Course Learning Outcomes for Unit II

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

1. Develop effective learning strategies by assessing your existing practices.

4. Evaluate habits and skills for each of the seven dimensions of wellness: social, physical, emotional, career, intellectual, environmental, and spiritual well-being.

Reading Assignment

Chapter 1:
P.O.W.E.R. Learning: Becoming an Expert Student

Click here to access the Chapter 1 presentation.

Click here to access the PDF version of the Chapter 1 presentation.

Unit Lesson

This unit covers what it means to be an expert student, what to consider in a learning style, and how you can determine the use of an appropriate learning style as a student and as a professional.

What you may be surprised about is that you already know how to be a great student. You have been learning for years—before you could walk or talk. We learn everyday regardless if there is a formal lesson involved with vocabulary or key concepts. When you read the newspaper, you learn something new and that information then becomes a part of your knowledge about the world. You get a new phone and play around on it—you have learned something else. Everyone is a lifelong learner and that is part of the reason why you are here in this course. Whether you are here to get a degree to advance professionally or grow personally, you being here is a step toward lifelong learning.

Why is lifelong learning so important in today’s world? Because information and technology are constantly changing. To be an expert learner does not mean you have to be an expert in education theory, it means you have the capabilities and critical thinking skills to approach a new idea, a new concept, or a new object, and then learn about it. Lifelong learning is more about curiosity and critical thinking than about a particular discipline.

You can help strengthen your ability to learn and pick up on new concepts and technologies by taking time to identify and reflect on how you learn. Everyone learns a bit differently: some are visual learners and some are auditory learners.

Click here to access a brief presentation about learning styles (how you learn).
Most people use a combination of all of the learning strategies and styles, and even more. Discovering what type of learning style best fits you will help you be successful not only while you are here at Waldorf, but also beyond in your work and personal life.

Now, that does not mean that every way to learn is going to be customizable. You may come across a course, an assignment, or a project, one which does not precisely fit with your style of learning. While in such a situation, it is important to at least try something new and different—you may be surprised and find you like this new way of learning. By expanding upon your existing learning styles, you can become a more effective learner, which can often result in a more effective professional. If you find it is not for you, then at least you know, and you can still use that knowledge to your advantage. Being reflective in your learning process also requires some flexibility. Be reflective by asking yourself questions: How well did I perform on that last project? What did I do well? How can I improve for next time?

Learning is not just about how you approach information, but how you approach other people as well. Being aware of your psychological learning style and interactions with others can help you succeed in school and the workplace. You might be familiar with personality tests, introverted tendencies, extroverted tendencies, as well as several other ways you can discover the type of person you are. Play around with these concepts and see what your strengths and weaknesses might be. Try to improve where you can. Being aware of your own personality and learning style will help you identify how to work with those possessing different styles than your own.

All of this is important as you learn and grow during your time at Waldorf. Do not let it overwhelm you. Instead, let it be another tool in your toolbox for success. We constantly go through reflective processes in our lives, this is just one instance where being reflective can help you succeed. Talk to your friends, family, and colleagues about these ideas and see where it leads you. Never be afraid to ask for help. We all could use help or guidance at certain instances in our lives. At other times, it is simply nice to know someone else’s thoughts on a particular matter. Seeking thoughts from others requires a small amount of effort, and the return on that effort usually results in an exemplary overall experience.

Another thought to consider is that learning is a significant part of the ongoing process toward improvement. You will learn, you will improve, and you will make progress, as long as you are involved in the process. Learning is like riding a current in the ocean. While riding the current, you will encounter and learn a variety of new things. However, once you step away from the current, you will only learn about the few things surrounding you. A great learner knows when to ride the current as well as when to step away from the current to spend time reflecting. Knowing yourself, including your most efficient learning style, is what allows you to successfully decide among when to ride, when to step away, and when to hop back onto the learning current.

One way to improve your learning skills and to proactively plan for your coursework is to use the idea of goal setting—setting and establishing goals for yourself. Attending college courses, even online courses, can be demanding and time-consuming. However, with a plan, some goals, and a strong desire to achieve those goals, you have what it takes to not only overcome the demands of coursework, but also to enjoy it.

Click [here](#) to access a brief presentation about goal setting.
Among the seven dimensions of wellness, intellectual wellness is the first dimension that we will address. So, what does it mean to satisfy the intellectual dimension of your life? Intellectual wellness can be described in different ways; however, this particular description will focus on three main terms: lifelong learning, critical thinking skills, and educational goals.

The first descriptive term is lifelong learning, which is the idea of continuously setting goals for learning new things. It encourages all of us as students, educators, professionals, and everyone else to never stop learning. When you graduate from high school, be sure to celebrate, as it is a wonderful achievement. However, know that your learning does not stop after earning a diploma. There is much more to learn and we like to encourage all students and professionals to embrace the idea of continuously learning, continuously improving knowledge and skills, and continuously experiencing new ideas, concepts, and challenges. One way to describe what you should not do is to become complacent with your skills and knowledge. Try to avoid allowing your intellectual dimension to become stagnant like a puddle. Instead, embrace lifelong learning, claim yourself as a lifelong learner, and continuously stimulate your intellect like the steady flow of a river. Even after you finish attending college courses or earning a degree, keep the learning flowing as a lifelong learner.

The second descriptive term involves critical thinking skills, and as a student, you will be asked to very frequently use your critical thinking skills throughout your coursework (not just in this course). While attending college courses or a degree program, critical thinking is your best friend as you learn new things, and even if you are reading about something you already knew. Critical thinking skills are what you use as you strive to improve in any area of life. It requires you to proactively think about something rather than passively think about a concept. For instance, suppose a friend just finished showing you a new app on her mobile device. As a passive thinker, you would basically accept what your friend showed you while not thinking too much about it. Conversely, a critical (proactive) thinker does not simply accept what was shown, but instead asks herself how she can use the app in her life—how it can help her meet the goals in her life. As a student, you want to approach your coursework the same way. Use your critical thinking skills to dissect your coursework before determining what it really means. Ask yourself how a course concept applies to you in the present and even how it could apply to you in the future. Critical thinking skills are more valuable than gold when it comes to learning. Once you start, you will not want to stop. We have more on critical thinking later in the course. If you cannot wait to read more, see Chapter 8 in your textbook.

The third and final descriptive term of the intellectual dimension is educational goals, and they can allow you to be very productive as a lifelong learner and critical thinker. In other words, educational goals encourage you to be very intentional about your time as a life-long learner and your efforts as a critical thinker. The point, here, is that you can use lifelong learning and critical thinking skills to help accomplish your educational goals. By establishing educational goals, you are much more likely to be satisfied with the results after spending your valuable time thinking critically and learning. Dissatisfaction could potentially occur by randomly learning new things. Instead, educational goals encourage you to purposefully learn a collection of related topics that together allow you to meet your long-term goals. With that, it is important to know that educational goals are different for everyone. You must ask yourself what is important to you and what you hope to gain. If you can answer those questions, then you are well on your way to establishing educational goals as well as being productive as a lifelong learner.

Now you have a few things to think about in relation to intellectual wellness. The next step heavily relies upon what you do with it. As a college student, you will spend plenty of time focusing on your intellectual dimension of wellness, and it is a lot of fun!