are actually using a concept or skill from their everyday life.

## Summary

Review the learning objectives and run the BSA 500 Game to test understanding.

## BSA 500 Game

Place the BSA 500 questions transparency for this session on the overhead projector, but do not turn the projector on. Announce that when the questions appear on the screen, each team will have exactly one minute to answer as many of the questions as they possibly can. The answers are to be given to the race steward at each table by the team's crew chief.

Turn the overhead projector on. After exactly 60 seconds turn the projector off, and announce that time has expired. After the stewards have determined the number of correct answers for each team, allow a little time for the crew chiefs to move their team's racecar along the track.

## Pizzazz

Add a song, stunt, run-on, or other morale feature to lead into the next session.

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**To continue, scroll down to view session materials, or follow one of these links:**

[Session 3: Communication](#)

[Contents](#)

## DIRECTIONS FOR GROUP LEADER 1

The purpose of the exercise for this group is for the leader to present only verbal explanations of the American Sign Language. **Do not allow the participants to practice the signs.** The verbal explanation is all that should be provided. The objective is for the participants to walk away without the ability to sign the phrase, but with the understanding that different motions are made to sign the phrase. But the participants won't have the ability to accomplish this task.

1. When you arrive in the breakout room, try to use up about 10 minutes getting everyone settled. Allow a short break if you need to.
2. To begin, explain that you are going to teach the group how to use American Sign Language.
3. Read a word, then read through the descriptions twice as written on the "Tell Me" Description Sheet.
4. **Do not provide this group with any type of written communication. Also, they are not permitted to practice signing the phrase. Again, remember no practicing whatsoever is allowed.**
5. After you have described the signs for each of the words, lead the group back to the main room.

## DIRECTIONS FOR GROUP LEADER 2

The purpose of the exercise for this group is to both hear how to sign the phrase and to see how the signs are made. **It is very important that the participants are not allowed to practice the signs.** The objective is for the participants to have a minimal understanding of how to sign, but not be able to sign completely.

1. When you arrive in the breakout room, try to use up about 10 minutes getting everyone settled. Allow people to stretch, and allow a short break if you need to.
2. To begin, explain that you are going to teach the group how to use American Sign Language to communicate the phrase, “Tell me and I forget. Show me and I remember. But let me and I understand.”
3. Say the phrase and write it on a flipchart.
4. Distribute the illustration sheets, which show students how the signs should be made.
5. Read the descriptions of how the signs should look.
6. **Do not allow the group to practice the signs.**
7. Collect the illustration sheets.
8. Lead the group back to the main room.

## DIRECTIONS FOR GROUP LEADER 3

The purpose of the exercise for Group 3 is for the participants to experience all three learning styles: hearing how to make the signs, seeing how to make the signs, and actually practicing the signs. The objective is to have the participants develop the ability to sign the phrase in front of the rest of the total conference.

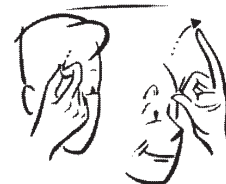
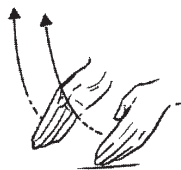
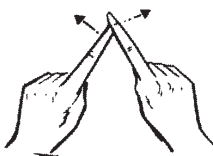
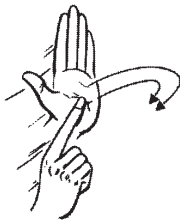
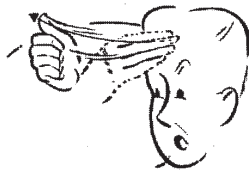
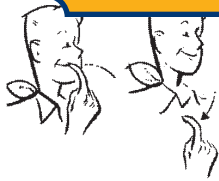
1. Once the other groups have left, explain that you are going to teach the group how to use American Sign Language
2. Explain that the phrase all the groups are learning to sign is, “Tell me and I forget. Show me and I remember. But let me and I understand.”
3. Explain that this group is competing with the other groups for prizes. The group that can most accurately sign the Confucius phrase in American Sign Language will win.
4. Show the group how to sign the phrase, “Tell me and I will forget. Show me and I will remember. But let me and I will understand” and ask the group to try it themselves.
5. Say the phrase and write it on a flipchart.
6. Distribute the illustration sheet, which shows how the signs should be made.
7. Teach “me” and “I” first.
8. Show the group how to sign the phrase, and encourage members to sign along with you. Rehearse the exercise as many times as the group requests and time permits.
9. Encourage the group to practice signing the phrase until the other groups are ready to come back into the main room. During this practice time, coach the group on their signing of the phrase.
10. Collect the illustration sheets.

