



Prifysgol Cymru
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ECSSO5005

Experiential Placement: Becoming a Reflective Practitioner

The Reflective Practitioner

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Trawsnewid Addysg; Trawsnewid Bywydau
Transforming Education; Transforming Lives



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Being a Reflective Practitioner

- Being a reflective practitioner should not be an 'easy' option.
- If done properly it presents challenges to the practitioner.
 - *In small groups, discuss what these challenges might be.*

Being a Reflective Practitioner

- Being a reflective practitioner involves looking at your own practice
- In a structured sequential way
- Using theory and research to evaluate our practice and learn from our experiences

CPD and Reflective Practice



What is continuous professional development (CPD)?

- It refers to the process of tracking and documenting the skills, knowledge and experience that you gain both formally and informally as you work, beyond any initial training.
- It's a record of what you experience, learn and then apply.
- The term is generally used to mean a physical folder or portfolio documenting your development as a professional.
- Some organisations use it to mean a training or development plan.

(Allen, 2009)

How widespread is reflective practice as a CPD?

- During the course of this Module we have mentioned a number of professions that use Reflective Practice, but we have only looked at the tip of the iceberg.
- In small groups, and using your preferred method of research, how many examples can you come up with?



How widespread is reflective practice as a CPD?

Some examples:

Royal College of Physicians – Faculty of Public Health



Institute of Biomedical Sciences



The Law Society



Institution of Mechanical Engineers



Warwick University School of Engineering



Reflective Practice and CPD

Who are The Chartered Institute of Professional Development?

- Established, as a registered charity, to promote the art and science of the management and development of people for public benefit.
- Committed to finding and championing ways of defining and organising work that create economic and societal value
- And to promoting ways of improving individual working lives.
- Vision is to define and represent the international benchmark for excellence in people and organisation management and development
- The CIPD was granted Royal Charter in July 2000, having demonstrated pre-eminence, public interest, stability and permanence. This was followed in July 2003 by the power to confer individual Chartered status on HR and L&D professionals.

<https://www.cipd.co.uk/about/who-we-are>

The CIPD and Reflective Practice

What is reflective practice?

- It involves integrating activities into daily life on a routine basis which raise awareness, prompt critical analysis and aid self-management and decision-making. It means:
 - Learning to pay attention – listening to ourselves
 - Coming face to face with our assumptions
 - Noticing patterns
 - Changing what we see
 - Changing the way we see.

(CIPD, No Date)

The CIPD and Reflective Practice

What is the role of RP in professional learning?

- Reflection deepens learning.
- The act of reflecting enables us to make sense of what we've learned, why we learned it, and how each increment of learning took place.
- Moreover, reflection is about linking one increment to the wider perspective of learning - heading towards seeing the bigger picture.
- Through reflection, learning is integrated, internalised and personalised.

(CIPD, No Date)

The CIPD and Reflective Practice

What is the role of RP in professional learning?

- Transformational theories suggest that adult learning is principally a meaning-making activity
- That acquiring job-specific skills and spending time on continuous professional development creates the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of self as learner as well as acquire a body of knowledge.
- This is often referred to as double loop learning.

(CIPD, No Date)

The CIPD and Reflective Practice

How does Reflective Practice improve personal and professional effectiveness?

- For individuals, the outcomes of developing a regular habit of reflective practice can be:
 - An increase in self-awareness, emotional intelligence, the capacity for emotional regulation and as a consequence the ability to inspire, influence and motivate others
 - An enhanced ability to make decisions which show good judgement, awareness of risk and systemic impact
 - A growth in the capacity to generate innovation through the technique of asking open questions and attending to the answers with an open mind
 - The ability to be compassionate to self and others and inspire trust through demonstrating trustworthiness.

