

# UNDERSTANDING DIFFERENCES IN LEARNERS & FLEXIBLE APPROACHES TO TEACHING



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# OF COURSE, WE ARE ALL DIFFERENT



Which may be stating the obvious, but when it comes to teaching a new skill, it is often forgotten and blanket approaches are used.

The objective of this session is to look at learners and ringers as individuals.

Each potential ringer has positive and negative attributes, which must be observed, identified and used positively and productively to make their learning experience satisfying and rewarding.

# WE ARE ALL DIFFERENT...



- Physical – size, strength, shape, posture
- Mental – fast thinker, visual thinker, logical thinker, practical thinker
- Emotional – confident, anxious, excited, apprehensive
- Physiological – fitness, stamina
- Chronological – age matters... young brains: quicker learning, better retention  
older brains: slower learning, poorer retention
- Life experience – youth brings enthusiasm, maturity brings wisdom and caution

# ...SOME OF US MORE THAN OTHERS

- Learning disabilities and difficulties
  - Developmental delay
  - Aspergers /ASD
  - Dyspraxia
  - Dyslexia
- Physical disabilities
  - Arthritis
  - Limb loss
  - Spinal and neurological injury
  - Orthopaedic injury
- Sensory impairments
  - Hearing loss
  - Visual loss
- Mental health issues
  - Anxiety
  - Mood swing
  - Depression
- Personality
  - Friendly
  - Retiring
  - Apprehensive
  - Sparky
  - Short
  - Critical
- Attributes
  - Musical
  - Sense of rhythm
  - Coordinated
  - (... or the lack of such attributes)
  - Well motivated
  - Keen



# WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

- Learning needs to be a rewarding experience
- Teaching needs to be a satisfying experience
- A one-size approach to teaching skills does not fit all learners
- Being flexible requires being reflective
- Standing back and reviewing , then
- Modifying approaches to improve success in learner's skill acquisition



# RIGIDITY – V – FLEXIBILITY – VALUE YOUR LEARNER



## Examples of Rigidity

- The ITTS training tells me I must do it this way (but it probably doesn't)
- This is how I was taught (therefore it must be right...?)
- Expectation that an objective or skill step will be learned in the teacher's time frame, not the learner's
- Assumption that if a learner cannot progress beyond handling a bell and call-changes, they will never make a ringer
- Repeated phrases and instructions which do not produce improvement in the ringing or handling
- Loss of patience, change to something else, criticise the learner

## Examples of Flexibility

- There is more than one way to tie a shoe lace and achieve the same secure knot
- The aim is ... to hold the rope this way for safety, efficiency and style. There are different steps and exercises to achieving this (refer to the ART teaching resources)
- Every person learns at a different rate. A good teacher will allow for that difference
- When teaching more than one learner at the same time, explain to them that each person is different and will learn at different rates. This does not make them unteachable or less worthy as a ringer. Different learners have different good and negative attributes – but **everyone** will have something positive to praise
- Be happy to repeat a step until it is achieved

# BEING A 'FLEXIBLE' TEACHER



## Attributes

A flexible teacher has:

- Patience
- Understanding
- Perseverance
- Ability to praise as much as be critical

Also

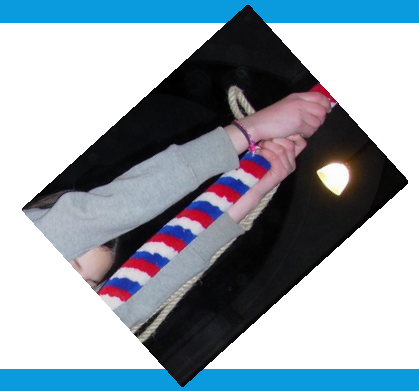
- Expresses feedback in different ways if the learner does not understand or see what is meant

## Flexibility

Requires

- Repetition or change *as needed*
- Perspective – standing in the learner's shoes
- Not giving up before trying alternative strategies
- Plenty of positive reward every time it is deserved
- Correction given politely, courteously

# TIPS TO HELP



- Start the practice by welcoming everyone
- Look at your learners / ringers and ask them, what would *they* like to achieve at this practice?
- Allow them to say what they want to do
- Plan your evening to provide opportunities for *everyone*
- Be prepared to *change objectives* for the evening if the band present is not the band expected
- Find other objectives to work on. Listening skills and handling, raising and lowering bells together as well as individually, are often not considered part of a band or team practice

Often the approach is the other way around, e.g.

*This evening we are going to do/ring...*

Expectations of the teacher are higher than what can be achieved with those present

Ringling is a team activity and requires everyone to work and interact together to make a whole beautifully struck sound = music!



# PARTICULAR ISSUES WHERE FLEXIBILITY IS NEEDED...

- Autistic spectrum
- Genetic syndrome – small hands and tiny thumbs
- Gender issue e.g. in teenage boy
- Blind ringer with Learning Disabilities
- Ringer with shoulder restriction
- Learner with dyspraxia (difficulty with planning and executing an action where there is no motor impairment)
- Dyslexia
- Spinal injury – wheelchair ringer
- Anxiety and apprehension
- “Wandering index finger”



# FLEXIBILITY IN OPPORTUNITIES

- Getting to service ringing early to help raise bells – an opportunity for one to one teaching with hands-on practice and learner getting the feel of bell and rope and hearing when the bell sounds in relation to pulling the rope
  - Ringing in the band tail-end only with teacher ringing handstrokes to feel the rhythm and pace of ringing
  - Take learner up to see bells ringing wearing ear defenders and point out named working parts of bell
- Short bites of one to one with learner between other ringing



# IN CONCLUSION

- Being a good teacher is having confidence in your own skills at whatever level you have achieved – you don't have to be a Surprise method ringer to be a good teacher of bell-handling and basic ringing skills
- There is a greater need for competent bell-handlers to keep our bells ringing and to increase the numbers of ringers. We need more competent teachers
- A band is the sum of its individual ringers at whatever level, working together. This requires teaching (and leading) with a flexible approach
- Ringing should be and can be an inclusive activity within the capacity of the individual to learn and acquire skills for safe bell-handling and to ring as part of a team
- This requires understanding and flexibility in teachers

**ANY QUESTIONS  
OR  
FEEDBACK?**

