

## Learning Styles: He is so Different from me... Understanding Learning Styles can Help Team Members Learn how to Work Together...



### **Case Study:**

Jose has been a nurse for seven years; he is a no nonsense guy; when he is faced with accomplishing a task, he just does it, no discussion. Jose often works closely with Marie. Marie has been a nurse for less than a year, and she enjoys learning from experts on the team. Even though Jose and Marie work closely together, their different styles contribute to tension in their relationship.

Jose wants Marie to be more willing to take action without being so hesitant. Marie, on the other hand, wants to make sure that she has very precise information before she takes action. While Jose understands Marie's desire to be cautious as a new nurse, he is particularly concerned that she is adding extra work for the team, as others often step in to take action when she doesn't feel ready.

**Goal:** Jose and Marie need to communicate about their differences and how they can work together with less tension and frustration.

### **1. Learning styles:**

Understanding each other's learning styles is the first step to wards acceptance of differences:

Marie is a reflective learner: she feels most comfortable moving to action only when she feels certain that she knows exactly what she is doing and can justify it.

Jose is an active learner: he feels most comfortable taking action; he doesn't spend time justifying what he does; he just does it. He has always been that way, even when he was a new nurse; he sees his style as the only way to be effective on a busy floor.

### **2. Acknowledge differences in approach and resist the temptation to judge each other:**

Jose needs to accept that Marie's learning style is different than his, without always judging her. If Jose is concerned about picking up the slack of Marie's unfinished tasks, it would be best if he would initiate a discussion with her, in a respectful way, that encourages finding a solution to the problem.

Marie needs to be willing to have a conversation with Jose about differences in their styles; she needs to communicate her concern about the prospect of making mistakes, and how that influences her style of working. If Marie and Jose are able to see the conversation as an opportunity to discuss options for taking action that will both protect Marie's desire to avoid mistakes, but also provide her with concrete recommendations for being more efficient, the conversation can be very productive for both of them.

### **4. Agreements:**

The best outcome will produce an agreement that acknowledges their individual learning styles, while also creating opportunities to broaden their perspectives and specific action steps Marie is willing to take, based on their conversation.

### **5. Ongoing conversation:**

In order for their agreements to stay viable and afloat, it is best to make a commitment to keep communication open. With this approach, they are more likely to create an opportunity for mutual learning with a chance to build rapport and respect.

A healthy team environment acknowledges and accepts each team member's learning style without judging each other's style as either right or wrong. With this approach, team members can create a learning environment where mutual learning is not only accepted, but also embraced.

<http://www.businessballs.com/kolblearningstylesdiagram.pdf>

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