## “TELL ME” DESCRIPTION SHEET

This description sheet may be used by the group leaders only. This is not a handout for students. It describes how to sign the saying, “Tell me and I will forget. Show me and I will remember. But let me and I will understand” in American Sign Language.

<b>“Tell”</b>	With index finger pointing at lower lip arch finger out and down to point at your own chest.
<b>“Me”</b>	Make a fist, with index finger pointing at chest.
<b>“And”</b>	Palm facing chest with fingers and thumb slightly spread; “pull” horizontally (actually move hand from one side to the other) while drawing fingers together.
<b>“I”</b>	Make fist with thumb and pinkie out and pinkie pointing up, thumb pointing toward chest.
<b>“Forget”</b>	Fingers touching brow, wipes across brow, ending with closed hand with thumb pointing up.
<b>“Show”</b>	Index finger of “dominant” hand points to flat palm of other hand—extend together toward object being shown (“show me” would pull toward self).
<b>“Me”</b>	Make fist, with index finger pointing at chest.
<b>“And”</b>	Palm facing chest with fingers and thumb slightly spread; “pull” horizontally (actually move hand from one side to the other) while drawing fingers together.
<b>“I”</b>	Make fist with thumb and pinkie out and pinkie pointing up, thumb pointing toward chest.
<b>“Remember”</b>	Fingers of dominant hand touching forehead (pointing up toward hair-line)—form hand into fist while bringing it down from forehead to meet the other hand, which is already formed into a fist in front of the chest, placing first thumb on top of the waiting thumb.
<b>“But”</b>	Make fists with both hands, with index fingers pointing out with one on top of the other; push index fingers out to the side, breaking contact.
<b>“Let”</b>	Hold hands out in front of body, palms facing, bring up slightly in a small arc.
<b>“Me”</b>	Make fist, with index finger pointing at chest.
<b>“And”</b>	Palm facing chest with fingers and thumb slightly spread; “pull” horizontally (actually move hand from one side to the other) while drawing fingers together.
<b>“I”</b>	Make fist with thumb and pinkie out and pinkie pointing up, thumb pointing toward chest.
<b>“Understand”</b>	Loose fist at forehead with index finger and thumb touching at tips, flip index finger up so it points to sky.

## "SHOW ME" ILLUSTRATION SHEET



# HOW ADULTS LEARN

## BSA 500 ANSWERS

### 1. Name three learning principles.

- ◆ Adults will be self-directing learners once they recognize a need.
- ◆ Adults come to training armed with related experience and knowledge.
- ◆ Adults respond to a variety of teaching methods.
- ◆ Adults learn by doing.
- ◆ Adults want immediate application of what they learned.

### 2. What are three phases of adult learning?

- ◆ Phase One: Experiencing
- ◆ Phase Two: Processing
- ◆ Phase Three: Generalizing
- ◆ Phase Four: Applying

