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The art of counselling is one that requires the full engagement of all the consciousness and awareness of the practitioner. Reflective practice is one of the tools that helps practitioners to grow in the knowledge of their practice and in self-awareness and understanding of their own emotions in practice. Within self-reflection are different reflective models used to undertake effective reflection. The purpose of reflection as stated Paterson and Chapman is to work out what is already known and add new information with the result of drawing out knowledge, new meaning and a higher level of understanding. **(Paterson.Colin, Chapman. Judith, *Enhancing skills of critical reflection to evidence learning in professional practice. 2013*)**

I will be discussing these models and what they each contribute to Reflective Practice. Out of these four models, I will be choosing one as a model reference do discuss my personal practice experience. The four Reflective Models used in reflective practice includes the following: ERA model, Driscoll's Model, Kolb's experiential learning model, and Gibb's model.

The ERA is an acronym that stands for Experience, Reflection, and Action. The core of this model centres on reflecting on the experience, a significant event that occurred that the practitioner seeks to reflect on to gain more understanding. Reflection is the act of the reflecting on the event on incident to learn from the experience. From such reflection, the practitioner then moves on to Action some plans they put in place during the reflection.

Driscoll's 'What?' Model, Driscoll's model helps the practitioner to engage in reflection using the What questioning Model. The What questioning model begins with "What, So What, Now What. The first what talks about the event of the situation, the second what, "so what" seeks to analyze the event and the "Now What" depicts the proposed actions to follow one's

analysis. The next model is Kolb's experiential learning model, the model offers a deeper reflective style. While this is a cyclical model, it has four stages which allows the practitioner to be forward thinking and focuses on moving forward instead of focusing on the negative. Kolb's model includes the concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, Active experimentation. The fourth model is Gibb's reflective model Describes six stages, Feelings, Evaluation, Analysis, Conclusion, Action Plan. This model stretches and goes a bit more in detail than other models. Having a background in policy development, I like the approach that this model takes. **(Slade, Catherine. The Use of Questions in Counselling, 2021)**

Policies are meant to address issues, and in policy development, there is what we call policy cycle. Within the policy cycle, policy makers first present the issue at hand, that is the issues that requires a policy to address. The next step is to conduct issue analysis, what is the issue, who does it affect, and how can it be resolved, and what are the possible policy alternatives.

Once the question of who, what, how and when are answered, policy makers narrow down the policy alternatives. Thus, the policy cycle begin. Within the policy cycles are various steps, that is, the proposed policy, policy analysis to see if this proposed policy addresses the question, if the policy passes the analysis stage it moves to the implementation stage, from implementation, comes the review. The policy review after implementation helps policy makers to measure the success of the policy in addressing the issue it was meant to solve. From this stage of analysis, a decision is made weather to leave the policy as is or to make amendments as needed. This process to me, seems similar to Gibb's reflection model and for that reason, I will choose Gibb's reflection model as my reference model in writing about my personal reflective journey and experience. In her article, ***Practice: The Necessary***

Preparation for working with People, Sarah Hewlett, stresses on the importance of the practitioner being well equipped with the skill needed to administer counselling to their clients. Hewlett, sites Gibb's model as an effective tool in reflection allowing the practitioner to really break down their thoughts and feeling, and analyzing their feelings as its applicable to their person and profession experience. She stresses on recognizing the inhibitors to reflection and allowing oneself to engage in deep reflection. Overall, she commends Gibb's model as an effective tool not only for experienced practitioners but also for beginners as the heart of the model is the understanding of self and one's own practice, self-care.

Understanding Gibb's Reflective Model

Gibb's model of reflection is a model carved by Graham Gibbs. Gibbs crafted this model in the year 1988 and the core of the model is to define the art of reflection experience in six steps. The model allows the practitioner to use the six-step model to engage in a practitioner's self-care and awareness. The six steps includes the following:

- **Description** of the experience
- **Feelings** and thoughts about the experience
- **Evaluation** of the experience, both good and bad
- **Analysis** to make sense of the situation.
- **Conclusion** about what you learned and what you could have done differently.
- **Action plan** for how you would deal with similar situations in the future, or general changes you might find appropriate. (Edinburgh University, [REFLECTION TOOLKIT](#)

