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DEVELOP IN DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS

# EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING & FACILITATION BEST PRACTICES

***BY SAMANTHA PENNELLS-INGLE***

SOUTH AFRICAN ADVENTURE INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION

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# Experiential Learning Facilitator & ARA Trainer | Life & Neuro Coach | Leadership Development Specialist

With over 15 years of dynamic experience, I am a moderator, assessor, facilitator and trainer, Life & Neuro coach and leadership development specialist who empowers youth, individuals, professionals and fellow facilitators to explore, dream, connect and lead with intention.

In 2018, I founded Divergent Consulting to build a movement around experiential, adventure-based learning - designing powerful spaces for reflection, transformation and growth. My work spans from grassroots initiatives to global impact, grounded in authenticity, human connection and inclusive leadership.

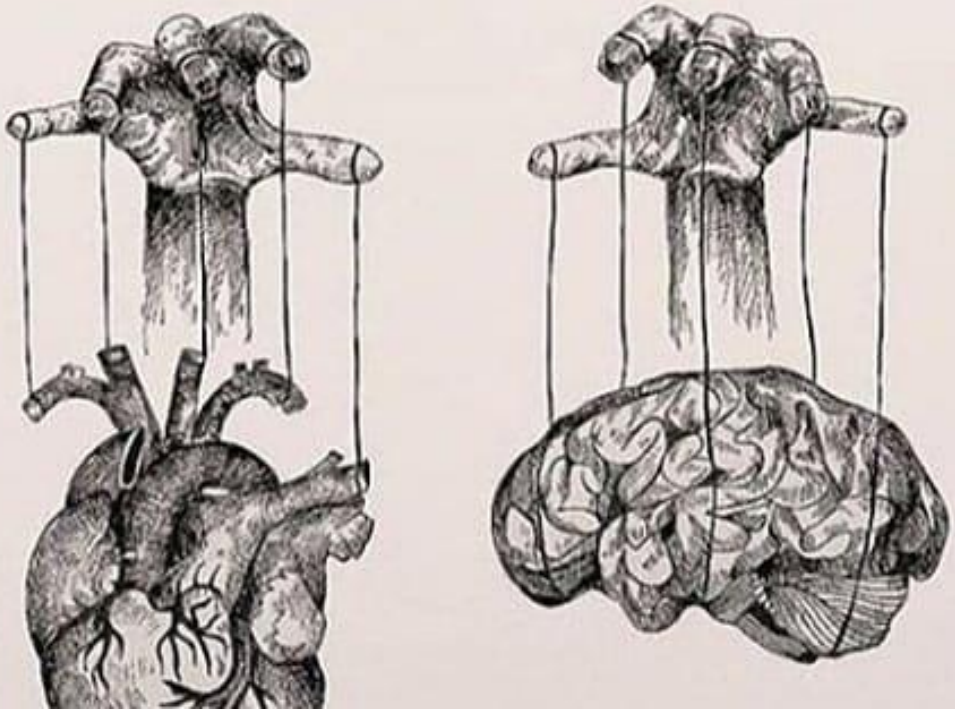
As a certified NLC Life & Neuro Coach, I bring a holistic, values-based approach to personal and professional development, helping individuals align with their most authentic selves. Through storytelling, intentional facilitation and hands-on tools like LEGO® Serious Play, I strive to create memorable, intentional learning experiences that spark long-term change.

My background includes extensive facilitation across Southern Africa and internationally working with schools, NGOs, corporates, professional sports team and community-based organisations

As a South African National sportswoman and one of the few women to represent the country internationally in Clay Target Shooting, I continue to advocate for equity and opportunity - on and off the field.

Human behavior flows from three main sources: desire, emotion, and knowledge.

— Plato



# This is not just a presentation…

# IT'S AN EXPERIENCE!!

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# WHAT IS EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING?

Experiential learning is the process of learning through experience, then reflecting on it to gain insights and apply those lessons to real life.

It's active, emotional and deeply personal. People don't just hear or read something - they live it, feel it and make meaning from it.

**Think:**

**"I do it → I reflect on it → I learn from it → I apply it."**

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# THIS IS BASED ON DAVID KOLB'S EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING CYCLE

**1. Concrete Experience** – the individual encounters a concrete experience. This might be a new experience or situation, or a reinterpretation of existing experience in the light of new concepts.

