

ASSESSMENT 1: KOLB'S THEORY

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Ecology of Adventure

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Introduction

Some of life's best experiences require a bit of adventure. However, adventure can mean something different for everyone. Webster's Dictionary defines adventure as an endeavor that contains dangers and possible risks (Merriam-Webster.com, 2019). In my opinion, adventure must have some degree of getting you outside your comfort zone. If the adventure was truly meaningful it would have some transformational experience. Life is about seeking adventure; we have an experience that leads us to seek out more. This is part of the basis of Kolb's Theory; the idea that we have experiences we reflect upon, and then we go out and make new experiences based on our previous ones; Kolb defined this as experiential learning. Experiential learning has four main components that can help us engage with our own experiences in a more meaningful way. The four components of experiential learning include concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Utilizing Kolb's Theory of experiential learning, I can better learn how to understand and reflect on past experiences, and then apply this knowledge to better prepare for future endeavors.

Kolb's Model

In 1984 Kolb took ideas from Dewey, Lewin, and Piaget's work on experiential learning and created the experiential learning theory, now commonly referred to as Kolb's theory. Kolb's theory turned away from the traditional methods of learning, turning a didactic approach into a more holistic approach to learning. Kolb's theory is based on the idea that learning best occurs when individuals set out to better understand a specific experience instead of just simply obtaining information about the situation. From his theory, Kolb created the experiential learning cycle. This cycle has four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract

conceptualization, and active experimentation. Concrete experience refers to the part of the cycle where individuals actively participate in an experience. This stage is the starting point of the cycle where individuals describe what exactly happened during their experience. This experience then leads them to reflect on the specifics of the situation. Once individuals begin to reflect on the experience they have entered the reflective observation stage of the cycle. During this stage, participants begin to critically examine why things happened the way they did. Reflective observation encourages learners to take a step back from the experience and consider things from alternative perspectives. This can better help to reflect on what worked and what did not work during the experience. During the abstract conceptualization stage, individuals begin to think of new methods that can help to solve the potential problems they faced during their experience. This is the stage where participants are encouraged to use research to help support their ideas. Individuals use this stage to plan what they may do differently next time. This leads to the last stage of the cycle, active experimentation. During this stage, individuals will apply their new methods to the experience. This will then allow individuals to see whether or not their new strategies worked. This cycle is continuous; once active experimentation has begun the experience becomes concrete allowing the cycle to start again. Whenever individuals are truly active in their learning, Kolb's experiential learning cycle will constantly be in effect (Kolb, 2014).

Concrete Experience

I have been horseback riding for as long as I can remember. I think one of the biggest mistakes people make when horseback riding is forgetting that horses can be unpredictable animals. Unless you have a good bond with your horse the ride can be quite dangerous. Especially if you do not know how to properly ride. Many things can spook a horse while riding;

other animals, bushes, large sticks, and various sounds (Asa et al., 2019). The terrain of the trail can also pose a great risk while horseback riding because while it is not very often that I fall it has happened before. One experience that sticks out the most to me was, when I was 13, I fell off the back of the horse I was riding and rolled down the side of a hill. I remember riding bareback on my horse while my grandma was in the saddle in front of me. We were on our way back to the stables after a long ride, to do this we had to go up a steep hill. I remember hearing my grandma saying to hold on tight and so I tried my hardest to hold on. However, the farther we got up the hill the more I felt my hands slipping. Then my body just started slowly slipping off the back of my horse. I remember at one point holding onto my horse's tail before I lost my grip altogether and fell back down the steep hill. Once I reached the bottom of the hill the entire right side of my torso was covered in scraps and burns from my shirt riding up as I fell. I count myself very lucky however because the fall could have been much worse. I could have hit one of the large rocks at the bottom of the hill, I could have broken a bone, or gotten a head injury because I was not wearing a helmet. Overall, for the lack of equipment I had on me, I came away from this fall pretty unscathed.

Reflective Observation

The reason my grandma and I decided to go up the hill was because it was the quickest way back to the stables. After a long day of riding, we were both ready to get back. I feel there was not much that worked that day. Realistically I should not have been riding bareback since that is what led to me falling. The only thing that did work that day was that I did not get more hurt than I already did. Given the style of riding and lack of equipment that day my grandma and I should have taken a longer trip to get back to the stables more safely. However, that was not the case so this situation became a teaching moment for both of us.

Abstract Conceptualization

Horseback riding can be a very dangerous activity especially if you are not well-prepared or well-versed in the sport. Asa et al. explain the different possible injuries that send horseback riders to the emergency room (Asa et al., 2019). The article states that not wearing the appropriate safety equipment, helmets, vests, and boots, is the most common cause of horseback riding-related injuries (Asa et al., 2019). Seeing as I was not wearing a helmet or vest on the day of my fall, I posed a great risk to myself. Although I did not suffer a head injury the possible repercussions could have been much worse. If I had been wearing a vest there is a greater chance that my shirt would not have ridden up during the fall and I would not have suffered from scraps and burns. Asa et al. also explains the importance of knowing the terrain while riding in order to prevent injury (Asa et al., 2019). Had I truly thought through my plan of going up the hill I would have seen the possible signs for potential injury because of the rocks on the ground and suggested we take an alternative route to the stables. I feel my biggest mistake and what I could have done differently on that ride was to make sure I was actually riding in a saddle. Riders use saddles as an asset to help prevent the chance of injury while riding, but also as a way to relay to the horse the action the rider wants the horse to take (Thompson, McGreevy and McManus, 2015). Had I been in a saddle the likelihood of me falling off the back of my horse could have been greatly decreased. Overall there are many steps I could have taken to make the ride much safer for myself.

Active Experimentation

This ride became a turning point for both my grandma and I. We realized our typical ways of riding were not working anymore and it was time for change. From that day forward anytime we would go on rides I wore a helmet. My grandma also bought a special saddle that

can go on the back of a horse that attaches to the main saddle to help prevent me from falling off. We also realized that I was at an age where I could ride on my own. Due to this, I began training on my own personal horse, from then on when my grandma and I rode we would each be on our separate horse. As horseback riding becomes more popular as a way of adventure it is important to remember the steps that can be taken to enjoy the sport safely (Gilbert and Gillett, 2014).

Conclusion

I have always loved horseback riding. To me, horseback riding has been one of the best adventures I have taken in life. As with all adventures, there are bumps and trials along the way. However, if we truly wish to continue we must strive to work through the challenges. I have used experiential learning in some form or another many times throughout my years of riding. Learning new skills is what made the activity more fun and exciting. Despite the amount of times I fell I never gave up. I always got back on the horse with a smile on my face ready for the next adventure that awaited me.

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