

Reflection and Self- Reflection in Education

Subtitle

Overview

What is self-reflection?

Self-reflection in
psychology and
counselling

Reflective cycles &
frameworks

Reflective writing



Socrates

An **Unexamined**
Life
Is Not Worth
Living



What is
reflection?



What is self-reflection

- The process of examining and understanding one's thoughts, feelings and actions
- It is a cognitive and emotional process
- A deliberate and purposeful focus on one's own internal beliefs and behaviours
- A way of understanding the 'why' behind your thoughts, emotions and motivations
- A way of assessing yourself

Key Aspects of Self-Reflection

- Purposeful Introspection
- Not just thinking about something over and over
- Purposely examining your experiences and thoughts about a situation
- Promotes self-awareness and personal and professional development

Key aspects of S-R

- Promotes learning and growth
- Individuals can learn from their successes and mistakes
- Helps to gain valuable insight for future decision-making and behaviour
- Creates a mindset that embraces challenges and sees failures as an opportunity to learn

Key Aspects of Self-Reflection

- Context
- SR often involves considering experiences within a specific context
- E.g. academia, work
- The context of the situation helps individuals make sense of their thoughts and actions in a more meaningful way
- Critical Thinking
- Critical SR encourages people to question their assumptions, consider alternative perspectives and areas for improvement

Key aspects of S-R

- Enhances self-awareness
- Key component of SR
- Involves understanding your emotions, motivations, strengths, weaknesses and values
- Increased self-awareness = make more informed choices & navigating challenges with greater emotional intelligence
- Cultivates Empathy
- Understanding your own thoughts and emotions helps to gain a deeper understanding of others' perspectives and experiences

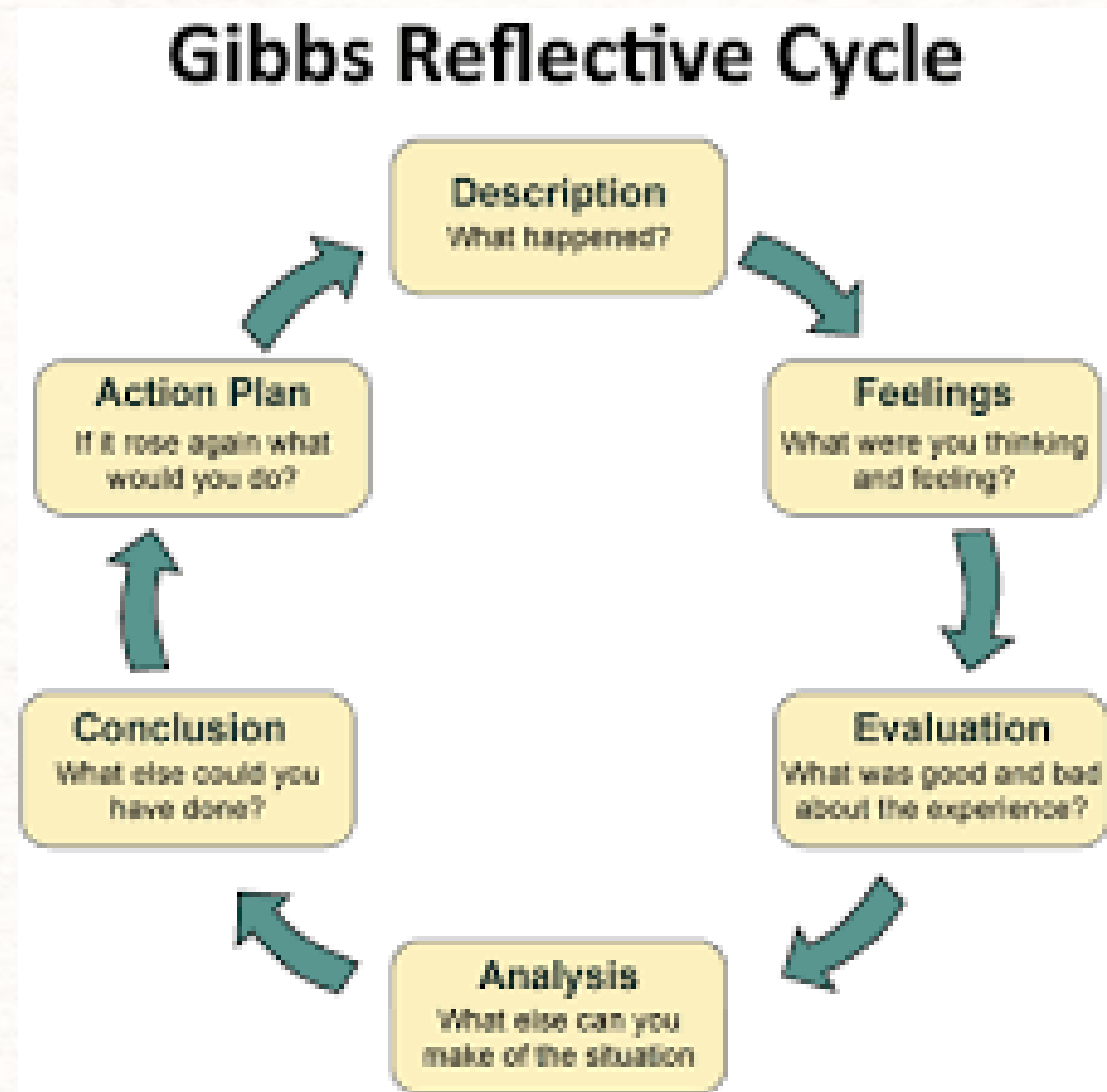
Models of S-R

- Unless you are used to this process, starting off can be difficult
- Lots of models exist to help guide your reflection
- They have common themes but take slightly different approaches
- Sometimes you may be asked to refer to a specific model, other times it is about demonstrating you have used one to guide you

Models of self-reflection (most popular)

- Gibbs Reflective Cycle (Gibbs, 1998)
- 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.