**2. Reflective Observation** – the individual reflects on the new experience in the light of their existing knowledge. Of particular importance are any inconsistencies between experience and understanding.

**3. Abstract Conceptualization** – reflection gives rise to a new idea, or a modification of an existing abstract concept (the person has learned from their experience).

**4. Active Experimentation** – the newly created or modified concepts give rise to experimentation. The individual applies their idea(s) to the world around them.

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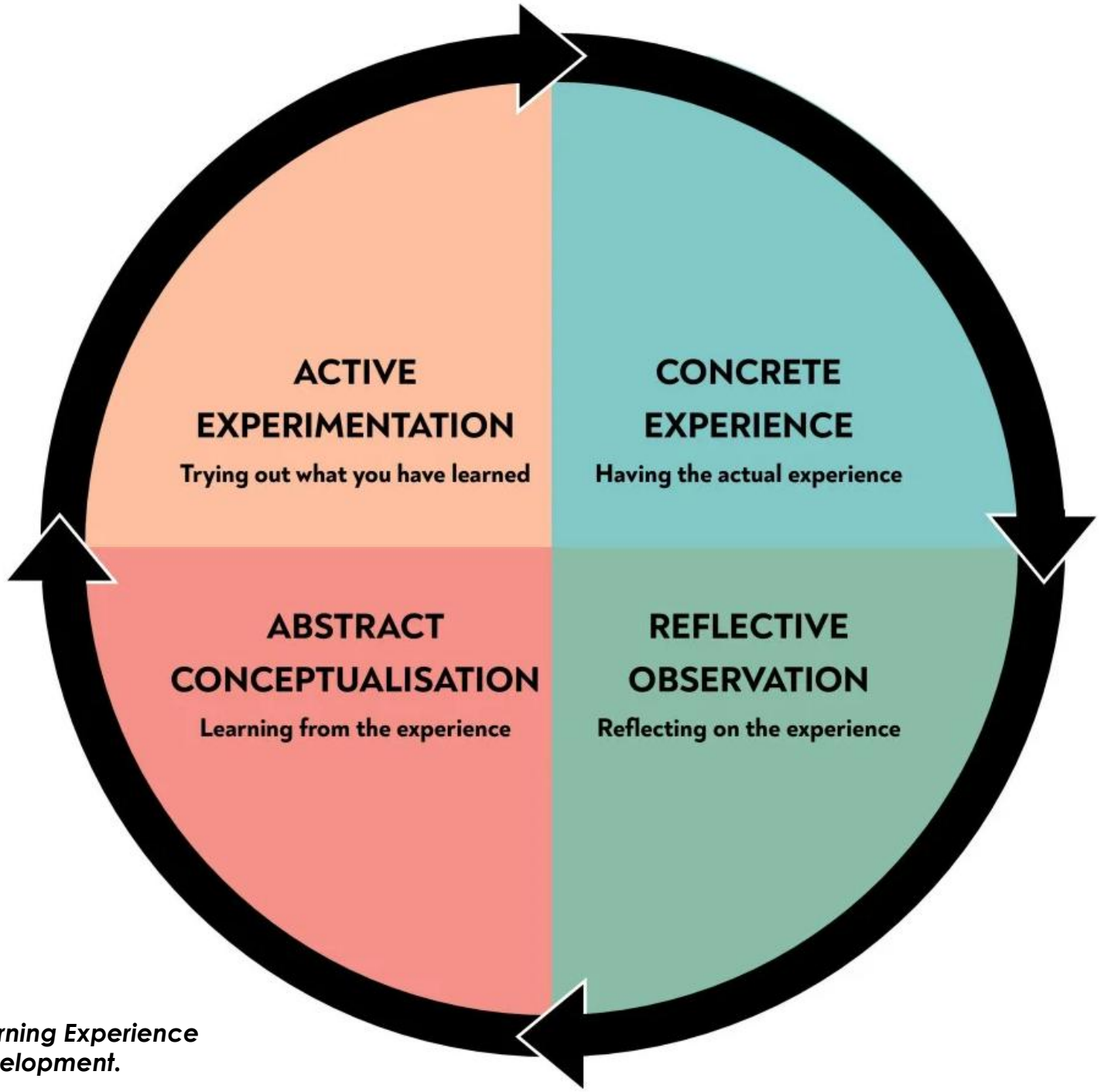


*Kolb, D. A. (1984). Experiential Learning Experience as the Source of Learning and Development.*

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# WHAT ARE FACILITATION BEST PRACTICES?

