

In class reflective exercise for Professional Career Development

STAGE 1 - DESCRIPTION OF THE EVENT *(What happened?)*

I was at a wedding last summer, in Romania, in a small town close to Cluj Napoca, the second city population wise from Romania. Upon our arrival, warm smiles and a general, typical Romanian wedding vibe welcomed us with open arms. It was the best time with so many wonderful laugh lines, smiles and dancing with our favorite people all night long.

The wedding was very traditional but with that perfect modern twist. The crowning glory was the white beautiful gown which hugs to the delicate lace and the one who wore a dashing elegant suit was no other than the groom. The fresh flowers, the Romanian dishes that were all freshly prepared for the feast. I was so grateful to be present in the room during the love that was shared among family and friends. I relished the experience of diving into one of these quintessential Romanian wedding scenarios packed with music, laughter and a bit of traditional Romanian dancing with a showpiece hora that drew everyone into an energized circle.

The food was another stand out, with unique Romanian twists on what we've never had before such as sarmale (cabbage rolls) and mititei (grilled sausages). The stories of each dish started adding layers to our cultural experience. So we ate a long late night dinner of eight to twelve strange courses from about ten until dawn, talking like crazy, but truly one when it came to the wonderful food. That entire night flew by in no time, as Melbourne got lost in celebration, writing stories that we all would remember and tell for the rest of our lives.

So the following morning, still dazed by the events of our sudden wing-ding wedding, my wife and I packed up in readiness for departure to Cluj Napoca Airport from whence we were due to fly to the UK. We were ready to go home, coming off the high of the night but also completely wiped out. We had organised everything for the flight, including printing my boarding pass at home and arriving at the airport well ahead of schedule. Thinking that we had everything squared away, we assumed it was all good.

But as soon as we were checking in, Ryanair service pushed against that makeshift door and said there was no place for us on the overcrowded plane. When the news came out, it absolutely floored us. For fucksake, we had tickets! BIt is when airlines oversell seats on the plane, a' nd sell more tickets than seats available under the assumption that some passengers will not show up. Bad luck though, this time all the passengers were on.getting us properly stranded places.

We were rather surprised; no prior notice, no immediate apologies. We tried our best to talk with the airline staff as coolly as we can about alternatives or even if they could re-rout us on another airlines... but failed. The worst news was when we were told that the next available flight would not be for a week. It was shocking and frustrating news. For us, in any case, a long slob-out in Romania was out of the question — we had duties awaiting back home in macLand on the morrow. I was then stressing from just one challenge now to the other over whether I was going to fail myself and not go into work.

STAGE 2 - FEELINGS *(What were you thinking & feeling?)*

For the both of us, it only made us feel more lost and angsty. I was baffled by how something so basic as seats could be handled in such a dysfunctional way. We did everything by the rules — followed all the protocols, paid for our seats and got there early enough — but ended up on the cutting room floor. It felt incredibly unfair. I replayed the check-in in my head and wondered if there were signs to see that were out of place, anything we could have done to prevent this from happening.

Worse, the airline staff were not exactly helpful — they offered us no actionable solution right away. The realization sunk in and it was all true that sense of helplessness crept up. The fact that we could not predict or influence what would happen only worsened the differences of opinion, generating a hotbed of conflict between me and you. The realization that everything we could just yesterday have planned for was falling through our fingers still fresh in the air, mingled with a sense of impotency like thick ground fog.

As time passed, we began to adapt emotionally. The village where we were lodged turned out to be quite beautiful. Though we were still stressed, we tried to make the most of our unexpected stay. The atmosphere in the village was serene, with cobblestone streets and quaint houses that exuded charm. It was perhaps this contrast that allowed us to reflect on our situation with a little more calm. We recognized that, even though things hadn't gone as planned, we were safe, and we were in an aesthetically pleasing environment, albeit involuntarily. Still, the anxiety about returning to the UK and the work we were missing

never fully left us.

STAGE 3 - EVALUATION *(What was good and bad about the experience?)*

Evaluating it all, it seemed there was a positive and negative side to this experience. First, the positive: despite the tricky situation and the airline's fault, the staff maintained a level of respect and courtesy. Though they did not immediately solve the problem, their patience helped diffuse some of the initial tension we felt. Moreover, the free accommodation provided by Ryanair—though small—was at least a step in trying to balance the inconvenience caused to passengers.

