



Reflection - The Synopsis

Learning Objectives

- Describe what reflective practice is
- Discuss why reflection practice is important in the everyday work environment
- Discuss the barriers to reflection
- Describe the differences between reflection and rumination
- Apply some structured models of reflective practice - 'What / So What /What Now' model

What is Reflection?

There are many proposed definitions, from the simple to the more complex.

- *To think carefully or deeply*
- *A process of seeking an understanding of self or situations to inform future action*
- *Persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in light of the grounds that support it and further conclusion to which it tends*

Why should one reflect?

Generically Reflection may:

- Aid understanding of one's strengths and weaknesses
- Identify and question underlying values and beliefs
- Acknowledge fears
- Recognise the potential for bias
- Identify areas for improvement

Reflective practice is more than just looking back at the events in the past. It is a way to be more intentional about our future. Having the ability to reflect on your actions is a really important tool for ongoing learning and for processing our experiences.

Reflection in Healthcare – Why is it necessary?

- We work in a complicated system in difficult and stressful situations.
- We interact with patients and colleagues who challenge our emotions, beliefs and values.
- We work in environments full of uncertainty.
- We carry the risk of making errors.
- We experience other people's hardships every day.
- Unexpected unpleasant moments are part of our daily practice, for example: a complicated diagnosis, an unfortunate patient outcome, a 'mistake'.

(Bernard, Gorgas, Greenberger, Jacques, & Khandelwal, 2012; Ménard, 2013; Sandars, 2009)

Reflection allows us to make sense of these situations and allows the practitioner to keep 'functioning' in the messiness of it all.

What does reflective practice look like?

Gibbs Reflective Cycle

Gibbs' Reflective Cycle was developed by Graham Gibbs in 1988 to give structure to learning from experiences. It offers a framework for examining experiences in more detail and allowing you to learn and plan from things that either went well or didn't go well.

It covers 6 stages:

- **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.



Reference: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/reflection/reflectors-toolkit/reflecting-on-experience/gibbs-reflective-cycle#:~:text=One%20of%20the%20most%20famous,analysis%2C%20conclusion%20and%20action%20plan>.

Reflective practice is not just the reflecting on the events that occurred but is also about looking inwards at your thoughts and reactions to these events.

What are the barriers to reflection/reflective practice?

It takes effort

- You have to have the will
- You have to have the skill

It takes some knowledge to do it effectively

It requires a change of pace and possible changed model of self-assessment

- It requires us to slow down
- We need to adopt a mindset of curiosity
- We need to take personal responsibility.

Fear of process or outcome

- We may not like the process or the results
- Insight gained can lead to
 - Fear and anger

- Sadness and vulnerability
- Defensiveness - particularly in settings like a missed diagnosis.

Due to this the experience can be blocked - consciously or unconsciously and there may be a reluctance to discuss or consider change.

What is the difference between reflection and rumination?

Where reflection is purposefully thinking about our experiences with the intent of learning something, rumination is when we think over and over about something in the past or future with a cascade of negative emotions directly linked to our thoughts about this event.

Reflection

- Thinking about the '*What Is*'
- Think carefully or deeply
- To realise or consider
- To think from past experiences (*both good and bad*) and to learn from them
- Thinking mindfully the past cannot be changed but it can contribute to a better future
- Thinking about something with the intent of learning about it

Versus

Rumination

- Thinking about the '*What Ifs*'
- Think deeply
- Thinking about something over and over with negative emotions linked to it
- To go over in the mind repeatedly ("to stew over something")
- Association with regret, lamenting missed opportunities (emotions, blame)

("Reflection Versus Rumination," 2015)

How to avoid rumination?

Step 1 – Recognise when you are ruminating (reflection is calm activity with neutral emotions vs rumination which is associated with negative feelings and emotions.) You can learn to mindfully tune into your body and recognise the feelings in your body that are associated with rumination.

Step 2 – Changing your thoughts, rearranging your body posture & breathing, intentionally managing your emotions to generate a different experience.

Perhaps reflection is rumination with structure, boundaries, self-awareness and an intention to avoid self-judgement in the process?