Gibbs (1998)



Gibbs (1998)

- **Description –**
- Describe in detail what happened during the event
- Where was I at the time?
- What was I doing?
- Who else was there and what were they doing?
- What happened?
- What was my part in this?
- What was the result?

Next...

- **Feelings**
- How were you feeling when the even started?
- What were you thinking about at the time?
- How did it make you feel?
- How did other people make you feel?
- How did you feel about the outcome of the event?
- What do you think about it now?

Next...

- **Evaluation & Analysis**
- What went well?
- What did I do well?
- What did others do well?
- What did not go well, or turn out as I had planned?
- What did I or others contribute to this outcome?

Next...

- **Conclusions**
- Now that you have explored your experience and drawn meaning from it (supported by scholarly evidence)
- You can draw conclusions about what it is that you need to do to improve and how you might achieve this

Finally...

- ACTION PLAN!
- How do you intend to make changes to your behaviour?
- What will I do differently?
- How?

Pro`s and con`s

- **Pros**

- Offers a structure to be followed
- Provides a useful starting point for those unsure where to begin
- Allows you to assess all levels of a situation
- You will know when the process is complete

- **Cons**

- Imply that steps must be followed in a defined way
- In the real world you may not start 'at the beginning'
- Models may not apply in every situation
- Reflective practice is a continuous process

Meaningful reflection

- REFLECTIVE JOURNAL
- DEDICATED TIME FOR REFLECTION
- SEEKING FEEDBACK FROM PEERS AND MENTORS

Barriers to reflection

- **TIME** - Whether you are studying, working or both it can be hard to find time to complete your existing to-do list so why add another thing? Doing proper reflection takes time but you need to think of this as an investment in your education, your professional development and your own mental wellbeing.
- **LACK OF SKILL** - Many people who are new to reflection are worried that they are doing it wrong or don't know where to start. Some of the popular models of reflection set unrealistic expectations that the process needs to be undertaken in a certain way. It is important to remember that reflection is a very individual process and there is no one 'right' way of doing it. You can follow which ever model suits you.
- **ENVIRONMENT** - For some people, finding a physical location to be reflective can be a challenge. You will need to be in a certain mind set in order to practice reflection and it can be difficult to find an available place for this.

Barriers to reflection

- **MOTIVATION** - A lack of time and support can take a toll on your ability to reflect, especially if you are reflecting on something you have been doing all day.
- **YOURSELF** - A lack of time and support can take a toll on your ability to reflect, especially if you are reflecting on something you have been doing all day.



What barriers
may prevent you
from being
reflective?



Reflective writing activity

- Writing about an experience
- Ultimately how you choose to reflect will be up to you.
- You may find that you can just start writing reflections or you may need some prompts. Try the formula below to write a short reflective piece using the three what's and a two, three, four sentence structure:
- Brief description (What?) - write a maximum of two sentences which describe the experience.
- What you thought about the experience (So what?) - write a maximum of three sentences which outline your feelings on the experience and anything you learnt from it.
- What happens next (Now what?) - write a maximum of four sentences on what you are going to do as a result of the experience

Reflective writing

Throughout your degree you will be asked to write a reflective essay/account

This type of writing is different from your standard academic essay

Can you distinguish what the key differences are?

Reflective writing

- Writing reflectively involves critically analysing an experience, recording how it has impacted you and what you plan to do with your new knowledge.
- It can help you to reflect on a deeper level as the act of getting something down on paper often helps people to think an experience through.
- The key to reflective writing is to be analytical rather than descriptive. Always ask 'why' rather than just describing what happened during an experience.

Reflective writing...

- IS

- Written in the first person
- Analytical
- Free flowing
- Subjective
- A tool to challenge assumptions
- A time investment

- IS NOT

- Written in the third person
 - Descriptive
 - What you think you should write
 - Objective
 - A tool to ignore assumptions
 - A waste of time
- 

Reflective terminology

- *A common mistake people make when writing reflectively is to focus too much on describing their experience. Phrases to help...*
 - 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...
- 

Free writing

- One of the main barriers to reflective writing is fear of the blank page.
- Whether you are looking at a sheet of paper or a computer screen there is nothing worse than staring at an empty page and wondering where to start.
- Free writing is an exercise which can help with this.
- When practicing free writing you don't need to think about sentence structure, grammar or spelling - you just write for a period of ten minutes without stopping.
- Taking away the pressure to produce something perfect the first time can really help to make your writing flow, and you will be surprised at how much you can produce in a short time.

Activity: Free writing reflection

- Choose one or two of the following images and write about it for ten minutes without stopping.
 - Don't worry about your sentence structure, grammar or spelling and don't review anything.
 - If you want to you can use the prompt questions next to the image to get you started but just write whatever comes to mind.
 - At the end of ten minutes look back at how much you have written. Are you surprised with the amount?
- 

Writing prompts

What could be happening?

Why is this happening?

What is going on around them?

What could happen next?



Writing prompts

What could be happening?

Why is this happening?

What is going on around them?

What could happen next?



Writing prompts

What could be happening?

Why is this happening?

What is going on around them?

What could happen next?



Writing prompts

What could be happening?

Why is this happening?

What is going on around them?

What could happen next?



Activity -

Using Gibbs (1998) model of reflection choose an experience from your first semester to reflect upon.

Next week –
compiling a PDP
using `smart` goals