

MOORE ABOUT.. REFLECTIVE PRACTICE



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REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

What is reflective practice?



Imagine you've come home at the end of a bad week and find a time machine which will take you back to Monday to live the week again. What would you change? What would you keep the same? Why would you make these decisions? What outcome would you like?

You might not realise it but this is reflective practice – the act of thinking back over your experiences, learning from them and using this to improve things in the future. Professional reflection has long been popular in disciplines such as medicine and teaching where theory needs to be linked with practice but it is increasingly popular in a range of subjects. It helps us to make meaning out of our experiences and turn them into a learning opportunity.

Why reflect?

Undertaking reflection might seem like a complex process if you've never done it before but it has many benefits for different areas of your life.

- **Study** – students are increasingly being asked to work on reflective assignments as part of their course. Linked to critical thinking, academic reflection involves challenging assumptions, making connections and linking theory to practice.
- **Work** – reflective skills can also enhance your employability. It can help you to think about the skills you already have as well as those you need to develop. Reflection can also help you think creatively when problem solving as it makes you think outside the box.
- **Wellbeing** – we all have a critical inner-voice which appears when we least need it. Reflection can help you to deal with this self-talk and help you maintain a work/life balance. It's also a vital part of strong emotional intelligence.

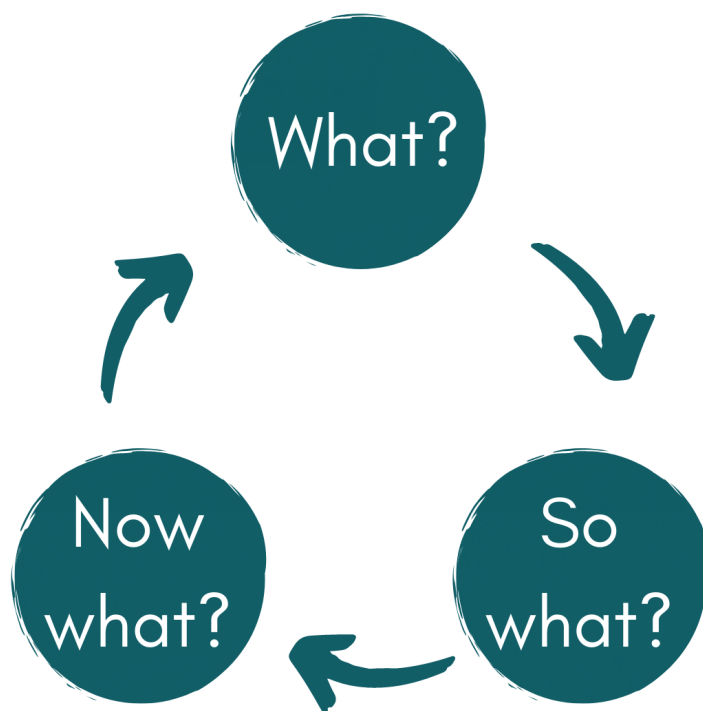


HOW DO I REFLECT?

Reflection is a very personal process which means there is no 'right' or 'wrong' way to do it. Each of us brings our own experiences to the process and has to make meaning in the context of our these experiences. However, if you're new to reflection it can be hard to know where to start so you might like to follow a model. Over the years several educational thinkers have suggested models of reflective practice including Kolb (1984), Gibbs (1998) and Jasper (2013). Perhaps the easiest to begin with is Driscoll's What Model (2007).

The What Model focuses on three questions about any experience: what, so what and now what? Start with a brief description of the experience to set it in context and record what happened in your own words. Next, look at what you learnt as a result of the experience. The final stage involves making an action plan based on what you have learnt and putting this into practice when you repeat the experience.

This model offers a simple introduction to reflection which can be applied to any situation.



As this model shows, the key to reflection is to ask questions to interrogate an experience. There are several questions that you might want to ask to help you get started:



REFLECTIVE WRITING

You will find that you need to write reflectively in many documents including essays, appraisals, research diaries and job applications. It involves critically analysing an experience, recording how it's impacted you and what you plan to do as a result. The act of writing something down often helps people to think an experience through and reflect on a deeper level.

Reflective writing is written in the first person and focuses on your thoughts and feelings about an experience. A common mistake people make is to spend too much time on describing the experience. To avoid this problem try using some of the prompts below in your writing:

At the time I felt...

This was because

...

I learned that ...

After thinking
about it ...

My next steps
are...

I'm still unsure
about ...

Later I realised ...

What if I ...

If you want to practice your reflective writing you can follow use the What Model as a starting point. Choose **one** experience and write:

- **Two** sentences describing the experience.
- **Three** sentences outlining your feelings on the experience and anything you learnt.
- **Four** sentences on what you will do as a result of your experience.

You will be surprised at how fast you fill a page with reflection!

FURTHER INFORMATION

We've put together some of our top tips and links to further information about reflective practice in our [Reflective Practice Toolkit](#). This will guide you through the different models of reflection, outline how you can use reflection in your assignments and offers some simple reflective writing exercises to get you started.



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