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Introduction

I am writing to present how this module has developed my academic and employability skills and how, it provides me with different techniques that can be applied in pursuit of my chosen career; through its use of self-analysis models and its teaching of goal and target setting methods, which have benefited me by allowing me to better plan and prioritize tasks. I will include references to the topics discussed within this module and I will explain the benefits of each of the techniques. I will show my understanding of theories by applying anecdotal evidence, to present my practice of reflection and the skills gained in using them.

Time management /Reflective methods

Our lecturer told us to have a group discussion about time management, we gave various answers such as: using post-it-notes, writing in a diary, setting alarms for appointments, writing the appointment in a calendar and setting an alarm on your phone the day before.

The lecturer explained that she uses a memory board which shows her what she has done, should be doing and what she will do or aims to do in the future.

The use of photos to aid in remembering was mentioned; it was said that it could help us remember important events so that we would be able to plan for the event by using information gained from the photos. Work diaries were also mentioned as beneficial, it was explained that it allows health care professionals to log information about their work with patients and also self-assesses their ability to provide adequate care for their patients, they would record this through digitally writing and physically noting it down, allowing them to log appointments and better prepare for the patient.

We then discussed the practicality of each of these methods, our lecturer explains that she doesn't trust the brain's ability to store information accurately, due to its ability to interpret information as something different from expected, for example mistaking 1400 hours for four o'clock, due to stress. She also explained that photos may be disorganised, hard to find and we may forget to use our photos to remember or may run out of space, and those work diaries may not accurately express the patient's response to care.

We watched a video for time management by Doubek (2011) promoting the use of a planner to log vital information that would better prepare us for 'events, plans or other activities' that we may forget; due to the likelihood of us focusing on an urgent event we may have, such as: returning a call or replying to messages rather than completing important tasks such as preparing for a meeting, that may be in hours or days. I have employed these methods into my daily life and the use of reflective cycles.

Gibbs reflective cycle

During this module, we discussed personal and professional development and were provided with self-reflection models that could enable us to understand our progress such as the Gibbs reflective cycle (1988), which involves:

A description of the event. Our feelings and thoughts about the event. An evaluation of the event. An analysis of the situation. A conclusion of what could have been done better and an action plan which shows what could have been done differently for better results; if events were to repeat.

My use of this reflective cycle in learning is:

Description

When I was six years old I had developed a serious outer ear infection from swimming and was instructed to take a daily dose of medication for six weeks, but as I started to feel better and did not like taking antibiotics, I threw away the rest of the dose that my parents kept in my room and filled it with water.

I had unknowingly gambled with my life, the symptoms returned but much worse. Days later I woke up to find that I could no longer hear when my name was called, I confessed to my parents who banned me from swimming as punishment and took me to a GP, who called me 'naughty' and prescribed me a new set of antibiotics. Over time the infection cleared, and I was no longer allowed to go swimming, without earplugs or making sure I had properly dried my ears after swimming.

Feelings

I felt irritation; physically because my ears ached, and emotionally due to the stress of having to be held down by my dad, as I squirmed having my mum pour liquid antibiotics in my ears; leaving me feeling as though my ears were burning like mint or as if something was crawling in my ear, even though it was just antibiotics.

Evaluation

Reflecting back on this experience, I believe that if I had fully understood the need for antibiotics and not replaced the antibiotics with water, but instead finished the dose prescribed, the infection would have cleared in less than a few weeks and I would not have needed to start a new dose or banned from swimming by my parents, I would have shown that I was responsible enough to take the medication and not childish and irresponsible towards my health; however, the experience has positively impacted my views on medicine and my ability to follow the instructions of professionals, rather than challenging them, and I now understand the risks of swimming without protecting my ears.