The model starts with recognizing or giving a description of the experience. This experience is the base or the basis of a person's reflection. In writing about my own personal experience, I can say the most significant experience that occurred in my life that brought me to a place of deep reflection was my divorce. This pain of this experience got me to a place where I naturally had to engage in deep reflection. In the article, **2016 International Practice Development Journal 6 (1) [7], CRITICAL REFLECTION ON PRACTICE DEVELOPMENT**, Margaret Martin, shares their team building experience on reflectivity practice. In this article she talks about the importance of leading people to find solutions through their own reflection instead of giving them solutions. She indicates that using enabling questions allowed her team members to engage in personal and professional engagement. She writes,

Our team is engaged in work across the health district that aims to enhance positive workplace cultures. This includes bodies of work relating to leadership development, and patient- and person-centred care programmes. It also involves working with groups of health professionals with the goal of fostering their development as teams. We avoid giving solutions, preferring to facilitate teams as they explore issues and develop their own solutions through asking them enabling questions.

2016 International Practice Development Journal 6 (1) [7], CRITICAL REFLECTION ON PRACTICE DEVELOPMENT. <https://www.fons.org/library/journal-ipdj-home>

In using Gibb's model and much like any of the other models, effective questioning of oneself is essential to finding truth in a reflective practice. As the models are guides and not absolutes, they become ineffective without the right questions. Taking Gibbs model in consideration, each step flows into the other, thus a faulty description leads to incongruent feelings, which leads to an inconsistent evaluation and analysis, resulting to a faulty conclusion, and an action plan that is likely not effective in resolving the core issue

that therefore making the person prone to repeating the same mistakes and finding themselves in a cycle of repeated mistakes. Gibb's model is considered cyclical and while life itself, just by the nature of it, is cyclical, there are some challenges in life that ought not be cyclical, the model sets the practitioner on a continuum of process and repeated cycles. While this is good, when a practitioner is dealing with a positive reflection, it becomes a challenge when an alternative form seems not to be a possibility when dealing with a negative issue. *In her article, **Application of Graham Gibbs Model of Reflection to Improve Teaching, 2020**, Jane Oviawe asserts that,* Gibb's model of reflection gives direction to reflective practice, taking the practitioner from one stage to the other. While there are great benefits to directed reflection, we must also understand that human life is not in a parallel sequence and issues of life are not always or never linear. Oviawe writes,

..Gibbs model is used because it describes the direction of reflection in a way that the action taken at the final stage makes feedback into the first stage (that is, beginning the process again).

In this next part of my paper, I will be focusing on my personal reflective experience using Gibb's model.

In 2018, I went through a life crisis that brought me to a place of deep reflection. Unbeknownst to me, I had a personal reflection that I could quantify this moment using the various models of reflection. However, I choose Gibb's model to describe my experience because the steps in this model closely relates to the steps I employed in my personal experience.

Description of my Personal Experience

Towards the end of 2017, myself and my partner lived in Glasgow, Scotland. Scotland is a beautiful place that I love so much. We had a beautiful life as a young couple and had many dreams ahead of us, yet an unfortunate thing happened when my husband met another lady at work. Our marriage deteriorated quickly and my hope of a future with this man was crushed. In 2018, our divorce was finalized, a divorce that I did not want despite being cheated on and going through all kinds of abuse.

Recollection of My Feelings

Someone once said, the pain of divorce was worse than the pain of death, I could not understand this until I experienced this kind of pain myself. Divorce is a tragic event that if not handled well, a person may never fully recover from the pain and stigma of divorce. This divorce situation caused me to feel betrayed, violated, and let down. My whole world was shattered and my self-esteem was at the lowest. I loved my husband and going through such betrayal from him was very painful for me. I could not imagine how a person you love so much can betray you in such a manner. I felt ashamed, hurt, and deeply wounded. I could not imagine how I would go through this painful experience. There were times that I felt like I was not worth living. I could not imagine the possibility of moving on. This affected my work, my social life, my health, and overall outlook on life. It was a painful experience I did not want to go through ever again.

As I acknowledged my feelings about the situation, I also felt I needed to step out of my feelings and imagine what it was like to be in the shoes of my husband. Was he enjoying seeing me suffer or was he remorseful?

In the article, *A reflective cycle: Understanding challenging situations in a school setting*, Markkanen, Pihla et al., 2020, used the Gibb's model to allow teachers to live vicariously through the heart and mind of their students to have a deeper understanding of the challenges

their students experience and to have a better understanding of how to provide the right support to their students in the face of adversity and challenges. They writes,

“Teaching staff were able to reflect on challenging situations from a variety of perspectives. Gibbs’ reflective cycle was a helpful aid for teaching staff when reflecting on their feelings, thoughts, and actions related to challenging situations. The participants tried to understand the challenging situations from the pupils’ point of view and considered the situations as opportunities to learn to review their professional practice”.