### 3. What was the wisdom that Confucius provided concerning how adults learn?

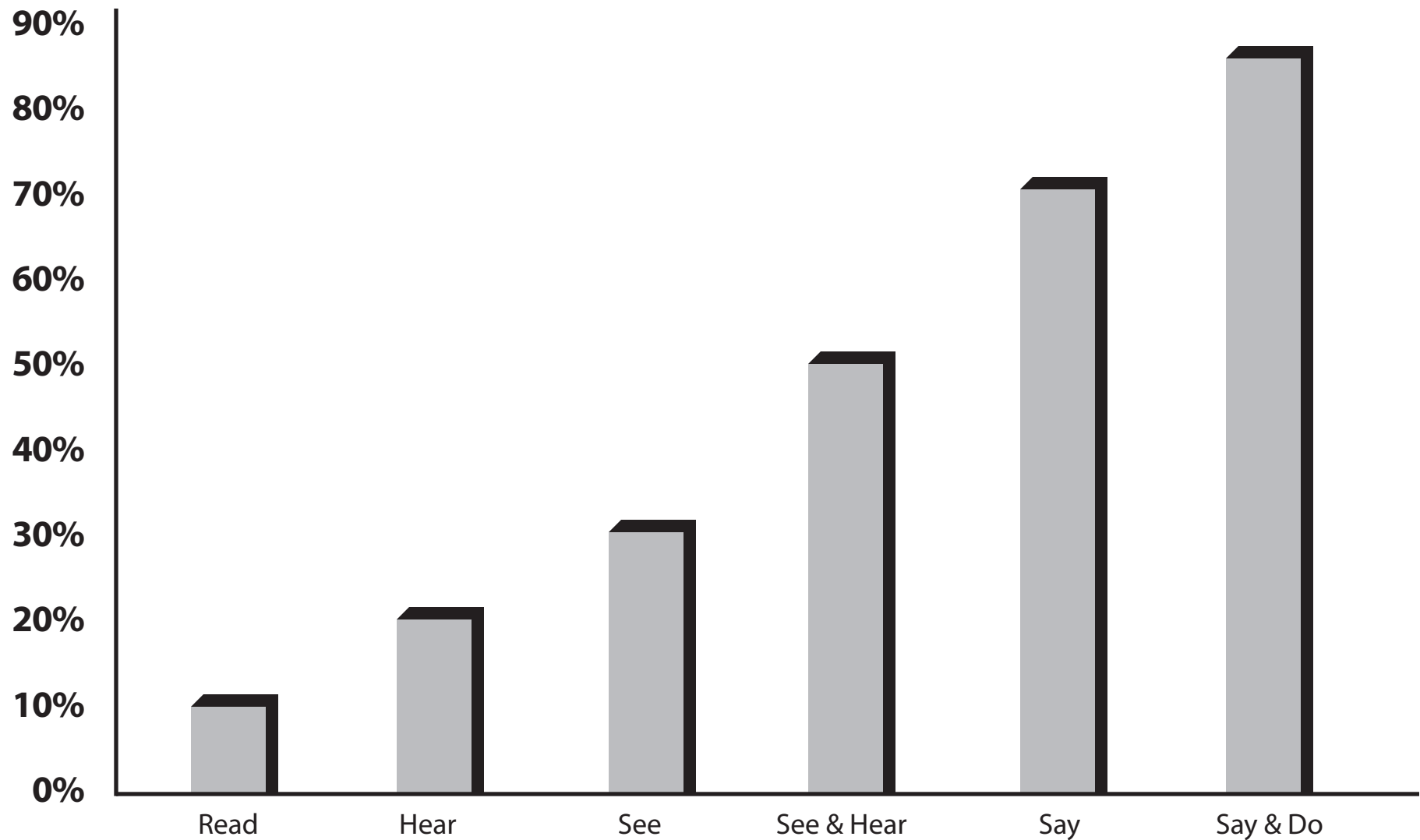
Tell me and I will forget. Show me and I will remember. But let me, and I will understand.