Analysis

I now know the importance of completing a prescribed dose of antibiotics and the risk of developing an antibiotic-resistant infection and the importance of asking questions when given instructions. I understand that I could have permanently lost my hearing, which as I think back is quite devastating to imagine, as people living in poorer countries may not have access to a complete set of antibiotics and may not regain their hearing due to bacterial resistance, and would gladly take the medicine. I understand that my parents had put the medication in my room to empower me, to show me that this was my responsibility; as well as it being a reminder for them to give me my medication.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I should not have seen taking the medication as a chore or as a punishment but instead as a necessary evil; for me to recover and return to being healthy. I also should have known that my parents would eventually find out that the water was not improving my health, which led to bacterial resistance due to not finishing the prescription.

Action plan

In future, I will ensure that any course of medication set by medical professionals for me to take ;if I am unwell and in need of medication, I will take it and would follow the instructions set, as well as ask questions about the medicine to comprehend the need of the medication and to gain as much information as possible about the risks; if I forget to take it, as well as the importance of the medicine for the illness and any possible alternatives.

The benefits

Using Gibbs' reflective cycle (1988) allows me to understand events that have occurred, with an insight into what happened and what may have needed to happen for improved results.

When using this I am better equipped to understand what my thoughts and feelings are, it enables me to develop mindfulness towards my tasks, I can perform effectively and am aware of what I feel concerning tasks. I believe that this reflective cycle has developed my cognizance of academic working; I am better at emotionally stepping away from a situation and using logic, and asking questions, than instead believing that I am unable to perform a task well or even capable of starting tasks without failing.

An example of this is when first learning how to ride a bike, fear of failure and injury and social/ cultural pressures can inhibit enthusiasm, consequently leading someone to give up, without fully immersing themselves in the activity, had they understood what was required and focused on the task they would have developed a greater understanding of the skill, but are instead left with unused potential regarding the skill.

Smart Targets

In class we were informed about S.M.A.R.T targets (Doran,1981), which is a way of creating goals and can be used to create principles for target setting which are:

Specific; keeping the target specific to the desired result. measurable; there should be a method of keeping track of progress. Achievable; it must be possible therefore realistic, which means that the task can be done and is not impossible. Targets must also be within a time frame and thereby time-bound to ensure completion and to increase the likelihood of success.

Smart targets may be used to organize our lives, by allowing us to perform better at work and develop our planning ability.

My use of this model

SPECIFIC

My task was to reflect on what has been taught within this module, with an explanation of how they have helped me, giving references to better support and evidence my reasoning. I will also show how I have used reflective models and time management methods.

MEASURABLE

I knew that this assignment had a deadline, and decided to spend at least two hours every day to perform the task by reviewing the previous lectures and assignment criteria, going to the student website to analyse videos related to the task, seeking out resources related to the task; my textbooks, notes and asking my lecturers to review my work, with this I was able to determine how much was needed for the task to be performed without adding excessive material. I thought about how I could apply what I had learned in class to my work, my school life and experiences; by doing this I could measure my progress, and over time, I would complete the task by logging my progress and asking if it was done correctly.

ACHIEVABLE

The task was set, I knew that If I were to collaborate with teachers, think about the task and review what had been taught; If I analysed what I had done in my previous assignments and what I had failed to do to get higher marks, I could effectively complete the assignment.

I wanted to know what had led me to procrastinate and not do as well. By looking at the mark scheme and the comments left by markers, I believed that if I replicated the desired action needed to achieve merit and distinction, I would need to refer to the mark scheme. I believe that if I also referred directly to the workbook and respond to the assignment brief the task would be achievable.

REALISTIC

I had to be realistic, I knew that on my own I could not just write a 2000 word assignment using just my notes and textbook and get 100% of the marks, I had to ask for help and gain criticism from my lecturer, I also had to understand that I could not be lazy and believe that I would start my assignment 'tomorrow', when it would never come; due to my belief that I would fail regardless, due to self-doubt in my academic ability; believing that if I don't try, I would never fail.

By using Smart target setting, I would be motivating myself, and capable of monitoring my daily progress through writing down what I had done on that day and previous days regarding my

assignment, such as reflective models, time management techniques and task setting. I also understood that this assignment has a word limit and could therefore not put an excessive amount of information.

