



SYNECTICS: A CREATIVITY EXERCISE

Stephanie Clemons

Colorado State Univ., Ft. Collins, CO 80523

Creativity is a skill in high demand by the current work force. An innovative exercise used in secondary education, known as synectics, offers educators another technique for enhancing creativity. Synectics is a theory that is based on the belief that creativity is critical to personal and intellectual development.

In a studio class, design students used this exercise to develop multiple design solutions to a given problem. Students were offered key concepts of (1) personal analogy (empathetic involvement with an object), (2) direct analogy (simple comparison of two objects or concepts), and (3) compressed conflict (combination of unrelated adjectives/nouns (i.e., furry dishwasher). Rather than conceiving creativity in isolation as an inward process, it was developed in teams, thereby increasing cohesion and empathy among group members. Students' initial confusion passed as the exercise progressed. Laughter and fun erupted as their creativity "muscle" expanded with new phrases or ideas. Interestingly, observed out-comes of this innovative teaching technique were similar to a study conducted in 1989 with interior design, fashion illustration, and visual merchandising students (Davis, 1990).

It has been argued that the ability to go beyond the known and synthesize fresh ideas or solutions is the ultimate information-processing skill. Synectics is an effective method of enhancing creativity in a group setting, whether it is used in a marketing, professional practice, or design class.

Davis, D. (1990). Using synectics techniques to help design students become creative problem solvers. Proceedings of the Interior Design Educators Council, San Francisco, CA, pp. 40-44.