### 4. Name one learning style.

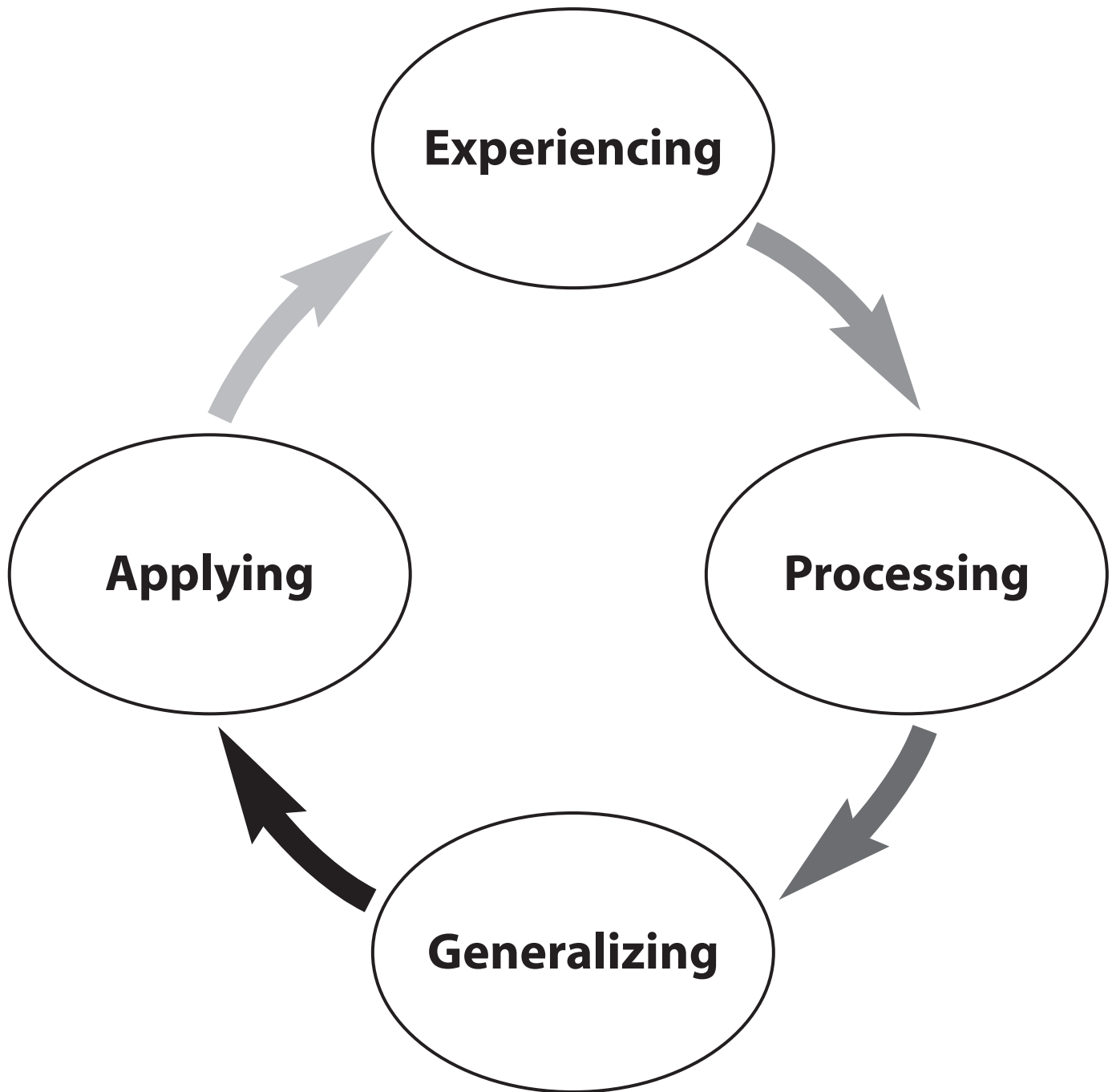
- ◆ Discussion of an experience
- ◆ Reflective thinking
- ◆ Experiencing/using



# LEARNING METHODS AND INFORMATION RETENTION



# ADULT LEARNING CYCLE



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# HOW ADULTS LEARN

## BSA 500 Questions

Name three learning principles.

