If I Had a Hammer...

This activity develops problem-solving and team-building skills,
along with encouraging creativity and inquiry. It offers a great lead into the appropriate
selection/application of the numerous tools/resources available today.

MATERIALS: (for 30 participants)

- 15 wooden blocks (i.e., 2x3x5 sanded pine)
- 15 assorted "fasteners" (i.e., 3 upholstery tacks, 3 roofing nails, 3 finishing/floor nails, 3 Phillips-head sheet metal screws, and 3 flat-head stove bolts)
- 14 different tools in a "toolbox" (i.e., large hammer, rock hammer, upholstery hammer, basin wrench, set of Allen wrenches, #17 combination wrench, C-clamp, 6' tape measure, carpenter's square, needle-nose pliers, wire pliers, slip joint pliers, flat-head screwdriver, and Phillips-head screwdriver)
- 1 extraneous item (i.e., silk flower)

EXPERIENCE:

- Ask participants to pair up with someone they do not already know. Tell them to look into their partner's eyes and decide who is the more tactile learner.
- Without communication between partners, have the more tactile learner of each pair pick up a wooden block and a random fastener. Have the other, less tactile, learner of each pair pick a random tool from the toolbox, including the extraneous item!
- Emphasizing safety precautions and the fact that they are to use no other objects, damage or alter the block, fastener or tool, or work with any other groups, give each pair 5 minutes to put the fastener into the wooden block.

PROCESSING:

1. Was it hard or easy or impossible to accomplish the task? What factors impacted your response?
2. What is the common item among each pair? Look carefully at yours and the ones near you. Are they all really the same?

   What could you do as a collective group to make it easier or better?

   Have the tactile people with the block and fastener match up with the less tactile people with the tools that make the most sense. Was there more than one option?
3. What are the similarities of the options? Why did you settle on that particular one?

REFLECTION:

- What tools are available to you to accomplish your tasks? Are they appropriate?
- How do you select your tools? What might you consider to expand your options?
- Are there specific actions you can take to reduce your frustration level and increase your rate of success?
- What implications does this have for learning styles, particularly with respect to various media/technology?
- Sometimes you're better off stopping and smelling the roses than trying to force an impossible solution!

There are all sorts of tools and resources available to most of us today. Some are better suited for certain tasks than others. Some are totally inappropriate! It is important to clearly define specific goals and objectives so that you can select and apply the right tool for the job. There are also variations on most themes. If you're not aware of what's available or how to take advantage of what you do have, most likely you either won't try at all or you'll eventually stress out and compromise.