Facilitation is the *art of guiding a group through a process* without controlling the outcome. A good, (NO, GREAT) facilitator helps others think, feel and act more meaningfully… especially in EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING.

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| PRINCIPLE | WHAT IT MEANS |
| --- | --- |
| **Be intentional** | Every activity, question, and pause has a purpose. Don't just "fill time" - design for ***meaning***. |
| **Know yourself** | You must understand ***your values, triggers and presence*** before guiding others. |
| **Create psychological safety** | People learn best when they feel safe to take risks, speak up and be ***vulnerable***. |
| **Let go of control** | The best learning happens when participants ***own the process*** - not when you "teach." |
| **Ask powerful questions** | Great facilitators don't give answers - they ***ask*** the right questions to ***spark insight.*** |
| **Debrief with care** | Learning happens in the ***reflection***. Use structured tools to guide it. ***Use their words – with emotion!*** |
| **Be authentic and present** | Your presence matters more than your script. People respond to ***realness***. |

# SO…..

## WHAT DOES

## “EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING & FACILITATION BEST PRACTICES”

## MEAN TOGETHER?

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# IT MEANS DESIGNING AND GUIDING LEARNING EXPERIENCES THAT:

- Are hands-on, emotional and reflective
- Are grounded in real-world experiences
- Are led by facilitators who create brave spaces
- Encourage growth, authenticity and insight
- Prioritize process over performance

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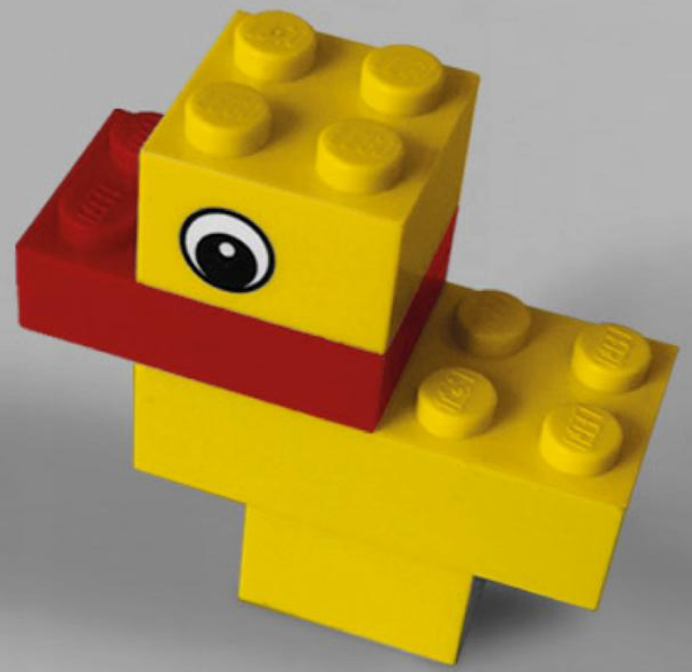
# USE YOUR HANDS TO THINK DIFFERENTLY

## LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY®



# ACTIVITY 1

## YOU HAVE 3 MINUTES TO BUILD A TOWER

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# MY PERSONAL IDENTITY AS A FACILITATOR

**Instructions: Build a LEGO® model that reflects who you are today - your story, values, passions, skills and how you contribute to others in the industry.**

*Once you've built your model, use or reflect on it using these prompts:*

1. **What part of your model reflects your core values?**
   (What really matters to you - deep down)

2. **If your model had a name or title, what would it be?**
   (Imagine it's a book or movie about you)

3. **Which piece shows something personal about you?**
   (What don't people often see, but is important to who you are)

4. **What do the colors in your model say about your personality or mood?**
   (Think: bold, calm, energetic, balanced)

5. **Which direction is your model facing—and why?**

6. **Which part shows your biggest strengths or skills?**
   (What do you bring to your team, work, job)

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GroupWork

LEGO®
SERIOUS PLAY®


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