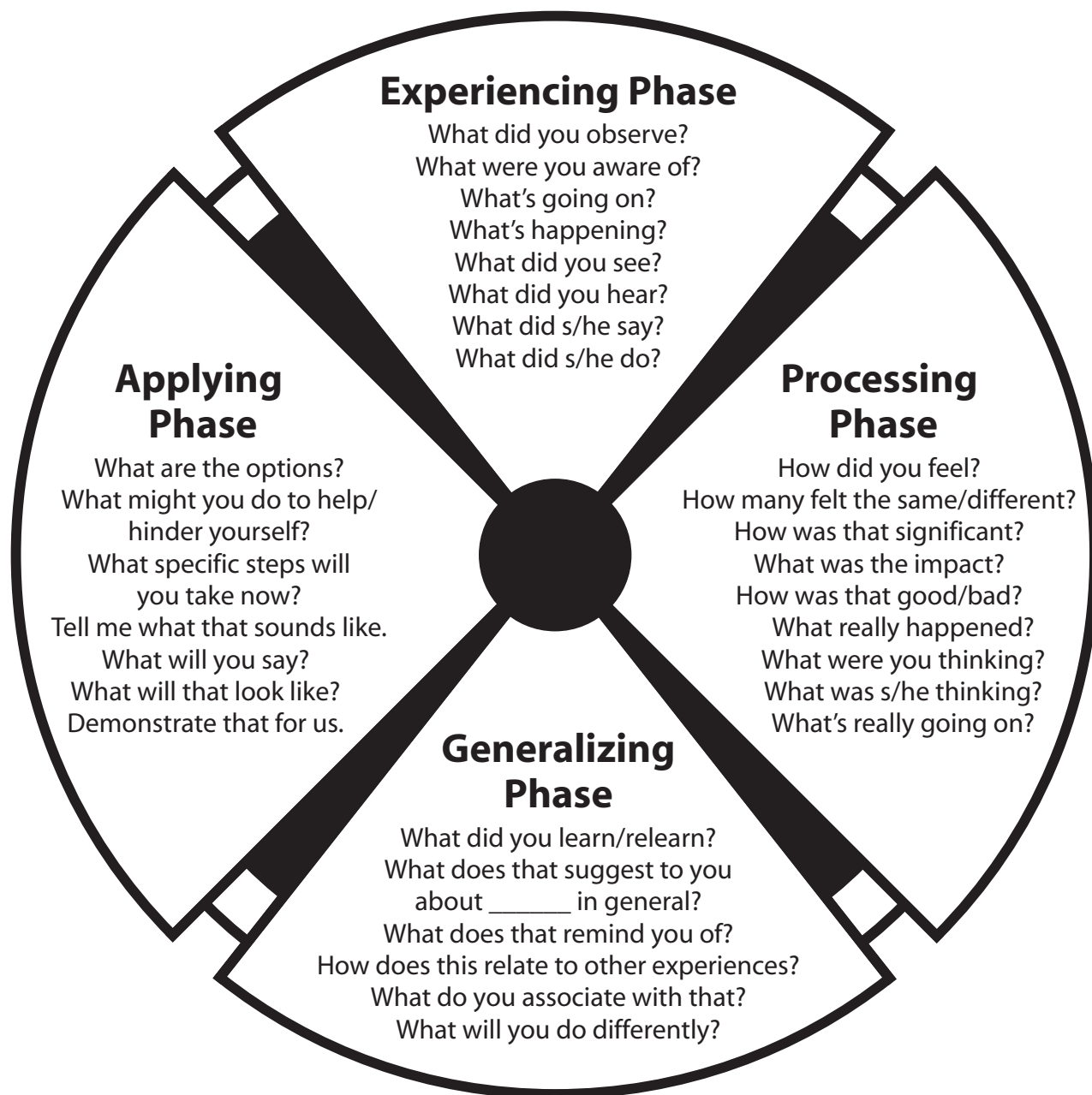
What are two phases of adult learning?

What was the wisdom that Confucius provided concerning how adults learn?

Name one learning style.

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# ADULT LEARNING MODEL



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