The other positive aspect was the unexpected opportunity to stay in a quaint village in Romania for a night. While we hadn't prepared for this, it proved to be quite rewarding. I was taken aback by the beauty of the village, with its traditional houses and picturesque surroundings. We even took a short walk and discovered a local market, where vendors sold fresh produce, handmade crafts, and delicious pastries. It offered us a glimpse of Romania that few tourists experience, and for that, we felt privileged.

On the downside, the overbooking issue itself felt inherently unfair. Knowing that there were more passengers than seats available on the airplane and that tickets were sold anyway felt like a gamble we never signed up for. It was one of those things we knew existed but had never encountered firsthand. The lack of information about alternative solutions only heightened our frustration. When we learned that the next flight would be in a week's time, it made us feel abandoned. The unavailability of alternative transportation options, or at least some form of a plan from Ryanair, placed us in a vulnerable position, making it difficult to know what our next move should be.

STAGE 4 - ANALYSIS *(What sense can you make of the situation?)*

As we reflected on the experience, we found that overbooking in airlines is a rather common practice, albeit seriously flawed. In their quest to maximize profit, airlines sell extra tickets, hoping that a certain percentage of passengers won't show up. However, when everyone does arrive, as in our case, the system collapses, leaving innocent passengers like us to bear the brunt of the consequences.

What was most difficult to handle was the uncertainty of it all. Not knowing what would happen next or how we would manage to get back home created a sense of helplessness. Much of our frustration stemmed from our ignorance about our rights as passengers. Had we been better informed, we might have insisted on alternatives or sought compensation. This experience illuminated the importance of being knowledgeable about airline policies and passenger rights, especially when traveling with budget airlines.

Moreover, our ignorance contributed significantly to our tension and inability to cope effectively with the situation. It became clear that being aware of the potential pitfalls of air travel could have minimized our stress and equipped us with the tools to advocate for ourselves. We realized that we had taken our travel arrangements for granted, assuming everything would proceed smoothly, which is often not the case in reality.

STAGE 5 – CONCLUSION

The main lesson learned from this experience is that knowledge is power. When flying, particularly with low-cost airlines like Ryanair, it's crucial for passengers to be informed of their rights and prepared for circumstances like overbooking. Had we researched airline policies and our rights prior to the trip, we would have been in a better position to handle the situation, reducing our stress and possibly finding a quicker resolution.

We also learned the importance of remaining calm in the face of unexpected challenges. While we could not control what had happened, we could control our responses. Spending that night in a village in Romania unexpectedly taught us that even when situations become stressful, there are opportunities for discovery and reflection. This experience emphasized the need for flexibility and perspective, lessons we will carry forward into our future travels.

STAGE 6 - ACTION PLAN *(If it arose again what would you do?)*

If I were to encounter a similar experience in the future, I would approach it differently. First, I would educate myself about the travel policies of the airline, particularly concerning overbooking. Understanding how these policies work would empower me to take proactive steps in case of any issues.

Second, I would keep a list of emergency contacts and important phone numbers relevant to passenger rights with me during my travels. This would ensure that, should a problem arise, I could quickly access resources for assistance and advice.

Third, I would invest in better travel insurance to cover unexpected situations, ensuring that if this type of incident occurred again, I would at least have some financial protection. This investment would provide peace of mind while traveling.

