



Turning Our Intercultural Stories into Critical Incidents

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Our Agenda for this Session

- Warm-up Activity: Let's hear those stories
- What is a Critical Incident?
- Why Use CIs? The Adult Learning Cycle
- Activity: Looking at the Tried and True
- Tips from the Experts on Writing CIs
- Put Your Stories to Work
- De-brief and (optional) Collection of CIs



Adult Experiential Learning Cycle

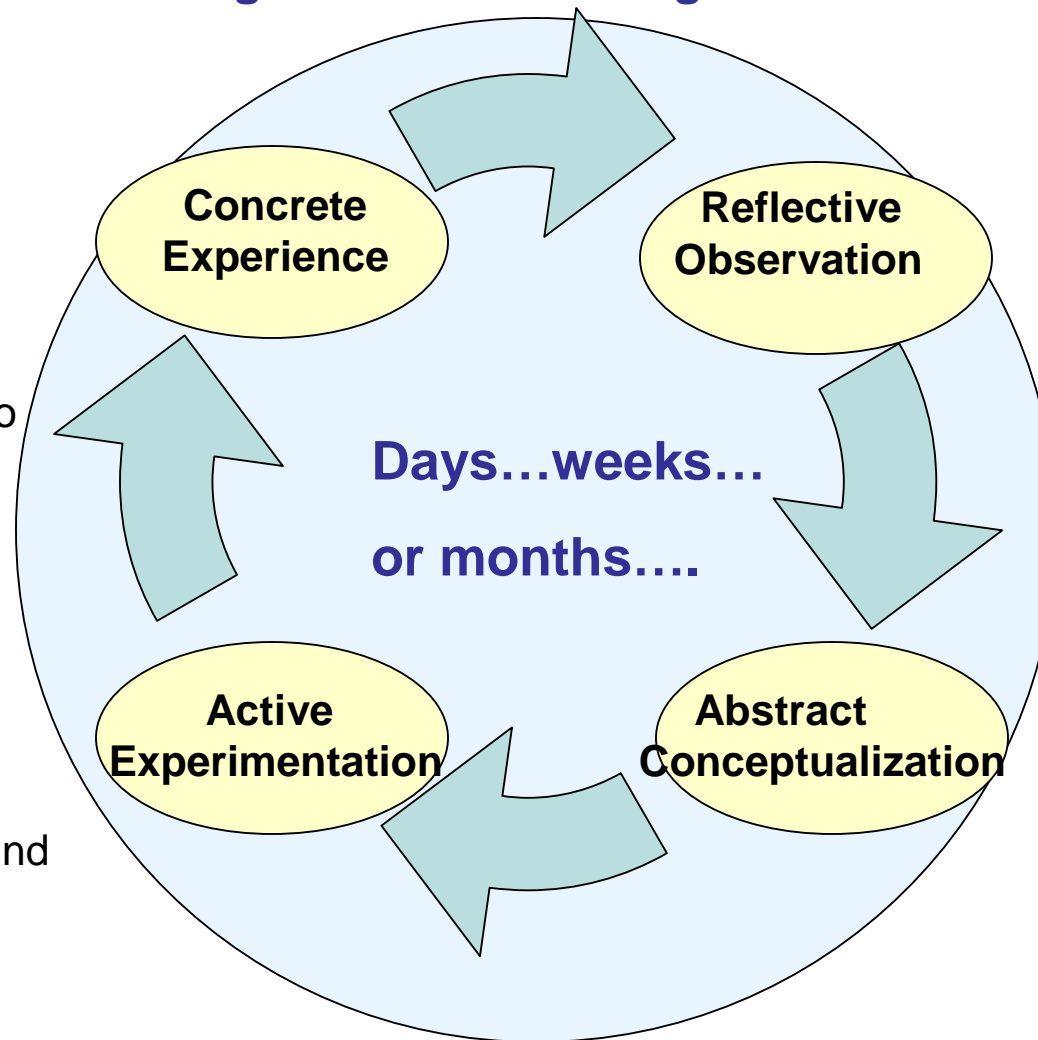
There are four stages of adult learning that follow one another:

Concrete Experience:

Putting current knowledge and experience into practice. (As we do every day)

Active Experimentation:

Experiment with conceptual understanding to find new solutions or modify next experience.



Reflective Observation:

Analyzing the outcome when it is either positive or not as expected or desired

Abstract Conceptualization:

Examine and apply knowledge or theories that may help define or explain the experience.

