



Kolb (1984) says that ideally the above process represents a learning cycle or spiral where the learner 'touches all the bases', i.e., a cycle of experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting. Immediate or concrete experiences lead to observations and reflections. These reflections are then assimilated (absorbed and translated) into abstract concepts with implications for action, which the person can actively test and experiment with, which in turn enable the creation of new experiences.

Kolb's model therefore works on two levels - a **four-stage cycle**:

1. **Concrete Experience - (CE) – aka 'Do'**
2. **Reflective Observation - (RO) – aka 'Review'**
3. **Abstract Conceptualization - (AC) – aka 'Plan'**
4. **Active Experimentation - (AE) – aka 'Apply'**

...and a **four-type definition of learning styles**, (each representing the combination of two preferred styles), for which Kolb used the terms:

1. **Diverging (CE/RO)**
2. **Assimilating (AC/RO)**
3. **Converging (AC/AE)**
4. **Accommodating (CE/AE)**

See below for brief descriptions of the four Honey & Mumford (2000) Learning Styles Questionnaire styles, which incidentally are directly mutually corresponding and overlaid, as distinct from the Kolb model in which the learning styles are a product of combinations of the learning cycle stages.

1. **'Having an Experience'** (stage 1), and **Activists** (style 1): are in the 'here and now', gregarious, seek challenge and immediate experience, open-minded, and are bored with implementation.
2. **'Reviewing the Experience'** (stage 2) and **Reflectors** (style 2): tend to 'stand back', gather data, ponder and analyse, delay reaching conclusions, listen before speaking, and are thoughtful.

3. **'Concluding from the Experience'** (stage 3) and **Theorists** (style 3): think things through in logical steps, assimilate disparate facts into coherent theories, are rationally objective, and reject subjectivity and flippancy.
4. **'Planning the next steps'** (stage 4) and **Pragmatists** (style 4): seek and try out new ideas, practical, down-to-earth, enjoy problem solving and decision-making quickly, and are bored with long discussions.

There is arguably a strong similarity between the Honey and Mumford styles/stages and the corresponding Kolb learning styles:

- Activist = Accommodating
- Reflector = Diverging
- Theorist = Assimilating
- Pragmatist = Converging

Transactional Analysis

TA has developed as a theory of how we communicate; the transactions that take place between people. Berne (1961) developed the idea that, in an encounter between two people, one will stimulate communication and the other will respond to it. Berne also developed the Parent-Adult-Child model, which belies three ego states assumed during any transaction. Although we can change these states, like all personality variables, this can take time and is often difficult to do.

Parent

This is our ingrained voice of authority, absorbed conditioning, learning and attitudes from when we were young. We were conditioned by authoritarian adult figures: our real parents, teachers, and older people. Our Parent is made up of a huge number of hidden and overt recorded playbacks. Typically embodied by phrases and attitudes starting with 'how to', 'under no circumstances', 'always' and 'never forget', 'don't lie, cheat, steal', etc. Our Parent state is formed by external events and influences as we grow through early childhood.

It can be recognised by the following:

Physical clues such as angry or impatient body language and expressions, finger-pointing, and patronising gestures

Verbal clues such as “always”, “never”, “for once and for all”; judgmental words, critical words, patronising language, and posturing language.

N.B. Be mindful of cultural differences in body-language or emphases that appear 'Parental'.

Child

Our internal reaction and feelings to external events form the 'Child'. This is the seeing, hearing, feeling, and emotional body of data within each of us. When anger or despair dominates reason, the Child is in control.

We can recognise the Child state by:

Physical clues such as emotionally sad expressions, despair, temper tantrums, a whining voice, rolling eyes, shrugging shoulders, teasing, delight, laughter, speaking behind the hand, raising a hand to ask permission to speak, and squirming and giggling.

Verbal clues such as baby talk: “I wish, I dunno, I want, I'm gonna, I don't care, oh no, not again, things never go right for me, worst day of my life, bigger, biggest, best”. There are often many superlatives, and words used to impress.

Adult

Our 'Adult' is our ability to think and determine action for ourselves, based on received data. The adult in us begins to form at around ten months old, and is the means by which we keep our Parent and Child under control. If we are to change our Parent or Child we must do so through our adult.

The Adult is recognisable through the following:

Physical clues such as being attentive, interested, straight-forward, having a tilted head, using words and actions that are non-threatening and equally, feeling and behaving in a non-threatened way.

Verbal clues such as asking questions 'why, what, how, who, where and when, how much, in what way', using comparative expressions, and reasoned statements such as: 'true, false, probably, possibly, I think, I realise, I see, I believe, in my opinion'.

In other words:

- Parent is our 'Taught' concept of life
- Adult is our 'Thought' concept of life
- Child is our 'Felt' concept of life

A final note to remember:

To analyse a transaction you need to see and feel what is being said as well.

- Only 7% of meaning is in the words spoken
- 38% of meaning is tone
- 55% is in body language (Mehrabian, 1971)

There is no general rule as to the effectiveness of any ego state in any given situation. Some people get results by being dictatorial (Parent to Child), or by having temper tantrums, (Child to Parent), but for a balanced approach to life, Adult to Adult is generally recommended.