Reflective Writing and Models

Aim of this factsheet
To support and develop your understanding of reflective writing and using reflective models.

What is reflection?
Reflection has been defined as:

- 'serious thought or consideration' (Oxford Dictionary, 2017)
- 'turning experience into learning' (Boud 2013)
- 'thoughtful deliberation' (Tickle, 1994)

In education and work:

'Reflection is an important human activity in which people recapture their experience, think about it, mull over & evaluate it. It is this working with experience that is important in learning.' (Boud, Keogh and Walker, 2013)

Why Reflect?
Reflection enables you to constantly improve.

Reflection helps you avoid making the same mistakes repeatedly – it is thinking about your work and how it can be improved.

As a student, reflection can be demonstrated by

- acting upon your assignment feedback to keep improving your academic performance.
- analysing your study habits and changing behaviours accordingly.
- investigating an issue which you want to reflect upon.

Reflection gives you an opportunity to think deeply about a specific subject/issue and to investigate it, so that next time you encounter the same situation you can be ‘better’ in what you do.
What does reflection involve?

Questioning your behaviours, thoughts, or feelings

Investigating - best practice/ alternative actions

Putting together actions for improved outcomes

Using Models

When writing a reflection, it is often advisable to use a **Reflective Model** to help you structure and clarify your ideas. There are many reflective models (structures), you may be told which model to use, or you may be able to choose a model which is most appropriate for your reflection.

Reflective Models

A summary of Driscoll (2000), Gibbs (1998) and Johns (1994) reflective models is provided below:


   **WHAT**
   - describe what has happened
   - what is the incident that you are reflecting upon
   - tell the facts of the situation

   **SO WHAT**
   - say why it is an important issue to reflect upon
   - what does research and current thinking say?
   - compare what best practice and research says against what actually happened

   **WHAT NOW?**
   - in the future how might your practice be different?
   - what have you learnt that you can put into practice?
   - what would you do differently next time?
Includes what you felt and how you were thinking at the time.

Bullet points listed are hints and tips, use the ones relevant to your reflection.

1. Description of the experience
   - Describe the experience
   - What essential factors contributed to this experience?
   - What is the background to this experience?

2. Reflection
   - What was I trying to achieve?
   - Why did I intervene as I did?
   - What were the consequences of my actions for:
     - Myself?
     - The patient/family
     - The people I work with?
   - How did I feel about this experience when it was happening?
   - How did the patient feel about it?
   - How do I know how the patient felt about it?

3. Influencing factors
   - What internal/external factors influenced my decision making?
   - What sources of knowledge did/should have influenced my decision making?

4. Could I have dealt with the situation better?
   - What choices did I have?
   - What would be the consequences of these choices?
5. Learning

- How do I feel now about this experience?
- How have I made sense of this experience in light of past experiences and future practice?
- How has this experience changed me?

(Hayfron-Benjamin, 2014)

Ways of reflecting

There are many ways that you can reflect, for example:

- Reflective journal or diary (written or recorded)
- Critical incident log
- Reflective conversation
- Problem based learning
- ePortfolio development of significant incidents
- Reflective essay or critical evaluation

Use whatever suits your immediate requirement to note your first thoughts and feelings.

Key point

Reflection is a transferable skill desired by employers. It shows you are a ‘thinking’ person who continually wants to improve. It is important for the Staffordshire Graduate

References and further reading


For an appointment or further advice:

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