TIME BOUND

By being time-bound, I was empowered by my progress and engrossed in the task but, I still have not completed it (when writing this) as I needed to organize the work further; to 'iron out the creases', I decided to give myself some time before the assignment to review my work and confirm with my lecturer if what I had done was correct. I would give myself a week to review my work before the deadline, and then hand it in.

The benefits

Smart targets are created for you to keep track of work through the 'measurable' aspect by reviewing what had been done and understanding what is needed to achieve the goal. With smart targets, you can successfully set a goal with sensible perimeters for the goal to be completed; with continuous action and a developed structure.

I found that when lacking the motivation to do work, smart target setting encouraged me to keep on task, it allowed me to break down a large task into smaller controlled chunks, by setting small goals that added up into a large goal, inevitably causing me to produce more work than initially expected.

Eat that Frog/The ABCDE Method

This method developed by Brian Tracy (2001), who informs us that if we are to perform tasks, we should give priority to the most important task and put tasks in order from 'A to E'. The most important task should be labelled 'A' as being 'very important', important tasks labelled under 'B'. Tasks that are 'nice to do' should be labelled under 'C', tasks that can be 'delegated to others' should be labelled under 'D', and tasks that can be eliminated 'whenever possible', should be labelled under 'E'. Brian Tracy

My use of this method

Within my daily life I found that tasks that I would perform every day become monotonous and boring, I seemed to perform tasks almost without thought about what is being done; because I would do it every day, and would not want to do them, but need to do them to accomplish the goals set, I would be relying on my automatic brain region, when getting up, cleaning myself, making toast, ironing, getting dressed, turning off the taps, etc. But I would always double-check to see if the iron is turned off, or if the door is closed even though I know it is locked.

I thought that by changing my daily rituals I would be more aware of my actions and better at managing my time. Instead of following my daily protocol, I employed the Eat That Frog and ABCDE method by Brian Tracy(2001); with this I would start my day by doing the most difficult

action; 'eating the ugliest frog first', on the previous night I would create a list of tasks that are to be completed. Before going to work or school, I would Iron my clothes, create a packed-lunch, plan the most effective journey to get to my destination the day before or early in the morning and create a list of activities to be done on the day, from the most important to the least important.

BENEFITS OF THIS METHOD

I would ensure that my bed was made, and that house-hold chores were completed, I found that by not pressing the snooze button and returning to sleep, I was motivated to keep focused on the tasks set, and was therefore; better prepared for the day by having greater time management abilities. Having a plan allowed me to do work-related tasks with ease because it was written down and I could review it and determine its importance, and I would know what to do and when to do it, by the scale of importance and need.

The Pomodoro Technique

Developed by Francesco Cirillo (2009). The Pomodoro method allows me to better manage my time by breaking the study session into digestible pieces of 25 minutes with a 5-minute break. After four Pomodoro's we can take a longer break of 15-30, but breaks are not mandatory; only suggested.

My use of this method

I found that when studying my level of focus would wean and I would get distracted, I learned that studying for hours is not as effective, if you do not give yourself adequate time to recuperate and properly absorb the information, so by using the Pomodoro technique, I found that I was able to enjoy what I was studying more, I was more focused on the task and would see learning as a challenge, instead of a chore.

My ability to retain information seemed to improve and I was less tired after studying and would then reward my study sessions with leisure activities to motivate me to continue using this method and to remind myself that studying could be exciting and rewarding and not unpleasant and dull. I accepted that my mindset of studying would impact my production of work.

BENEFITS OF THIS METHOD

This method seems to put pressure on my mind by showing me that my work time is running out, my response seems to be a panic, almost similar to the flight, fight and freeze response (Cannon,1932), when watching my time run out, I would think that if I continue doing work after the timer it would not be as effective as when I am being timed to work and would have less time for my break. I would restart the timer and immerse myself into an environment of pressure and tension; working independently and with focus.

Conclusion

Reflection allows us to review our skills by assessing our way of working, it trains our minds to understand our experiences and learn from mistakes, providing us with a deeper insight into the effectiveness of our activities by examining what we have learned through considering how we can improve.

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