

ERAGA - One Way to Process Learning¹

Training often includes *experiential learning*. Many people think that simply having a new experience automatically generates new learning. This may sometimes be true. However, the chances of processing learning, embedding it in the learner's consciousness and generating new ideas for next time they face a similar situation are greatly enhanced by a fuller process. **Long term benefits** are best achieved by going through a more comprehensive process, and consciously **learning** from the experience. The *ERAGA* model suggests one way of doing this.

The following is loosely based on a range of similar cyclic concepts²:

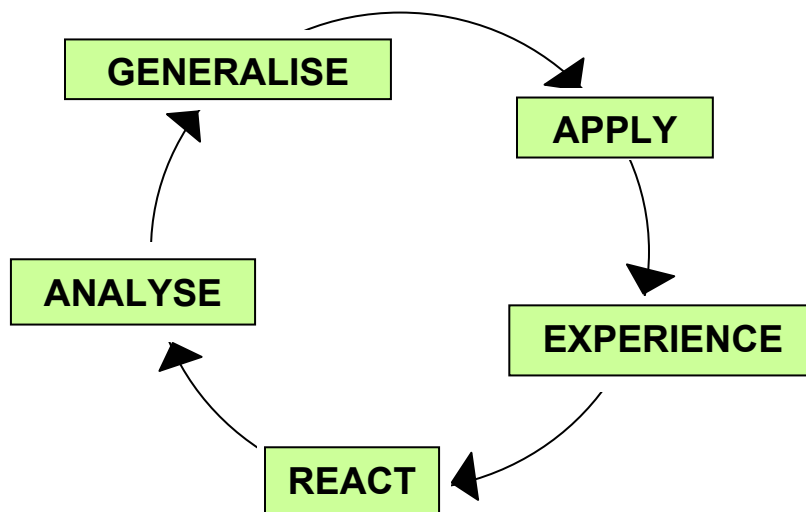


Diagram 1: The ERAGA Learning Cycle

Detailed Explanation of ERAGA

EXPERIENCE - The **process** used to help participants remember past experience relevant to the area of learning or have a new experience constructed as part of the training setting.

Example: Imagine a training program focused on responding to clients in crisis situations. The trainer might either:

- Ask participants to think of a time in their life when they were in crisis. They might walk participants through a *guided visualisation*, where they are asked to remember what happened, how they felt, what other people did in response, etc., **or**,
- Create an imaginary crisis scenario, and ask participants to role play the situation.

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² See *Further Reading* at end of article.

REACT

- A chance to reflect on what happened during the experience, and how participants felt/feel about it. It is a time during which participants can share reactions and general thinking related to the experience/issue. This is the *offloading* stage, concerned with participant **emotional responses**. This step of the process generates the data for learning, based on the experience.

Example: Participants talk about the emotions they felt in their personal crisis situation, or during the role play. For example:

- Feeling out of control, and wanting someone to be their *sanity* for them, **or**,
- Being annoyed when the helper kept trying to suggest solutions to the situation, when all they wanted to do is talk ... and talk ... and talk, **or**,
- Wanting the helper to help them think about things they could do in response to the situation they're facing.

ANALYSE

- Focuses on making sense of the *head* and *heart* data derived from the experience. This stage provides a chance for participants to **think critically** about their reactions. During this stage, the group is concerned with asking *Why?* questions. This is the beginning of interpreting the significance of the experience, and beginning to identify the learning which could emerge as a result.

Example: Participants might discuss:

- *I wonder why someone wanted someone to be their sanity?* ... leading to a discussion on the potentially different needs of someone who is rational, compared with someone who is irrational.
- *I wonder why someone was annoyed with ideas on solutions?* ... leading to a discussion on the importance of a sense of control, for clients in a crisis situation where they feel that so much is outside their control.
- *I wonder why someone wanted to talk through possible solutions?* ... leading to a discussion on the value of seeing crisis as a great opportunity to move forward and make changes in life ... simply an intensive version of a normal helping process, if the person is in a rational state.

GENERALISE

- Looks at the bigger picture. What are the **principles** that emerge from the experience/analysis? Can you move findings related to this particular situation from the practical to the abstract? Here, participants are encouraged to develop concrete hypotheses which could be tested in a real situation.

Example: Some hypotheses developed are:

- **Principle 1:** It is important for a helper to be a *safety net* of rationality for someone, during the time that they are irrational, or *out of control*.
- **Principle 2:** Effective crisis intervention focuses on *working from where the person is at*. If they are *rational*, this might mean simply listening for as long as they want to talk, or focusing on problem solving if that is their priority.

APPLY

- Is about moving back to practice. If this is the principle operating here, then how might it apply in another/similar situation? What strategies would be most effective in a similar situation? When might participants be able to apply what was

learned? What sort of constraints might apply when transferring this learning? Essentially, this stage focuses on planning how the learning might be implemented in a new situation.

Examples:

1. Some participants might decide to develop an organisational policy which distinguishes the strategies to be used during critical incidents and crisis, according to the level of rationality of the person, **or**,
2. Some participants might decide to go back and challenge the existing *high intervention* policies of their organisations.

EXPERIENCE 2

- The cycle begins again when participants actually apply their learning/theory - thus creating a new experience.

Example: Once these strategies are implemented, a new 'experience' happens. This is the opportunity to test, in practice, whether use of the ERAGA model has been effective, and whether the learning has been adequately processed and suitably applied. If not, the cycle can begin again ... using the new experience as the starting point.

Further Reading

Quixley, Suzi (1995) **Designing Experiential Programs**, Revised Edition, ESSQ, Adelaide. (This provides more details on how to facilitate ERAGA processes.)

Beverly Gaw (1979) *Processing Questions: An Aid to Completing the Learning Cycle*, in Pfeiffer, J. & Jones, J **1979 Annual Handbook for Group Facilitators**, University Associates, La Lolla, California.