



CPD guidelines

Guidelines for Reflective Writing

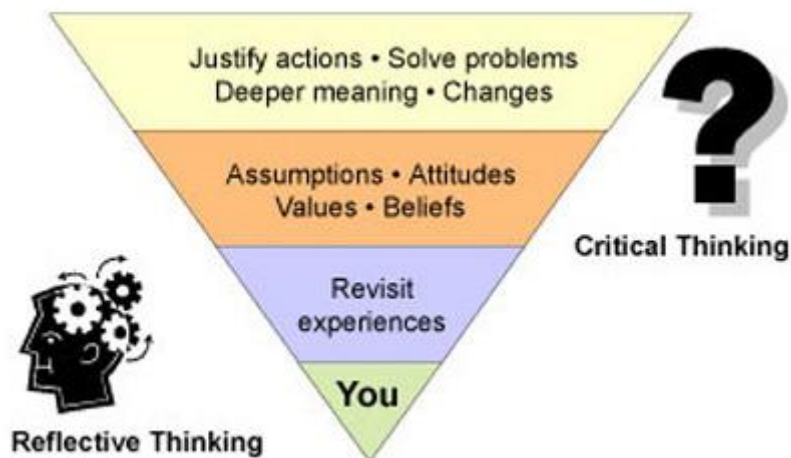
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Overview

This short guide is intended to outline key principles for reflective writing. As a practitioner, we are often asked to reflect upon experiences and draw meaning from the activities we choose to engage. What exactly is reflection and how best do we, as a community of professional healthcare practitioners, articulate our learning experiences in an impactful and measured way? As we move into a climate of evidence-based practice, it is important to not only consider the value of CPD activity, but more importantly the impact of how the activity has enabled learning. What questions are important to ask and how do we develop our practices, or challenge our beliefs, as a result of continued professional developments?

Please use this guide to help you develop a framework for reflective writing. The guidance below is illustrative of some of the challenges and thought processes we may need to consider, to better understand how CPD works to develop and enrich professional practice.

Towards an Understanding of Reflective Writing



The purpose of reflective writing is to give you an opportunity to examine your learning experience, integrate it, and make it relevant for your own purposes. Occasionally you may have a specific topic to write on or begin

with an open-ended starter phrase. These will help you focus your attention on particular aspects of the material or experience. However, once you have addressed these topics, you will want to go beyond them and/or to address different topics as well. Other times, you will need to decide what is interesting and important to you and go in that direction.

When you write, consider that...

- your audience is your advisor, instructor, and/or fellow professional;
- reflection is NOT the same thing as summarising. Only summarise the content of the material or experience when it is necessary for the reader to understand what you are saying and the comments you make;
- you should expect to go into depth. The length of a reflection is dependent not only on the topic and the amount of material or length of the experience, but also on the depth of your integration of the ideas and connections you make to other material and experiences.

It is often difficult to master the art of reflective writing. Some practitioners feel that a coherent summary is sufficient to detail their experiences, while others argue that deeper probing and criticality is central to the process. Although the content of the reflection is to be based on what you think and how you integrate ideas, there should also be depth, connections, evidence of understanding, and broad integration of ideas. There are lots of ways to address those criteria, but for those of you who would like further guidance, a possible pattern to pursue in your writing, one that seems comfortable for most people is to:

- summarise your understanding CONCISELY and in your own words,
- support your perspective with examples from your own experience,
- agree, disagree - and support your position,
- doubt or question any elements, conclusions,
- draw your own tentative conclusions and / or applications,
- identify and ask remaining questions.

Not all of the above need be addressed in every reflection; however, your reflection illustrates the depth of your learning and needs to be thorough enough for you and your reader to draw an accurate picture.

Use the experience to shape your learning, develop new skills, ask different questions, consider gaps in your knowledge and skills, and strategically work towards a plan to address these.

Below is an example to illustrate the alignment of evidence with examples during the reflective writing process:

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| <p>Self-disclosure is an important component of developing good communication in a close relationship. According to Johnson (1999, p.45), self-disclosure is the act of letting people know personal information about oneself. It usually occurs within a personal relationship where there is a lot of trust involved or when there is a need to disclose personal information, for example, to a health professional. Early in my relationship with my partner, I felt that we had a good relationship based on trust and so I gradually disclosed things about myself. I remember feeling very apprehensive when I disclosed some of the mistakes that I had made as an adolescent, but being relieved that my partner accepted this and was not judgemental. After this, I felt that my trust in my partner was confirmed. I feel that this has probably contributed to the continued development of good communication within our relationship.</p> | <p>Topic of reflection Explanation of supporting theory with in-text reference – note no use of the language of personal language i.e. I, we etc. Personal example and interpretation of that example in relation to the theory Draw the ideas presented to a logical conclusion i.e. an evaluation of the relevance of self-disclosure to the communication within the relationship Use of language to modify the personal judgement</p> |
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