In my quest to have a better understanding of the situation, I applied this principle and reflected on past events and tried to understand what would cause my husband to feel the need to step out of our marriage. Applying this method, helped me to see areas of weakness on both sides and in situations that I have missed it or make mistakes. Having this understanding did not justify his actions but made me aware of my own mistakes and provided a learning opportunity for me to learn valuable lessons from where I got it wrong.

Evaluation

The pain that I felt was so excruciating that I had to take some time and to consider why I was feeling such intense pain. Was I in pain such pain because of the situation that led to the divorce, the stigma of the divorce with my close circles, was it the sense of betrayal or that thought of starting all over again? After evaluating my feelings about the experience, I realized the pain I was feeling was a mixture of reactions towards the separation from the person I loved deeply, the shame of how he treated me and the stigma of the situation. At this point I knew that I had to find a solution to this challenge as I could not imagine myself going through such grievous pain for the rest of my life. I knew I needed a plan to overcome this challenge. Being stigmatized as a young, divorced woman is something that is quite common in the community I am a part of. This is so for two reasons; the African culture really places a great deal of

importance and emphasis on family life and marriage. Being a Christian and knowing what the scripture says about divorce is another factor that makes being a divorcee a reality that was hard to accept. Sadly, these two communities' judges divorced women much harshly than the men. My initial response to the stigma I was facing in church was that of resentment because I felt that was the place that I needed the support. And indeed, I did get a great deal of support from the church but its amazing how you can focus on the few negatives when you are in pain. Also having an understanding of this scripture made a world of a difference in how I perceived God would respond to my situation and what His perception of me was as a divorcee.

“For the Lord God of Israel says

That He hates divorce,

For it covers one's garment with violence,”

Says the Lord of hosts.

“Therefore take heed to your spirit,

That you do not deal treacherously.” Malachi 2:16 New King James Version.

Prior to my divorce I'd read this scripture a number of time and heard it preach for many years, but I did not have a true and deeper understanding of this scripture as when I went through the divorce. My understanding of this scripture after my divorce was that God hates divorce not because He has the people involved in the divorce or hates them for what they have done but rather hates what divorce does to a person or the impact divorce has on the people involved. As I woman, I really found great comfort in God as a father reading through the scripture and seeing how God spoke in favour of women who were rejected by their partner. Scriptures such as

Malachi 2:14 New King James Version

Yet you say, “For what reason?”

Because the Lord has been witness

Between you and the wife of your youth,

With whom you have dealt treacherously;

Yet she is your companion

And your wife by covenant.

And Isaiah 54: 4-8 English Standard Version

“Fear not, ^mfor you will not be ashamed;
be not confounded, for you will not be disgraced;
for you will forget the shame of your youth,
and the reproach of your widowhood you will remember no more.

5 ⁿFor your Maker is your husband,
the Lord of hosts is his name;
^oand the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer,
^pthe God of the whole earth he is called.

6 ^qFor the Lord has called you
like a wife deserted and grieved in spirit,
like a wife of youth when she is cast off,
says your God.

7 ^rFor a brief moment I deserted you,
but with great compassion I will gather you.

8 ^sIn overflowing anger for a moment
I hid my face from you,

but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you,”

says the Lord, your Redeemer.

What I found intriguing was that I found much comfort in these ancient scriptures that what I found in my interactions with people and how they responded to me because of my gender. In reading the article, *The Significance of Gender in Predicting the Cognitive Moral Development of Business Practitioners Using the Sociomoral Reflection Objective Measure*, Beverly Kracher & Robert P. Marble, 2008,

the pairs raise a many great points on how society views gender in the issue pertaining to moral judgement in the business world. The core of their theory is that societal views on women being more upright in business have changed and the expectation of moral judgment in business for men and women are almost the same, yet what I find fascinating is that in some arenas of life, the moral responsibility on men and women are almost the same yet as advance as society is now, women are still judged harshly when it comes to matter of family life and marriage.