How can we start to create formal reflective practice

- Identify the need.
- Select a practice that works for you (writer vs talker vs journaling)
- Schedule a time to do it.
- Aim for 5 minutes to start.
- Be deliberate and non-judgemental in your approach.
- Ask for help if it isn't going well.

How can you incorporate reflective practice in your day-to-day life?

- Daily Reflection exercises
- Journaling
- Reflective Writing (longer pieces about an experience)
- Conference reflections (key learnings to reinforce these when you return to work, you could do these for yourself, or you could do it and share it with your colleagues who missed out on the conference.)
- Education sessions (break up sessions with reflections on learning, mind-maps, top 3 practice changing lessons at the end of the teaching session)
- Professional Development (ask trainees to reflect on what makes a good leader, a good speaker, a great shift in the ED.)
- Challenging conversations (how did that go, could I have approached that conversation differently)
- PDPs (where am I now, where do I want to be in 12 months, 5 years, what can I do to get there)
- Coaching

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE TOOLS

Simple Daily Reflection

What 3 things went well today?

What 3 things would I do differently?

WHAT, SO WHAT, WHAT NOW?

What?

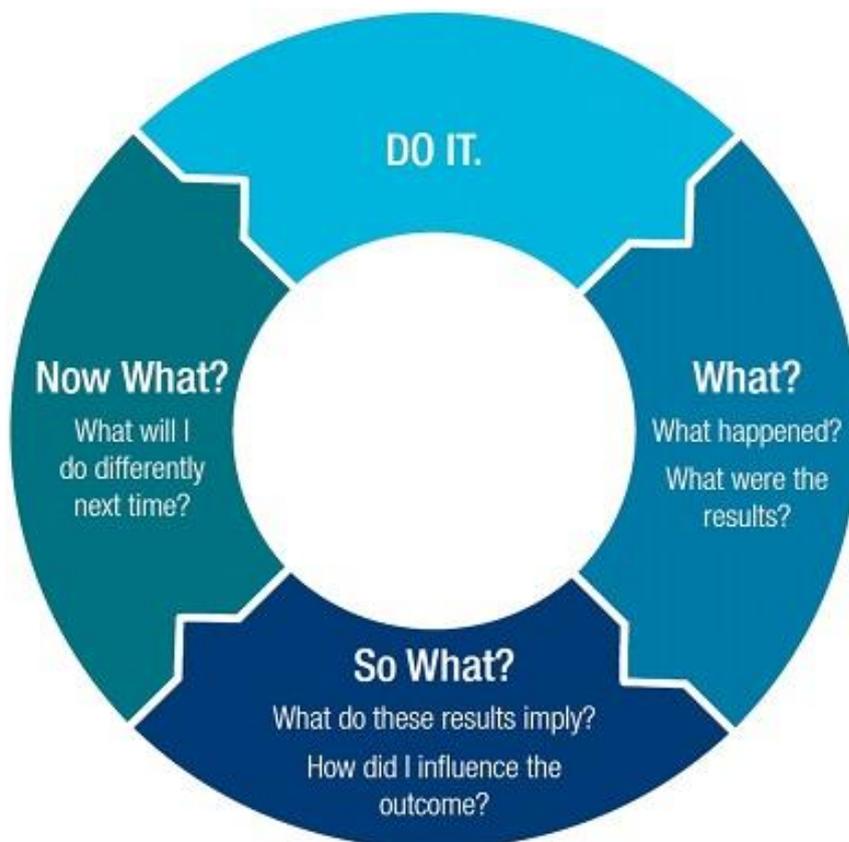
- What happened?
- What were the results?

So what?

- What do these results imply?
- How did I influence the outcome?

What now?

- What do I need to do differently next time?
- What learning or professional development do I need to focus on for a better outcome?



Klob's Models

- What happened (Concrete experience)
- Analysis (Reflective observation)
- Making generalisations (Abstract conceptualization)
- Planning future actions (Active experimentation)
- What do I need to do differently next time?
- What learning or professional development so I need to focus on for a better outcome?

(Bernard, Gorgas, Greenberger, Jacques, & Khandelwal, 2012)

References

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