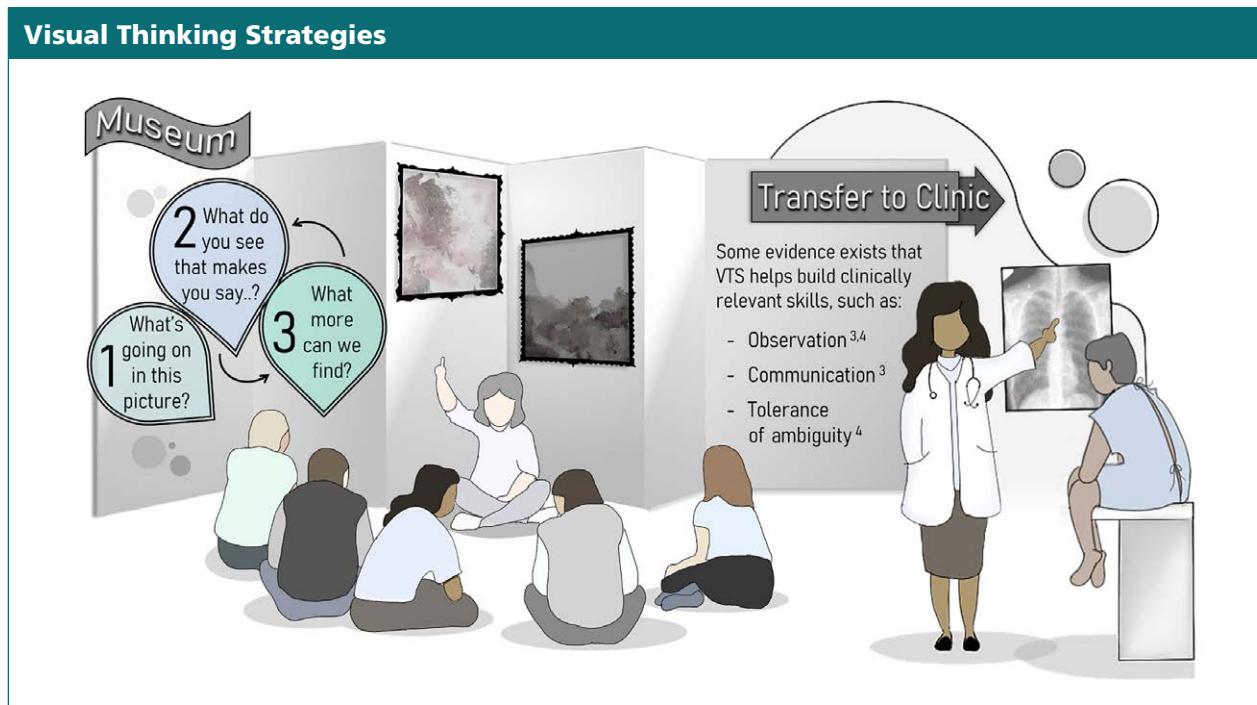


Art Museum-Based Teaching: Visual Thinking Strategies

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The Association of American Medical Colleges recently launched an initiative to explore the role of the arts and humanities in physician development, a topic gaining recognition in health professions education.¹ This Last Page focuses on the most established and studied of the art museum-based teaching methods: visual thinking strategies (VTS), an open-ended, facilitated discussion centered around a preselected work of art, such as a painting.²



VTS Method

- Begin with a moment of **silent looking** at the piece.
- Ask **3 questions**, beginning with question 1, as shown in the graphic above: *What's going on in this picture?* Then toggle between question 2 and question 3. **Paraphrase** conditionally—deeming responses as possibilities rather than correct or incorrect—and ask participants for visual evidence to support their claims.
- Allow for **15–45 minutes** for each work of art discussed and **4–15 participants per facilitator**.

VTS Tips

- While VTS ideally takes place in an art museum, it can be adapted to other settings using projected images.
- Although VTS appears simple, learning to paraphrase and hold the group in inquiry are skills that require training and practice for which certification as a facilitator is recommended.²
- To encourage multiple interpretations, select works in which the implied narratives are not entirely clear.
- If the facilitator is also a clinician, at the conclusion of VTS they may ask participants to reflect on how this activity applies to patient care.

Conclusion

VTS is a research-supported teaching method that builds clinical skills associated with improved patient outcomes and thus has the potential to bolster health professions education.

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