My Analysis of My Divorce

Growth and understanding in every situation are essential to me as a person and for that matter, analyzing and seeking growth opportunity out of this situation was important for me. To go through such a situation and not learning anything out of it. What I wanted to seek out of this analysis was, what made my partner seek another woman? Was there something that I was not doing or was not giving to him? At which point in our marital journey did he make a decision to look elsewhere? What was the actual damage of this situation to me? Will I

recover from it and how can I recover from it, and when will I recover from this? I had many questions and needed to find solutions to it.

Conclusion

Upon my analysis I came to the conclusion that there was not much I could have done from my side to prevent this situation. Each of us have decisions to make each day to either stay committed to our relationships or to step outside of our relationship. As a couple we had minor challenges which to me was part of an everyday challenge for couples, nothing that should have led to divorce. This did not mean that there was no opportunity for learning and growth from this situation. I learned in this situation that as much as we would want things to be permanent, yet sometimes we cannot determine what others will do and we should have the mindset of recovery no matter what comes our way. This situation taught me the unpredictability of life. Life is unpredictable and we cannot always predict what is to come yet we can overcome the worse possible situations with the right attitude, support from our loved ones, and a faith in God who makes all things possible. My conclusion was that I needed healing. I needed to be healed and to get my life back and to achieve that there were steps in need to take to attain that healing.

I realize that to get my life back and attain some normalcy I needed to go on a journey of healing. In thinking about healing, I knew I needed to forgive. I needed forgive myself, forgive those who had hurt me, accept the new reality, and move on to create a new future for myself. These were my goals and to achieve these goals, I had to put a plan in place.

Action plan

Healing is a journey that takes time and, in my opinion, deliberate actions. I was focused and knew exactly what I wanted my life to look like in the next few years. While I did not know what was in the future, I needed I wanted to be healed. I know I wanted to be happy and live a life free of bitterness and anger. I decided to take a journey, a sabbatical, a change of environment to do some soul searching and allow myself to heal. Being a person of faith, I trusted the healing power of God and the ability to find healing in the scriptures and through prayer. Therefore, I enrolled in the Bible College of Wales, Swansea and spent 7 months in Swansea. This was the steppingstone and the beginning of my healing journey.

While I was at the Bible College of Wales, I spent a lot of time alone due to the Lock and this allowed me to reflect and seek healing. This journey went on for a while as was expected. Through out the journey discovered areas of brokenness that I had prior to being married that made feel so insecure to go to the extent of “fighting hard” for the marriage even after I was grossly betrayed. While I was desperate to save the marriage, I put myself in harm’s way and allowed myself to be mistreated and humiliated yet deep within me I knew I was stronger than that and deserved better. Within the course of my seven-month Sabbatical, I found strength, and a sense of worth, a new outlook on life which led me to write three books.

The writing experience was so empowering and fulfilling. I initially thought to write one book but ended up writing three books. I felt so empowered that I vowed to myself never again to find myself in such a place of vulnerability. To ensure that I live up to this vow and not find myself in that place of vulnerability, I put some plan in place to ensure that my life was on an upward climb. These plans included building on my business to make it more profitable, working on my build my writing and speaking portfolio. I figured that building myself up financial and making myself profitable in other areas of my life would in many

ways help me maintain a healthy self-esteem, give me greater exposure to other areas of life, and help me connect with people in spheres of influence that I had not experienced before. I felt this would help me to achieve well rounded wholeness which will lead to healthy future relationships.

After a year post healing journey, I can attest that these resolutions have been beneficial to me in many ways. I am emotionally healthier, mentally stronger, growing in my craft and in my business and nurturing a healthy relationship that has a great chance of leading into marriage.

My divorce experience was one that brought me into deep darkness and sorrow. At the heat of the unfortunate event, I felt hopeless, I could not see my way out of this deep darkness. Yet in the midst of that hopelessness, I never needed to find healing or create a better life for myself. While I did not see a professional counsellor, I believe that I engaged in a personal reflective practice and in many ways applying Gibb's model of reflection took me from recognizing and accepting my situation to finding wholeness and implementing preventative measures that will keep me from having a repeated marital relationship failure.

Going through Gibb's model of personal reflection for this paper brought back memories of the dark places yet but the same model reaffirmed how far I have come in my healing and what I have accomplished since the unfortunate situation happened in my life. This reflective practice also brought up areas of discomfort that are still lingering that I need to pay attention to and work at completing healing from it. This then affirms the need for a practitioner to continually engage in reflective practice as a means of effective self-care.

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