

TAPPING GARDNER'S MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES TO STIMULATE LEARNING

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Since the release of Howard Gardner's groundbreaking research on multiple intelligences in 1983, he and other researchers have conducted numerous studies on the ability of the human brain to learn in various ways. In his original study, Gardner proposed that people have seven intelligences. This is opposed to the standard Intelligence Quotient (IQ) test areas and verbal and performance sub-areas normally measured by more popular adult intelligence tests, such as the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale. He later revised his theory to add an eighth intelligence (naturalist) and continues to speculate about a possible ninth (existential).

Research continues in the area of multiple intelligences. Many other people now believe that there are actually additional intelligences that will be identified in the future. By focusing on Gardner's eight areas, facilitators and trainers can enhance the learning opportunity for participants by offering something that will capture and hold the interest of all learners. To do this workshop activities, content and materials should include elements that will address the following eight intelligences.

1. Musical/Rhythmic Intelligence. This intelligence allows someone to create or compose music and to understand, interpret and appreciate it. In your workshop, you can address this intelligence by engaging learners using music before the session, during breaks, and as background music during small group activities. You can also have them work individually or as teams to create music-based songs or skits that tie to your session topic or event and are based on well-known music.

2. Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence. A second intelligence gives learners the ability to solve problems or manipulate items using their own bodies or parts of the body. To tap this intelligence during learning events, use physical activity to engage brain neurons and help stimulate learning. You can do this through activities in which learners are actually creating a product, problem solving, being creative, or using learning skills like interpersonal communication and teambuilding, or simply moving to get blood flowing with oxygen to energize the brain. Using such activities you can get learners up and moving in order to increase the energy levels during a program.

Additionally, you can place toys or other props on tables and allow learners to manipulate them quietly throughout the session. This can help them address their kinesthetic need. A secondary advantage of such items is that when you see multiple people manipulating their toys or props, you have a non-verbal cue that it is time for a break or change of pace.

3. Logical-Mathematical Intelligence. This intelligence involves the ability to reason, calculate, think in a logical manner, and process information.

To address the need of people with this intelligence, use problem-solving and decision-making activities to engage learners individually or in groups. This allows them to build on previous knowledge or experience and taps into the core adult learning principles that you read about earlier. Many times, learners have the answers to their own workplace and life issues. They simply need structure and the chance to focus on those solutions. Building such activities into your workshop will provide them with such opportunities.

4. Linguistic Intelligence. The fourth intelligence relates to the ability to read, write and communicate effectively in a variety of ways.

In order to engage learners with this type of intelligence, provide occasions in which learners have to read, analyze, discuss and present their thoughts and ideas about issues posed in the session. You can also use tools such as word games, storytelling, rap songs, or journal writing. Use these types of techniques throughout your learning event. Such activities offer opportunities for learners to network and share ideas while practicing interpersonal communication skills like listening, speaking, and reading non-verbal cues.

5. Visual/Spatial Intelligence. The ability to think in pictures and to visualize a conclusion or result is Gardner's fifth intelligence.

There are many ways to tap into this intelligence. You can build in visualization activities in which you play soft background music while learners close their eyes and visualize situations that you describe. The mental images that you encourage should tie directly to your learning objectives and can be followed by a summation in which you ask open-ended questions, such as, who, what, when, how, and why. For example, following a period in which participants visualize themselves being successful in a specific situation, you might ask something like:

- "What knowledge or skills made you successful in your vision?"
- "In what ways did performing in that manner aid your success?"
- "What additional knowledge or skills could have improved the situation you envisioned?"

Such questions help learners focus in on key knowledge and skills that they can use in the future when they face similar situations to the one described in real life.

You can also address this intelligence by using jigsaw puzzles or images related to your session topic to assist learners in recognizing and understanding key concepts. For example, you might make a jigsaw puzzle from a photo of a piece of equipment used on the job and allow people to work together within a specified time period to assemble it, then discuss its functions. You could also create a flip chart page with session learning objectives and cut it into jigsaw pieces that you distribute as learners enter the room. Let participants work in small teams to assemble them as a way to introduce key session elements.

6. Interpersonal Intelligence. This intelligence is crucial for understanding others, their emotions, traits, and abilities, and how best to interact with people.

Teambuilding activities that allow learners to share information, solve problems, and make decisions all provide opportunity for learners to work together and exchange ideas and information. Such activities strengthen potential bonds among learners, help expand their resource network, and allow them to practice their communication skills. All of these can be beneficial to aid learners in improving relationships and becoming more proficient in working with others.

You can also use friendly competition such as timed events in which learners solve puzzles, answer questions, or accomplish a task in small groups. Give small session-related prizes to volunteers and winners in such events in order to add fun and address some of the motivational needs of learners.

7. Intrapersonal Intelligence. The seventh intelligence provides learners the ability to form accurate self-perceptions and use the knowledge to function effectively throughout life. Many people have not had the opportunity think about their own strengths and areas for improvement related to their behavior, beliefs, skills, and other personal aspects that impact the way in which others perceive them.

Build in self-assessment activities that include the use of professional behavioral style instruments such as, the Personal Profile System (PPS) or Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). These tools help learners identify key personality or behavioral styles. Through them, you can provide a chance for participants to identify personal factors, improve self-esteem, recognize how their characteristics affect relationships and their level of success, and get to know others better. The more learners know and understand themselves, the more likely it is that they will be able to understand others.

Another strategy that can help with this intelligence is to allow learners to journal thoughts or ideas and describe how they feel about certain issues or events.

8. Naturalistic Intelligence. Gardner's last intelligence involves the ability to observe, understand, and classify patterns in nature and to become more aware of one's natural environment. People with this intelligence interact well with nature, in environments in which they grow and nurture things and animals. They learn best through gathering and analyzing items prominent in nature. Being outside and engaging in kinesthetic activities are motivators for such learners.

You can tap this intelligence of your learners by providing opportunities in which explore their natural environment. For example, you might hold a scavenger hunt for clues to a session-related situation or challenge that you present. Before the workshop begins, hide the clues in different areas of the room and outside in a garden atrium or patio area. Allow a timed period in which learners search for them individually or as a team. To do this, hide strips of flip chart paper with the session learning objectives on them

and allow learners to find them. Once learners find all the paper strips, ask finders to post them on a flip chart and read them aloud to others while you explain how each objective will be addressed in the session. You can reward people who find the objectives. Additionally, have everyone give a round of applause for the group's effort in order to reward all learners. This avoids the perception that there will be losers in the workshop.

Another way to include everyone and provide rewards to them is to have those finding the strips, reward other finders, and then have them give their objectives to others who did not find one. These people come to the board to post and read the objective. You can then reward those people also. Give anyone not involved to that point small prizes so that there are not losers.

You can also address this intelligence by placing plants in the room and providing plenty of natural light for the environment. You could also allow small groups of learners to assemble outside on a nice day to brainstorm a topic or issue.

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