

There is much confusion today over the concept of learning styles. I believe that the whole concept of learning styles is an attempt to fit people into boxes in order to better understand and control them.

In reality, people cannot fit into standard boxes because God made each and every person a unique individual. Ultimately these attempts to control people must break down because God and His designs are limitless. I do feel that it is important to look at the subject because so many people are talking about it and producing materials to help you identify your teaching style and your child's learning style. I am not saying that these materials are useless. In fact, they may help you look at yourself and your child from new perspectives and give valuable hints for controlling and expanding the learning environment. I only suggest that you do not expect a magic answer that will make everything run smoothly. See Appendix A for additional resources.

I have isolated five ways of thinking about learning styles which are currently popular and seven sets of terminology for one of them! There may be some I am not aware of. Let's try to sort them out!

Personality Types

This first way of looking at learning style began before Christ! Perhaps the fact that it is such an old concept explains in part why so many ways to describe it have developed.

This way of thinking originated with Hippocrates, and was related to a theory about fluids in the blood which were supposed to affect behavior and personalities. I first heard of it through Tim LaHaye in the seventies. It is presently enjoying a resurgence of popularity. At one time, it was meant to be helpful in describing and understanding personality differences; now the emphasis seems to be on how it affects teaching and learning.

Several years ago, I took a Myers-Briggs Personality Inventory. Later, I was certified through The Institute for Motivational Living, with its DISC Profile. Then Cathy Duffy's excellent

Learning in Spite of Labels

treatment in her elementary Curriculum Manual caught my eye and attention. Next came *Learning Styles and Tools*, an excellent way to identify styles and organize your learning setting. I met 4 Mat through Claudia Jones' *More Parents are Teachers Too*, which briefly describes them again with new terminology. *The Family Zoo* came to my attention through Gary Smalley's video course. Each of these has a slightly different way of looking at these four types and some include combinations of the four as well.

The common thread of all of these is that there are four personality types (learning styles). They hold that by identifying an individual's learning style, you can adjust the environment to enhance learning.

The four types have been described by different people as:

Hippocrates:

Sanguine, Phlegmatic, Choleric, and Melancholy

Institute for Motivational Living:

Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, and Compliance (DISC)

Senecal (Alta Vista College):

Feeler, Thinker, Sensor, and Intuitive

Duffy:

Wiggly Willie, Competent Carl, Sociable Sue, and Perfect Paula

Golay:

Actual Spontaneous, Actual Routine, Conceptual Specific, and Conceptual Global

McCarthy (4 Mat System):

Common Sense, Dynamic, Imaginative, Analytic

Smalley (Family Zoo):

Lion, Golden Retriever, Otter, Beaver

Some of these describe the four basic styles and some describe a mixture of two types. That makes it especially difficult to converse between two different sets of terminologies.