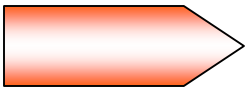
What a Critical Incident Isn't

- **Case Study:** “An account of a situation that includes enough details to assess the problem involved and determine possible solutions.” They provide an opportunity for “deep, systematic investigation.” (Fowler and Blohm 2004)

- Multi-faceted
- In-depth
- Detailed
- Descriptive



- **Role Play:** A training activity in which two (or more) participants take on characteristics of people other than themselves in order to attain a clearly defined objective. (McCaffery 1995)
 - Unscripted
 - Spontaneous or “rehearsed”

- Short stories that involve interaction of people from different cultures that make a point rather than providing deeper, systematic investigation of specific context. (Gudykunst 1996)
 - Dialogues
 - Short descriptions
-  Highlight specific, definable dimensions of culture

A New Procedure

Ms. Cooper: The new tracking procedure hasn't worked, has it?

Mr. Wong: There were some small problems.

Ms. Cooper: Who's idea was it anyway?

Mr. Wong: We need to learn from this lesson.

Ms. Cooper: Yes. It came from Mr. Tung's division, didn't it?

Mr. Wong: Many people worked on the proposal.

(Craig Storti, Cross-Cultural Dialogues, 1994)



Purpose of the Critical Incidents

- Increase participants' awareness of their own culturally determined values and accompanying behaviors and those of other cultures
- Compare and analyze interpretations and perceptions that form from behaving "naturally" in a new environment
- Begin to generate ideas for alternative behaviors and predict possible responses
- Provide the basis for role plays or brainstorming sessions that will help build skills for intercultural adaptation

(Adapted from Wight, The Intercultural Sourcebook (Fowler and Mumford) Vol. I 1995)



The Best Critical Incidents....

....have four key ingredients:

The conversation or scenario must sound natural

The difference or misunderstanding must not be immediately obvious

The difference must be based on cultural differences that can be generalized (rather than details or obscure points about a country or culture)

The conversation should contain clues to the difference which become clear when pointed out



Common Pitfalls

- Too much extraneous background information
- Creating sympathy for one character over another
- Implying a definite “right” or “wrong” behavior
- Failing to link the CI to a clear value or communication difference
- Focusing on stereotypes or *do's and don'ts*
- Allowing too many possible interpretations

It's on Me?

A friend has invited Roberto to dinner at a nice restaurant. They dine well, and at the end the waiter brings the check and puts it in the middle of the table. Roberto expects his friend to pick up the check, but he (or she) doesn't. He waits, and the conversation grows slow, and still he (she) doesn't. Roberto is getting very tired and is beginning to think his friend expects *Roberto* to pick up the check. Roberto is uncomfortable and doesn't know what to do.



Values and Communication Differences

Individual	↔	Group
Equality	↔	Hierarchy
Universalist	↔	Particularist
Task Oriented	↔	Relationship Focused
Tolerance for Ambiguity	↔	Need for Certainty
Action / Doing	↔	Planning / Preparation
Short-term Orientation	↔	Long-term Orientation
Formality	↔	Informality
Achievement Orientation	↔	Quality of Life Orientation
Monochronic (Fixed time)	↔	Polychronic (Fluid time)
Attained Status	↔	Ascribed Status
Man Controls Environment	↔	Environment Controls Man
Direct	↔	Indirect
Explicit	↔	Implicit
Emotionally Expressive	↔	Emotionally Restrained



Writing Your Critical Incident

- Identify the event or occurrence with as much specificity as possible, and either write it down or share the story with someone
- Identify the problem that occurred and how you knew that something had gone “wrong”
- Determine which culturally influenced values and / or communication differences led to the unexpected outcome
- Choose whether dialogue or text format would be best to highlight your incident
- Share your written CI with others, ideally with those from the cultures represented, to see whether they can identify the differences being highlighted
- Edit, revise, and give it a try...





References: Methods for Using Critical Incidents

- Counseling the Culturally Different, by Derald Wing Sue and David Sue, John Wiley and Sons, 1990
- Cross-Cultural Dialogues, by Craig Storti, Intercultural Press, 1994
- Handbook of Intercultural Training, by Dan Landis, Janet M. Bennet and Milton J. Bennett, Sage Publications, 2004
- Intercultural Sourcebook: Cross-Cultural Training Methods Vols. 1 and 2, edited by Sandra M. Fowler and Monica G. Mumford, Intercultural Press, 1995
- The Whole World Guide to Culture Learning, by J. Daniel Hess, Intercultural Press, 1994



Thank You!

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