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Title of essay - Using Gibbs' reflective cycle to reflect on your personal development during the process of making the group video. Weave in concepts of group work, Design Thinking and personal development into your insights to support your reflection.

Using Gibbs' reflective cycle to reflect on your personal development during the process of making the group video. Weave in concepts of group work, Design Thinking and personal development into your insights to support your reflection.

Reflective practice is a key component of both academic and professional development, allowing individuals to critically evaluate experiences and identify areas for improvement. This essay applies Gibbs' Reflective Cycle to reflect on my experience of working within a group to deliver a presentation on how screen time affects behaviour. The reflection will incorporate concepts of group work, design thinking, and personal development to provide a deeper level of analysis and demonstrate progression towards a merit-level understanding.

Gibbs' Reflective Cycle is a framework used to help people think systematically about their experiences so they can learn and improve from them. Developed by Graham Gibbs, it breaks reflection into six clear stages: Description of what happened, who was involved, what occurred and who took part. Feelings of what you thought and felt, reflecting on the emotions you experienced. Evaluation of what was good or bad, identifying what went well and what did not. Analysis is making sense of the situation, digging deeper into the positives and negatives outcomes. Conclusion, summarising what you learned, the key lessons learned from the experience. And finally, an action plan, of what you would do differently next time, outlining specific steps you will take to improve or maintain successful outcomes. The model is widely used in education and professional settings because it encourages deeper thinking, helping individuals not just describe events but understand them and use that insight to support personal development and future improvement. (McLeod, 2025)

1. Description

The task involved working in a group of five to produce and deliver a presentation focusing on the impact of screen time on behaviour. The group was self-selected, which initially suggested that communication and collaboration would be effective due to pre-existing relationships. My role within the group was to explore the

relationship between screen time and mental health. I chose this role as it aligned with both my personal interests and my professional experience as an Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA), where I regularly observe the impact of emotional wellbeing on behaviour.

Communication within the group took place through a combination of WhatsApp messaging and face-to-face meetings. However, communication was inconsistent, and planning lacked structure. While all group members contributed to some extent, there were instances where individuals worked independently rather than collaboratively. This resulted in some misunderstandings and a lack of cohesion. Minor conflicts also arose, primarily due to differences in opinion and a lack of clear communication. These were partially resolved through face-to-face discussions.

Despite these challenges, the group completed the presentation, and on the day, each member contributed. The content covered the key areas of the topic, including the behavioural and mental health implications of screen time.

2. Feelings

Initially, I felt confident about the task, particularly because I was able to select a topic that aligned with my interests and experience. However, as the project progressed, I began to feel frustrated with the lack of communication and organisation within the group. The inconsistency in teamwork led to moments where it felt as though we were not functioning as a cohesive unit.

I also experienced anxiety in relation to presenting, as I do not naturally feel confident speaking in front of others. However, I recognised this as an opportunity for personal growth. Additionally, I felt frustrated at times with group dynamics, particularly when some members discussed issues indirectly rather than addressing them openly. This created unnecessary tension and impacted the overall group atmosphere.

At the same time, I felt a sense of satisfaction when contributing my own section, as I

was confident in the quality of my work and my understanding of the topic.

3. Evaluation

There were several positive aspects of this experience. The group successfully completed the task and delivered a presentation that addressed the key themes. My individual contribution, particularly in relation to mental health, was strong and informed by both academic understanding and practical experience.

The experience also contributed to my personal development. I developed greater patience and began to build confidence in presenting. These are valuable transferable skills that are relevant in both academic and professional contexts.

However, there were also notable weaknesses. Communication was inconsistent, which impacted the group's ability to collaborate effectively. According to Bruce Tuckman's model of group development, effective teams progress through stages such as forming, storming, norming, and performing. In this case, the group appeared to remain within the 'storming' stage for longer than necessary, as conflict and lack of clarity were not fully resolved early on.

Planning and organisation were also limited. The absence of clear deadlines and regular meetings reduced accountability and contributed to inefficiencies. Additionally, while all members contributed, the level of engagement varied, and I acknowledge that I could have been more proactive in contributing to discussions.

4. Analysis

To gain a deeper understanding of this experience, it is important to consider relevant theoretical frameworks. Effective group work is dependent on clear communication, shared responsibility, and mutual respect (Johnson and Johnson, 2009). In this case, while roles were identified, the lack of consistent communication meant that the group did not fully achieve effective collaboration. This supports the idea that simply assigning roles is not sufficient; ongoing interaction and accountability are essential.

The concept of design thinking also provides a useful lens for analysis. Design thinking emphasises collaboration, creativity, and iterative problem-solving (Brown, 2008). While the group engaged in some idea-sharing, the process lacked structure and consistency. For example, the 'ideation' stage was limited due to infrequent discussions, and there was minimal opportunity for feedback or refinement of ideas ('testing' stage). This suggests that a more structured, design-thinking approach could have enhanced both the process and the final outcome.

From a personal development perspective, this experience highlighted both strengths and areas for growth. I demonstrated independence and subject knowledge by producing a strong individual contribution. However, I also recognised a tendency to adopt a more passive role within group settings. This aligns with my preference for working independently, where I feel more in control of the outcome.

However, as highlighted by Kolb's experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984), learning occurs through reflection on experience. This experience has demonstrated that avoiding active participation in group discussions can limit both personal development and group effectiveness. By engaging more proactively, I could have contributed more significantly to the overall quality of the presentation.

Additionally, the experience emphasised the importance of emotional intelligence in group work (Goleman, 1995). Managing frustration, responding to conflict, and maintaining professionalism are essential skills. While I demonstrated patience, the group could have benefited from more direct and respectful communication.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this experience of group work provided valuable insights into both my own development and the dynamics of teamwork. While the group was able ultimately to complete the task successfully, there were clear limitations in communication, organisation, and collaboration. These challenges impacted the overall effectiveness of the group.

On a personal level, I was able to produce a strong contribution and begin developing confidence in presenting. I also developed patience and gained a better understanding of my working style. However, I recognise the need to become more proactive and engaged in group situations.

The integration of theoretical perspectives, including Gibbs' Reflective Cycle, group work theory, and design thinking, highlights that effective collaboration requires structure, communication, and active participation. Without these elements, group work is less likely to reach its full potential.

6. Action Plan

To improve my future performance in group work, I will take several practical steps. Firstly, I will adopt a more proactive approach by helping to organise meetings and establish clear deadlines. This will improve structure and accountability within the group.

Secondly, I will actively contribute to discussions by sharing ideas and engaging with others' perspectives. This will help create a more collaborative environment and enhance the overall quality of the work.

Thirdly, I will promote open and honest communication within the group, addressing issues directly rather than allowing tension to build. This will contribute to a more positive and effective team dynamic.

Finally, I will continue to develop my confidence in presenting by seeking opportunities to practice and improve my public speaking skills. This will support both my academic progress and future professional development.

Overall, this experience has reinforced the importance of effective group work skills and highlighted key areas for personal development. By applying these lessons, I aim to become a more confident, proactive, and collaborative learner.

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