How we teach is shaped by how we learn!

(Kinsella, cited in Théberge et al., 2000)

Learning style refers to a certain characteristic (personal and distinct) way in which an individual acts and behaves in a learning context (Chevrier et al., 2000).

Just as we have a preference for learning in a specific way, we also have a particular style when we teach.

Knowing your learning style enables you to:

- better understand how you learn and have a tendency to teach;
- better understand how each student learns;
- incorporate supervision activities related to different learning styles.

As a clinical supervisor, it is useful to know your student’s learning style and to take that into consideration in the supervision process. In this way, you will help to facilitate dialogue and the student's learning.

Learning styles provide indications about:

- the way that the learner acquires and stores information;
- the way that a learner approaches a task;
- the learner's preferences toward different ways of studying;
- the teaching methods that the learner prefers.

The supervisor needs to be aware of these individual differences in the student and their impact on the student’s learning. Knowing this information, the supervisor can individualize his teaching by drawing on strategies adapted to the student’s style. This would give the student an opportunity to learn in his preferred style, which avoids placing him in a situation where he must constantly adapt (Théberge et al., 2000).

The supervisor can also consciously use strategies that force the student to adopt another style. When this is done, the student may develop new abilities but he may also encounter additional challenges in his clinical experience.
To find your learning style:

The LSQ (Learning Styles Questionnaire) by Honey and Mumford (1992) is an instrument that measures learning styles (LSQ Fa, abridged French version (Chevrier, J., Fortin, G., Leblanc, R. and Théberge, M.)). Permission is required from the author to use this tool.

A description of the different learning styles is available in Learning style’s importance in supervision] (Tremblay & Paradis, 2001).

The following sites provide additional useful information on learning, including the Kolb cycle, how to encourage the student to adopt a different learning style, etc.: www.mcgill.ca/hssaccess/two/supervision, www.practiceeducation.ca and www.preceptor.ca.