(CIPD, No Date)

The CIPD and Reflective Practice

Becoming a reflective practitioner

- There is no magic formula for developing as a reflective practitioner. But here are some guidelines to get you started:
 - Time.
 - The most often cited reason why learners skimp on reflective practice is a lack of time. Build reflective time into your learning schedule; even a few minutes on a regular basis is better than trying to catch up occasionally. Like all habits, little and often is the most effective.
 - Attention.
 - Make a conscious effort to minimise distractions. Put the phone out of earshot and sight line. If you're writing directly on your computer, you may want to go offline to prevent emails coming in and attracting your attention. Find a space where you're not likely to be interrupted and consider headphones in a noisy environment.

(CIPD, No Date)

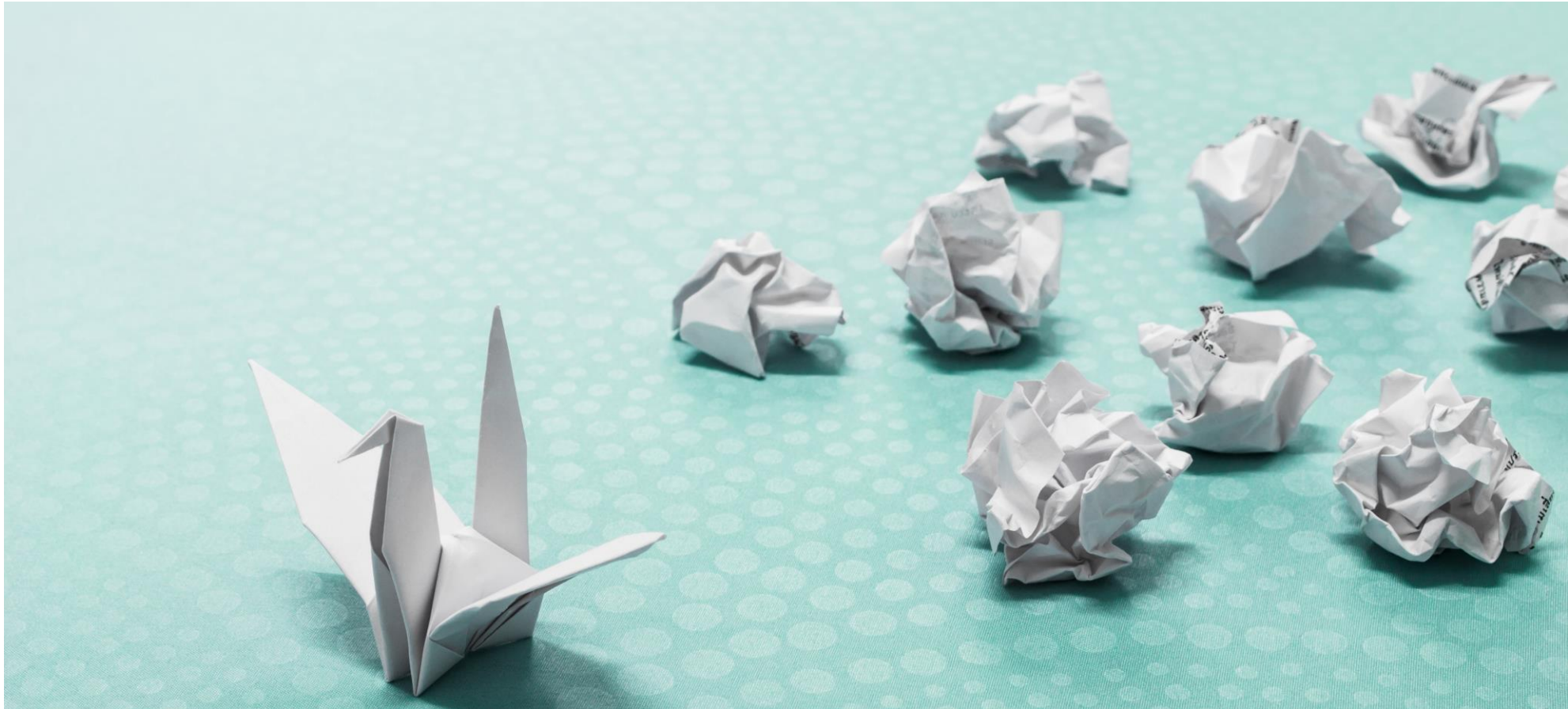
The CIPD and Reflective Practice

Becoming a reflective practitioner

- Pace.
 - Slow down. If mindfulness works for you, then use this as a way of locating yourself in the present. A minute of breathing from the diaphragm – breathe in for a count of four, hold for a count of four and breathe out for a count of four – will also encourage a reflective brain state. Even if you only have a few minutes for your reflective practice, make each minute count.
- Curiosity.
 - Approach your reflective practice without judgement or self-criticism. There is no 'one right way' to do this. You are doing this for yourself, not for anyone else.
- Experiment.
 - In the next section we suggest a range of tools you can use to enable reflection and encourage you to experiment to find what works for you.

(CIPD, No Date)

Reflection in Practice

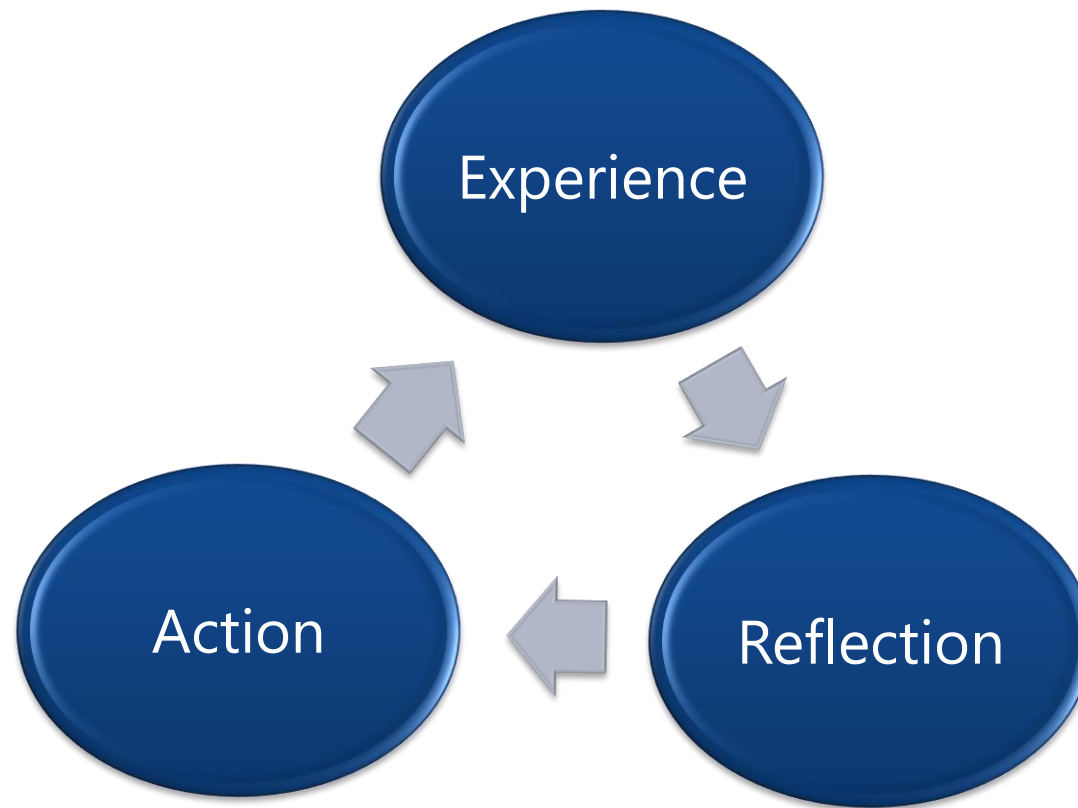


What is Reflection?

- Exploration / examination of ourselves and our actions (often written but also spoken)
 - That is considered and thoughtful
 - That is rational and unemotional*
 - *(even though it often deals with feelings, reactions and emotions)
 - in relation to theory / wider context / other perspectives
- Why do it?
 - to develop understanding / learning / skills
 - and give us a path by which to **move forward**

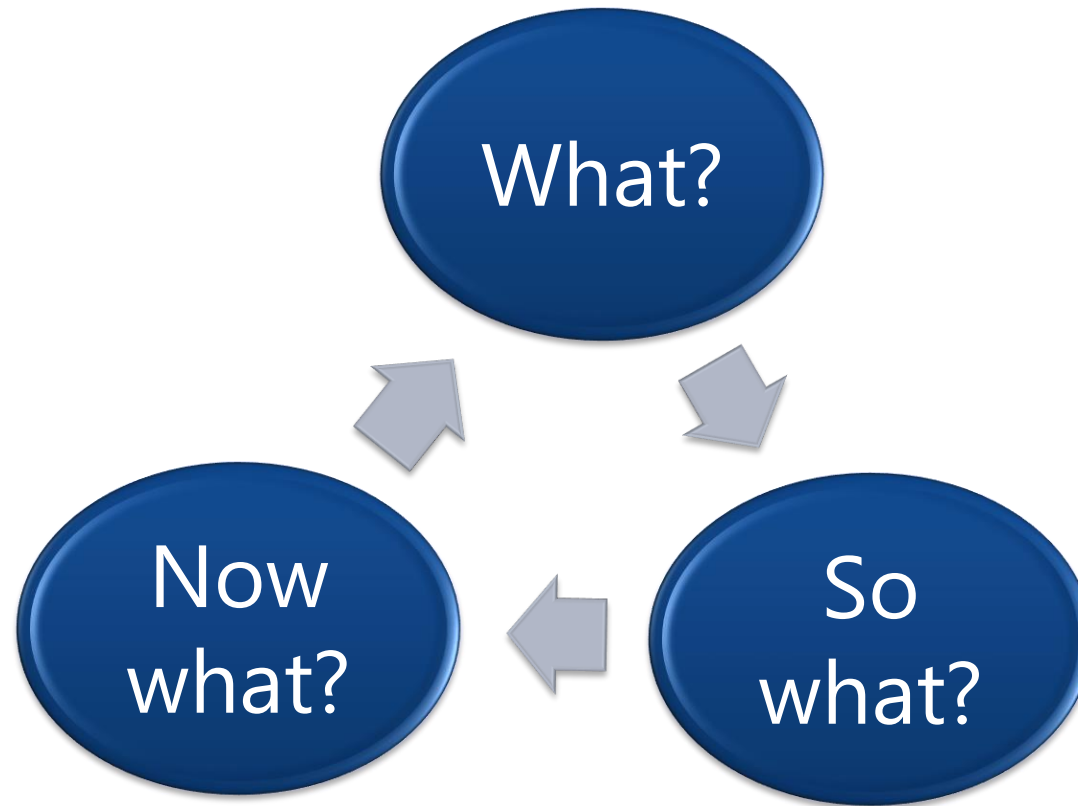
Doye (2012)

Reflection: The basics



Borton's (1970) cue questions:

(Cited in Jasper, 2003, p.99)



Questions for Continuous Improvement

- 'Kaizen' is a theory of continuous organisational improvement first developed in Japan.
- The word can be translated into English as 'change for the better'
- The principles of Kaizen include the development of a reflective culture in an organisation
- One technique for doing this is to ask questions for continuous improvement
- Also known as the 5 Ws and an H

See for example Suárez-Barraza, M. F. and Rodríguez-González, F. G. (2015)

Questions for Continuous Improvement

- Who?
- When?
- Where?

These questions are useful for the description phase.

- What?
- Why?

These questions are useful for the analysis phase.

- How?

This question is useful for the analysis phase.

Contexts and purposes

- Episode / experience/ process
 - Short/specific e.g. lesson we have taught, procedure we have carried out
 - Longer process e.g. project work, group work, course, client-practitioner relationship
- Critical incident
 - Positive or negative
- Our own development, e.g. skills, strengths, challenges

What is a critical incident?

- Something that happened that is, in some way, significant
 - For you personally,
 - Or in a wider context
- and that you can learn from by considering it more deeply
- It does not have to be earth-shattering
- It can be either positive or negative

Skills involved

- Self-awareness
- Description / factual reporting
- Critical analysis
- Synthesis
- Evaluation
 - (Atkins and Schutz, 2008, p.26)
- Self-awareness is the main skill that is not usual in other academic writing.

Gibbs' Reflective Cycle



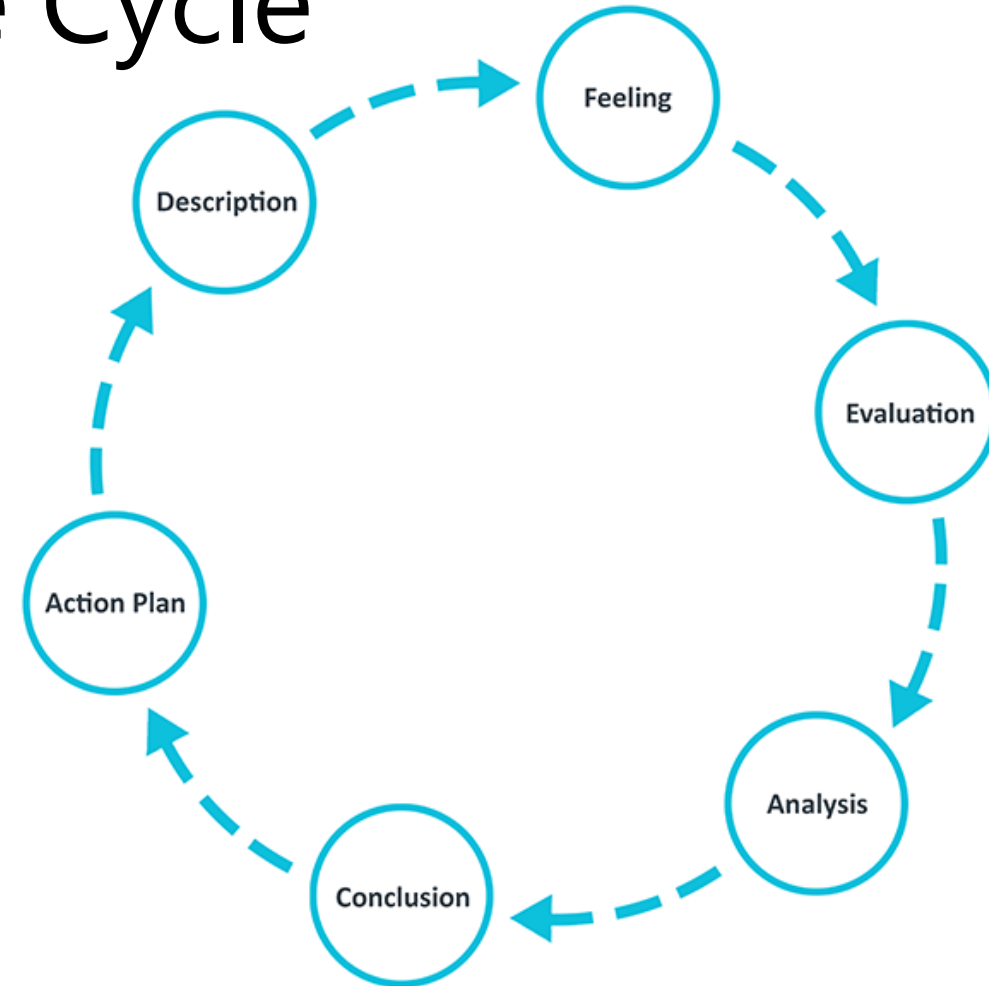
Professor Graham Gibbs

- Gibbs' Reflective Cycle was developed by Graham Gibbs in 1988 to give structure to learning from experiences



Gibbs Reflective Cycle

- This model is a good way to work through an experience.
- This can be either a stand-alone experience or a situation you go through frequently, for example meetings with a team you have to collaborate with.
- Gibbs originally advocated its use in repeated situations, but the stages and principles apply equally well for single experiences too.
- If done with a stand-alone experience, the action plan may become more general and look at how you can apply your conclusions in the future.



Gibbs Reflective Cycle: Description



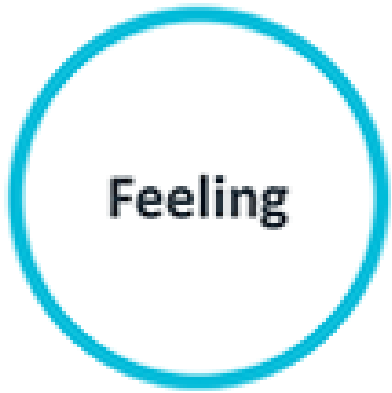
Here you have a chance to describe the situation in detail. The main points to include here concern what happened. Your feelings and conclusions will come later.

- Helpful questions:
 - What happened?
 - When and where did it happen?
 - Who was present?
 - What did you and the other people do?
 - What was the outcome of the situation?
 - Why were you there?
 - What did you want to happen?

For example

For an assessed written group-work assignment, my group (3 others from my course) and I decided to divide the different sections between us so that we only had to research one element each. We expected we could just piece the assignment together in the afternoon the day before the deadline, meaning that we didn't have to schedule time to sit and write it together. However, when we sat down it was clear the sections weren't written in the same writing style. We therefore had to rewrite most of the assignment to make it a coherent piece of work. We had given ourselves enough time before the deadline to individually write our own sections, however we did not plan a great deal of time to rewrite if something were to go wrong. Therefore, two members of the group had to drop their plans that evening so the assignment would be finished in time for the deadline.

Gibbs Reflective Cycle: Feeling



Here you can explore any feelings or thoughts that you had during the experience and how they may have impacted the experience.

- Helpful questions:
 - What were you feeling during the situation?
 - What were you feeling before and after the situation?
 - What do you think other people were feeling about the situation?
 - What do you think other people feel about the situation now?
 - What were you thinking during the situation?
 - What do you think about the situation now?

For example:

Before we came together and realised we still had a lot of work to do, I was quite happy and thought we had been smart when we divided the work between us. When we realised we couldn't hand in the assignment like it was, I got quite frustrated. I was certain it was going to work, and therefore I had little motivation to actually do the rewriting. Given that a couple of people from the group had to cancel their plans I ended up feeling quite guilty, which actually helped me to work harder in the evening and get the work done faster. Looking back, I'm feeling satisfied that we decided to put in the work.

Gibbs Reflective Cycle: Evaluation



Here you have a chance to evaluate what worked and what didn't work in the situation. Try to be as objective and honest as possible. To get the most out of your reflection focus on both the positive and the negative aspects of the situation, even if it was primarily one or the other.

- Helpful questions:
 - What was good and bad about the experience?
 - What went well?
 - What didn't go so well?
 - What did you and other people contribute to the situation (positively or negatively)?

For example:

The things that were good and worked well was the fact that each group member produced good quality work for the agreed deadline. Moreover, the fact that two people from the group cancelled plans motivated us to work harder in the evening. That contributed positively to the group's work ethic. The things that clearly didn't work was that we assumed we wrote in the same way, and therefore the overall time plan of the group failed.

Gibbs Reflective Cycle: Analysis



The analysis step is where you have a chance to make sense of what happened. Up until now you have focused on details around what happened in the situation. Now you have a chance to extract meaning from it. You want to target the different aspects that went well or poorly and ask yourself why. If you are looking to include academic literature, this is the natural place to include it.

- Helpful questions:
 - Why did things go well?
 - Why didn't it go well?
 - What sense can I make of the situation?
 - What knowledge – my own or others (for example academic literature) can help me understand the situation?

For example:

- I think the reason that our initial division of work went well was because each person had a say in what part of the assignment they wanted to work on, and we divided according to people's self-identified strengths. I have experienced working this way before and discovered when I'm working by myself I enjoy working in areas that match my strengths. It seems natural to me that this is also the case in groups.
- I think we thought that this approach would save us time when piecing together the sections in the end, and therefore we didn't think it through. In reality, it ended up costing us far more time than expected and we also had to stress and rush through the rewrite. I think the fact we hadn't planned how we were writing and structuring the sections led us to this situation.
- I searched through some literature on group work and found two things that help me understand the situation. Belbin's (e.g. 2010) team roles suggests that each person has certain strengths and weaknesses they bring to a group. While we didn't think about our team members in the same way Belbin does, effective team work and work delegation seems to come from using people's different strengths, which we did.
- Another theory that might help explain why we didn't predict the plan wouldn't work is 'Groupthink' (e.g. Janis, 1991). Groupthink is where people in a group won't raise different opinions to a dominant opinion or decision, because they don't want to seem like an outsider. I think if we had challenged our assumptions about our plan - by actually being critical, we would probably have foreseen that it wouldn't work. Some characteristics of groupthink that were in our group were: 'collective rationalisation' – we kept telling each other that it would work; and probably 'illusion of invulnerability' – we are all good students, so of course we couldn't do anything wrong.
- I think being aware of groupthink in the future will be helpful in group work, when trying to make decisions.

Gibbs Reflective Cycle: Conclusion



In this section you can make conclusions about what happened. This is where you summarise your learning and highlight what changes to your actions could improve the outcome in the future. It should be a natural response to the previous sections.

- Helpful questions:
 - What did I learn from this situation?
 - How could this have been a more positive situation for everyone involved?
 - What skills do I need to develop for me to handle a situation like this better?
 - What else could I have done?

For example:

I learned that when a group wants to divide work, we must plan how we want each section to look and feel – having done this would likely have made it possible to put the sections together and submit without much or any rewriting. Moreover, I will continue to have people self-identify their strengths and possibly even suggest using the 'Belbin team roles'-framework with longer projects. Lastly, I learned that we sometimes have to challenge the decisions we seem to agree on in the group to ensure that we are not agreeing just because of groupthink.

Gibbs Reflective Cycle: Action Plan



At this step you plan for what you would do differently in a similar or related situation in the future. It can also be extremely helpful to think about how you will help yourself to act differently – such that you don't only plan what you will do differently, but also how you will make sure it happens. Sometimes just the realisation is enough, but other times reminders might be helpful.

- Helpful questions:
 - If I had to do the same thing again, what would I do differently?
 - How will I develop the required skills I need?
 - How can I make sure that I can act differently next time?

For example:

When I'm working with a group next time, I will talk to them about what strengths they have. This is easy to do and remember in a first meeting, and also potentially works as an ice-breaker if we don't know each other well. Next, if we decide to divide work, I will insist that we plan out what we expect from it beforehand. Potentially I would suggest writing the introduction or first section together first, so that we have a reference for when we are writing our own parts. I'm confident this current experience will be enough to remind me to suggest this if anyone says we should divide up the work in the future. Lastly, I will ask if we can challenge our initial decisions so that we are confident we are making informed decisions to avoid groupthink. If I have any concerns, I will tell the group. I think by remembering I want the best result possible will make me be able to disagree even when it feels uncomfortable.

Preparing for reflection: Focused free writing TASK

- This technique can help you to start thinking freely about something.
- Think of one event that you would like to reflect on
- Using Gibbs Reflective Cycle
- Write for 10 minutes without stopping, just following your train of thought as if you are talking to yourself on paper
- Don't worry about grammar, spelling, punctuation or anything else
- If you wander off the topic, don't worry, just bring yourself gently back
- When the time is up, skim through for any interesting/useful words, phrases, ideas or thoughts
- The idea of free writing, from which focused free writing is adapted, was popularised by Peter Elbow (1973)

Reflective Journaling



When to do what

At the time /straight afterward

- Write a description as you see things now
- Include your feelings
- Note down anything you might want to refer to as 'evidence'
- Note questions or things you might want to explore if they occur to you

Later reflection

- Look back objectively at what you wrote
- Compare you now with then: changes?
- Ask & answer critical questions
 - Relate to wider context
 - Justify what you say
- Learning & moving forward

Doye (2012)

How to write a reflective piece academically



Description

- Ability to give effective account so that others understand what happened as you saw it:
 - Pick relevant, significant detail: right amount
 - Writing = clear, concise, well structured
 - Objective rather than emotional: thoughts & feelings are recorded rather than colouring account

Critical Analysis/Evaluation

- Aims for deeper understanding
- Breaking down into constituent parts
- Identifying positives / negatives/ issues
- Identifying and challenging assumptions (self & others)
- Making connections (other experience, learning)
- Relating to external sources, e.g.
 - Theory, research, case studies, wider social / political / economic context

Reflective Terminology

- A common mistake that people make when writing reflectively is to focus too much on describing their experience.
- Think about some of the phrases below and try to use them when writing reflectively to help you to avoid this:

The most important thing was...

At the time I felt...

This was likely due to...

After thinking about it...

I learned that...

I need to know more about...

Later I realised...

This was because...

This was like...

I wonder what would happen if...

I'm still unsure about...

My next steps are...

- Always try to write in the First Person when writing reflectively. This will help you to focus your thoughts/feelings/experiences rather than just a description of the experience.

(University of Cambridge, 2023)

Referencing Reflective Academic Work

- As with all submissions, you **MUST** reference your Reflective Journal.
- Please read the Referencing exemplar Handout



But how do I
reference my
own
experience?

Referencing Discussion

- How does the author of this passage reference the reflection?
- Why do you think the author is referencing it in this way?

Features of Reflective Writing

- Describing what happened and how you felt is only a small part of reflective writing.
- The emphasis as you write should be on your analysis and exploration of the experience.
- Reflective writing differs from most academic writing in that you will use the first person ("I") to describe the experience and your feelings.
- Most reflective writing for assignments will also include an academic element so you should write in the first person ("I felt...") for your own account and in the third person ("Jones (2010) suggests that ...") for the theory.

(University of Wolverhampton, 2018)

Features of Reflective Writing

- Use the past tense when writing about what happened and how you felt as you are looking back on the experience (e.g. "I felt..."), but when referring to any academic theory, use the present tense as these ideas are still current (e.g. "Jones argues that...").
- As in academic writing, reflective writing requires the use of formal language, arguments supported by evidence, and fully referenced information resources. Reflective writing looks to the future.
- You need to show how your reflection on what happened in the past will inform your future practice. Your analysis of the experience should be linked to academic theory in order to give it credibility.

(University of Wolverhampton, 2018)

Reflective Writing Task

- Over the last 4 weeks, we have learnt about reflective practice.
- We have explored how to write reflectively,
- Why we write reflectively (Benefits and barriers)
- And We have demonstrated this Using Gibbs reflective Cycle.
 - Remember this is not the only Reflection method that you can use
- For the rest of this session, I would like you to reflect on the last four weeks and write a short reflection using a model.
- Try to focus on your learning experience
 - What have you learnt?

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