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Essay/Gibbs Reflective Writing

Description: (what happened?)

Over the past couple of months, i found myself struggling trying to juggle and balance day to day life on top of pursuing my education. I'm a full-time mother to two young children so naturally household tasks and responsibilities, emotional needs of my children, essays and assignments and extremely bad lack of time management have created a chaotic and mentally draining environment for me. Majority of the time, i found myself in a state of despair as all the responsibilities have created an overwhelming weight on my shoulders, rushed meals, laundry stacking up, my children needing my attention. I constantly felt behind on everything and the pressure of failing made it impossible to manage. I constantly thought that i could complete and manage what's needed of me, but reality struck me as i was up at three am trying to finish my last assignments and how much I underestimated my optimisms with my time.

Feelings: (what were you thinking and feeling?)

Getting back into education at first, i felt confident and proud of myself for taking that step as i had been thinking about it for a while. I felt that i could balance my everyday life and my school life without any pressure, but soon, i realised how hard it was to manage **(The, 2023)**. I began feeling demotivated as i felt like I'm taking personal time away from my family and i had numerous amounts of negative emotions such as guilt, anxiety, and a strong sense of failure as i didn't want to let myself and my children down. I realised that it began taking its toll on me when small tasks as doing the dishes felt overpowering and i felt fatigued, i also felt lonely because i had thought no one could understand what i was going through at the time. During this, my daughter was teething so i was up most of the night for several days only to get up at 8am and go to my classes feeling like i should be at home with my child when they needed me **(Dow, 2025)**.

Evaluation (What was good and bad about the situation?)

One thing i can take away from this challenging time of my life is the importance of self-care and my limitations. What i discovered about myself is that when in stressful situations i have a mediocre effort at tasks which leads me to face these negative emotions. I've also come to the realisation that i am resilient even though i did struggle quite a lot, i didn't give up and there were quite a lot of times i really wanted to but i kept my head high and wanted to be in charge, although i didn't manage it in the best way , i have had strong will to keep pushing forward so looking back i am proud of myself in a way or another. However, the negative aspect would be my poor time management **(Parsons, 2022)**. Having poor time management meant that I was too distracted with 10 things at once and my children and partner had to see me in an easily irritable state, so my home life suffered too as well as my results because they were poorly written, i was often in overstimulated states where i didn't know what to begin with which left me awake late at night trying to make the deadline of my assignments resulting in me losing sleep and focus . I had felt like I wasn't completely present in a role as a mother, partner or as a student. The deficiency of planning, maintaining and keeping on top tasks made this experience harder **(Sokolova, 2021)**. This experience taught me the importance of appreciating small successes, as i finished one of my assignments i have felt pleased with myself that i managed to write it given the chaos or getting through the day without being frustrated or irritable, cooking a decent meal while managing my children. At the end of the day, these steps helped me realise some days weren't as bad as the others. **(Melissa Russell, 2024)**

Analisis (Why did it happen?)

Reflecting back now, i can see that i struggled mainly because of unrealistic expectations and lack of planning and readiness. I had thought that i could carry the mental load of parenting, staying on top of my education, housework, family time and studying. I didn't create a realistic pattern to follow which lead to mental exhaustion. My time management was a significant problem as i did not set a straight foreword strategy and often thought i didn't need help which led to poor multitasking. **(University of York, 2016)** I had thought that asking for help was a sign of weakness and fragility and I wanted to prove mainly to myself that I've got this, i also thought that slowing down would only push me backwards. However, i didn't communicate efficiently with my support network, i merely thought that seeing me struggle is translucent, but i put a brave face on and masked how i was having difficulties managing which resulted in me feeling stuck and not reach out when i most needed it.

Action plan (What will you do next time)

Moving forward if i were to find myself in a similar situation i would have approached things very differently based off what i experienced through this difficult time. I would like to coordinate a schedule. I have started using a diary which has helped me prioritise the most important tasks to follow first which helps me avoid wasting time, map out daily tasks, i have created a better routine for my children which helps me provide an overall better structure for us individually. These steps i have included in my routine has implemented better results for me as i feel more confident and in control which has boosted my mindset and my mood and most importantly it helped me make steady progress without procrastinating (**claire, 2018**). Additionally, I'm learning the importance of reaching out or accepting help when I'm stuck or overwhelmed in challenging situations as a helping hand would have released as well as released some tension and stress i had built up. To help my time management, i will be using digital calendars and daily to do lists to stay on track of my tasks (**Badgujar, 2022**). Self-care is also an aspect i need to add to my routine, this will support me as i can take time for small, consistent habits that protect my mental health, getting a nutritional meal, efficient rest, staying hydrated or even small walks will drastically help reduce anxiety and stress. By taking these steps i will be prioritising my well-being which will lead me to be in a place where i can support my children and do better with my education. To end this reflection essay i will regularly reflect on my progress as a ongoing habit such as setting up personal goals and celebrate small wins to keep me going for example submitting my tasks on deadlines, this will help me recognise any patterns whether negative or positive so i can make adjustments when needed. Reflection helps me stay on track and grounded, it will help me make a suitable plan and a overall balanced lifestyle.

Conclusion (What else could you have done?)

Looking back, I see various things that i could have done differently. Firstly, i could have created a realistic and strategic schedule that accommodated flexibility, limited distractions, used a calendar to stay on top of deadlines, prioritize tasks (**Reeves and Charme di Carlo, 2017**) and most importantly self-care as well as setting easily achievable goals that would potentially reduce any negative emotions. Uncomplicated tasks like asking or accepting help when needed, asking my lecturers for an extension when urgent and i could have been easier on myself as a strong percentage of my stress came from my own thoughts and feelings, when in challenging situations i should recognise that i am trying my best and that its okay to not be perfect and not have all the answers sometimes. These steps would have helped me be in a less challenging and

chaotic atmosphere where i can focus on the main tasks which would've given me some space to breathe and regroup, I can see now that considering an effective action plan ahead and categorise priorities would aid me drastically in circumstances like this. Looking back on this experience my intentions were positive, my approach lacked structure. I came into this experience with a strong will to succeed as a student and a mother and I haven't realised this choice would need to have a good structure and resilience. **(Lumen Learning, 2019)** Balancing both academic and a parenting life is tricky so taking these measures are essential for development and success.

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