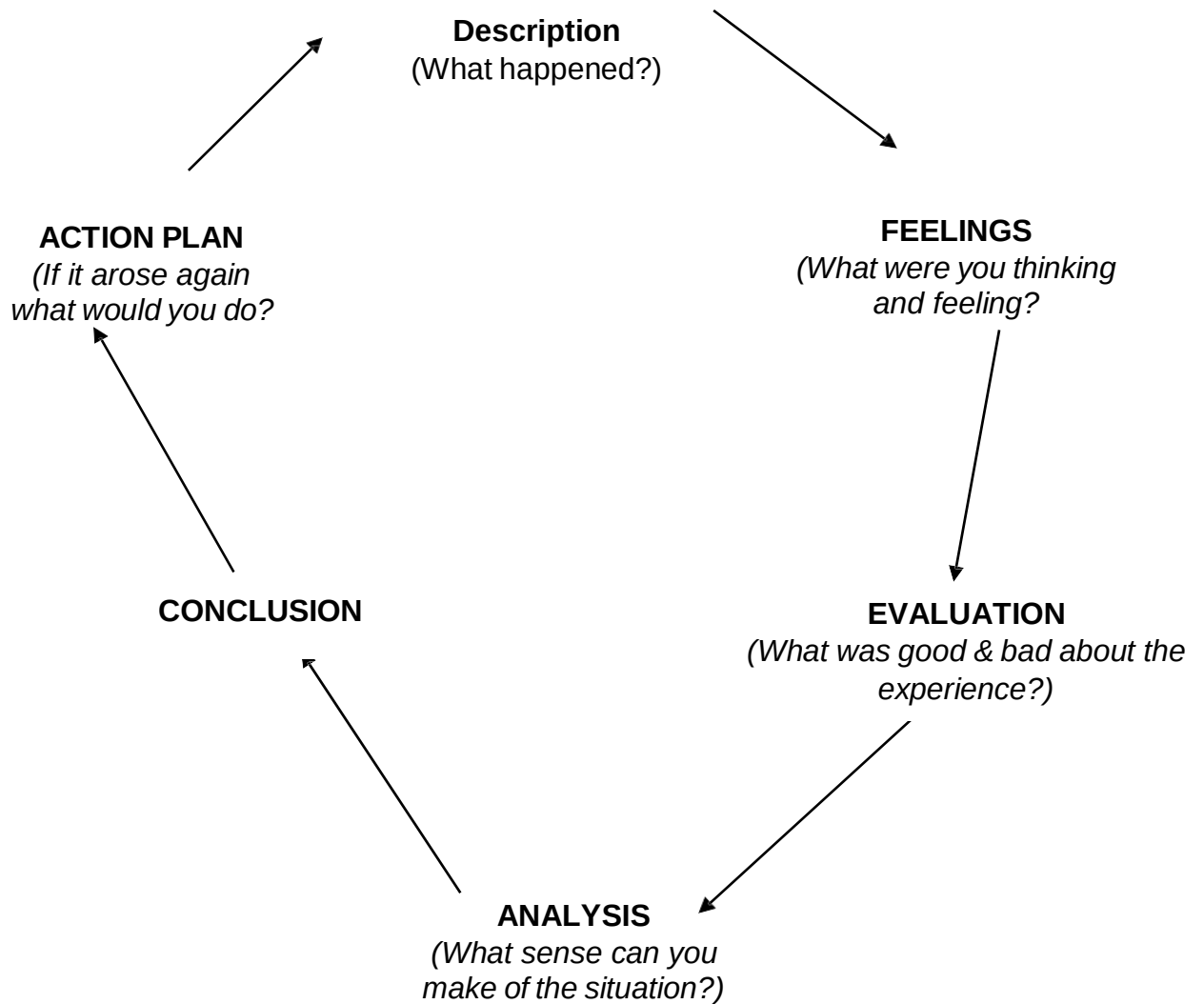
Lastly, I would adopt stress management techniques and maintain a positive attitude. Recognizing that unexpected events can sometimes open doors for new experiences, I would strive to view challenges from a broader perspective. The experience in Romania taught me that even in distressing situations, there can be beauty and lessons to learn if we remain open to them.

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GIBBS REFLECTIVE CYCLE



(Gibbs1998)

Stage 1 - Description of the Event

Describe in detail the event you are reflecting on.

Include for example:

- where were you?
- why were you there?
- what was the context of the lecture?
- what happened?
- what was your part in this?
- what did you achieve/learn?

Stage 2 - Feelings

At this stage try to recall and explore the things that were going on inside you head i.e. why does this event stick in your mind?

Include for example:

- how you did you feel during the class?
- what you were thinking about at the time?
- how did the experience make you feel?
- how did the lecturer made you feel?
- how did you feel about the outcome of the class?
- what do you think about it now?

Stage 3 - Evaluation

Try to evaluate or make a judgement about what has happened. Consider what was good about the experience and what was bad about the experience or didn't go so well.

Include for example:

- what went well?
- what did you do well?
- What did you not do well?
- what went wrong or did not turn out how you believe it should have done?

Stage 4 - Analysis

Break the event down into its component parts so they can be explored separately. You may need to ask more detailed questions about the answers to the last stage.

Include for example:

- why did things go well/badly?
- what might have helped or improved things?
- Could you have responded in a different way?

Stage 5 - Conclusion

This differs from the evaluation stage in that now you have explored the issue from different angles and have a lot of information on which to base your judgement. It is here that you are likely to develop insight into your own and other people's behaviour in terms of how they contributed to the outcome of the event. Remember the purpose of reflection is to learn from an experience. Without detailed analysis and honest exploration that occurs during all the previous stages, it is unlikely that all aspects of the event will be taken into account and therefore valuable opportunities for learning can be missed. During this stage you should ask yourself what you could have done differently.

Stage 6 - Action Plan

During this stage you should think yourself forward into encountering the event again and to plan what you would do - would you act differently or would you be likely to do the same?

Notes: