Learning Guide
Self-reflection

Name:

Workplace:

28992 Apply self-reflection in a health or wellbeing setting  
Level 4  
6 credits
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Introduction

In your role as a support worker you are required to collaborate with your colleagues, provide the best care for the person you support and build positive relationships. In this learning guide you will construct the necessary skills to use self-reflection as an effective tool for relationship building within your health or wellbeing setting.

How to use your learning guide

This guide supports your learning and prepares you for the unit standard assessment. The activities and scenarios should be used as a general guide for learning.

This guide relates to the following unit standard:

• 28992 Apply self-reflection in a health or wellbeing setting

Follow the tips in the notes column.

You may use highlight pens to show important information and ideas, and think about how this information applies to your work.

You might find it helpful to talk to colleagues or your supervisor.

Finish this learning guide before you start on the assessment.

What you will learn

This topic will help you to:

• understand self-reflection and its purpose.
• understand the process and different models of self-reflection.
• be aware of boundaries of self-reflection that exist.
• apply self-reflection in your work.
• evaluate the effectiveness of workplace self-reflection.
Self-reflection – how, what and why?

An important part of virtually every job is working with other people. In your health or wellbeing role, you may work closely with only a few others or you may be part of a much larger group. No matter how many people you work with, working successfully requires a range of ‘people skills’. These skills might include the ability to work collaboratively, to listen, to negotiate, to receive and give feedback, and to resolve conflict.

In order to expand your range of skills you will need to develop an astute level of self-awareness. Self-awareness begins with self-reflection – you must be willing to take a candid look at yourself to identify what makes you ‘tick’. You may need to use self-reflection to ask yourself the hard questions, such as:

- What are my strengths?
- How could I improve?
- What are my deepest concerns and fears? Do these affect my behaviour or how I interact with people?
- How do I stop doing things that I know are not working for my overall success or for the success of my team?
- How do I move from being reactive to being proactive?
- Are there problems holding me back?
- Are there processes or practices that I am unhappy with?

Answering these questions honestly will help you analyse your perspective and decide whether or not you should do things differently in the future.

Please note that the key word here is ‘honestly’. It can be incredibly difficult to remain objective about your own behaviour. However, it is imperative that you do not lie to yourself, as you will only create a false view of your behaviour, character and abilities. This could make it challenging for the people you work with to trust you and your ability to be open minded and receptive to others’ views.

Examining and exploring yourself by self-reflection will lead you to being more self-aware. If you understand how you think and learn, your talents and abilities, the way you make decisions and how you behave, you will have a better understanding of how people perceive you and your point of view. To put it simply, to understand other people, you need first to understand yourself.

More info

A list of exercises and activities for developing self-awareness can be found at http://www.pathwaytohappiness.com/sessions_summary.htm
How self-reflective questions are chosen will vary from person to person and situation to situation.

**Example:**

Some people find it useful to write their responses to their self-reflective questions in a reflective journal. By writing it down, they not only have a record of their thoughts, which they can refer to later, but they can also see how their thoughts and responses change over time. A reflective journal may also help you to focus on a particular difficulty you might have, such as having a difficult conversation at work or responding to negative feedback.

Other people may prefer to keep their thoughts to themselves. Do what you find comfortable for you. Perhaps start by keeping your thoughts in your head, then move to using a reflective journal as you become more comfortable with the process.

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**Key words**

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Tips for self-reflection

Regardless of your choice of approach to self-reflection, here are some simple tips to help you get the most out of the exercise.

Get into the right state and environment

For self-reflection to be effective, you need to put yourself in the right mental state. You want to give the process your full attention, so minimise any distractions. It may be helpful to choose a quiet place where you will not be interrupted. Choose a time of day when you are relaxed and alert.

Ask the right questions

It’s best to ask yourself ‘how’ questions, rather than ‘why’ questions. ‘Why’ questions only tell you why things are as they are. ‘How’ questions will help you to identify things you want to change and improve.

Example:

Ask: “How can I have a better relationship with my boss?”

Rather than: “Why do I have a lousy relationship with my boss?”

Be 100% truthful

If you lie to yourself or avoid something unpleasant, nothing will change. Being truthful to yourself might be challenging, but remember, you are only talking to yourself.

Use a self-reflection model

A model can be useful for starting your self-reflection process and keeping you on track. We will look at three self-reflection models in the next part of the learning guide.

Don’t lose sight of the key questions

Asking yourself a question will probably lead to another question, and another, and so on. It can be easy to drift off track and end up getting nowhere. Keep the focus on your key questions.

If you make a decision, act on it

Self-reflection is all about changing things. If you come up with an idea to improve something, make sure you put it into action; otherwise, what is the point of thinking about it?
Developing self-awareness

Self-awareness is practised through the focus of your attention on your thoughts, behavioural patterns and emotions. At times, we might think that we are being self-aware but instead we might be focussing more on others and the situation instead of ourselves. Self-awareness takes a great deal of personal integrity and honesty – it can sometimes be difficult to recognise a behaviour you possess as being bad or unproductive to your team.

Once you understand why you think and behave in certain ways, you can use positive reflection to look at ways of changing the negatives and developing your skills in the way you work or learn.

Example

It is likely that you already practise self-reflection, perhaps without even realising it.

For example, you may have had an argument with someone at work. On your way home you find yourself thinking about the argument and wondering if you handled it well.

Was there a way it could have been avoided? Did your emotions get the better of you? Were you assertive or aggressive? Was the dispute resolved or do you still feel angry with the other person?

What you are doing is evaluating how you handled the situation and looking at ways you might change your behaviour to avoid such situations in the future. In short, you are self-reflecting.

Self-reflection is about questioning in a positive way what you do and why you do it, and deciding if there is a better or more efficient way of doing it in the future. You probably already practise self-reflection, although you may not realise it. So perhaps the question we should ask is:

Why make self-reflection a regular habit?

In our busy day-to-day living we often get caught up in our routines and sometimes forget how we are behaving and the effect we may be having on others. However, if we take the time, we can reflect on our own perspectives: our goals, reactions, approaches and performance. Self-reflection can help you learn from your mistakes, expand your perspectives and support others with whom you interact. It can also reinforce positive interactions with others. Through self-reflection you can change how you see yourself, how you view others, how you feel about certain situations and, in the end, how you perceive the world around you.
Example:

Think back to the earlier example of reflecting on the argument at work. While this is an example of self-reflection, it deals with your response to the immediate situation, rather than a wider understanding of your motivations. So the questions you asked yourself were probably not very organised and may have concentrated on the other person’s behaviour rather than your own. You may also have still felt angry or upset about the incident, so emotion may have been blocking your ability to understand how you acted and reacted to the situation.

**Benefits of self-reflection for the organisation**

Self-reflection gives you the opportunity to take a deeper look at yourself: your personality and your habits related to your culture. The use of self-reflection is also a tool for efficiency that could also benefit your organisation.

It can help you and the people with whom you work to conduct self-evaluations in a more structured and organised way.

The use of self-reflection as a personal evaluation tool could benefit you, your organisation and the people with whom you work by:

- increasing staff self-awareness and the ability to manage thoughts, emotions, responses and behaviour.
- assisting in recognising strengths and weaknesses; enabling people to understand their own skills, knowledge and behaviours so that they can meet the demands of their role.
- encouraging staff to explore theory and the use of practical experiences from the workplace.
- providing a framework, through documenting reflection, for meaningful discussion about performance, personal development requirements and ongoing career options.
- helping staff to learn from personal experiences, value strengths, develop insight and judgement, and different, more effective ways of participating in the future.
- providing an opportunity to track personal and professional goals.
- helping staff empathise with peers and the people being supported.

What other benefits of regular self-reflection can you think of, for both you and your organisation?
Models of self-reflection

There are many models that you could use to assist with your self-reflection process. While the structure and format of these models may vary, they share many features. All have the same purpose – to act as a guide to assist you to become self-aware.


Gibbs Reflective Cycle

Gibbs’ model acknowledges personal feelings about a given situation and the influence they may have on how you begin to reflect. The model (see the diagram below) breaks down the reflection process so that you can explore your experience.

Gibbs’ model provides a clear link between what you learn from an experience and the changes you make to your future practice.

The model has six steps. First you describe your experience. Next you evaluate your feelings and the negative and positive aspects of the experience. Then you examine the situation and finally review other possible outcomes to reach a conclusion and develop an action plan.

Gibbs Reflective Cycle

Description
What happened?

Action Plan
If it rose again what would you do?

Feelings
What were you thinking and feeling?

Evaluation
What was good and bad about the experience?

Analysis
What else can you make of the situation

Conclusion
What else could you have done?
The different stages of the Gibbs Reflective Cycle are described below.

**Description**
What happened? Describe a situation or experience without making any judgements or drawing any conclusions. Simply describe the situation.

**Feelings**
What were your reactions and feelings? Refer to the situation or experience; at this point, you are not trying to analyse your experience. You are just gathering the facts.

**Evaluation**
What was good or bad about the experience? In your evaluation be clear about the experience and the positive and negative aspects. Make value judgements.

**Analysis**
What sense can you make of the situation? What was really going on? Were there similar or different perspectives that should be taken into consideration?

**Conclusions**
Make general conclusions about the situation. What can be concluded, in a general way, from these experiences and the analyses you have undertaken?

Make specific conclusions about the situation. What can be concluded about your own unique, personal situation or way of working?

**Personal action plans**
It is time to move reflection into future action. What will you do differently in this type of situation the next time? What steps are you going to take on the basis of what you have learnt?
Johns Model for Structured Reflection

The Johns model was developed for nursing practitioners but is applicable for any field. The model is based on five questions that enable you to break down your experience and reflect on the process and outcomes (see the diagram below). This model not only provides a framework for reflection, it also encourages guided reflection – that is, sharing the reflections with a mentor or peer to gain a greater understanding of an experience.

Johns Model for Structured Reflection

The different stages of the Johns Model for Structured Reflection are outlined below.

**Description**
- Write a description of the experience.
- What are the key issues within this description to which I need to pay attention?

**Reflection**
- What was I trying to achieve?
- Why did I act as I did?
- What are the consequences of my actions, for myself and for people I work with?
- How did I feel about this experience when it was happening?
- How did the people I work with feel about it?
- How do I know how the people I work with feel or felt about it?
Influencing factors
- What internal factors influenced my decision making and actions?
- What external factors influenced my decision making and actions?
- What sources of knowledge did or should have influenced my decision making and actions?
- Could I have dealt better with the person?
- Could I have dealt better with the situation?
- What other choices did I have?
- What would be the consequences of these other choices?

Learning
- How can I make sense of this experience in light of my past experience and future practice?
- How do I feel about this experience now?
- Have I taken effective action to support myself and others as a result of this experience?
- How has this experience changed my ways of thinking or my practice?

Framework for reflection
The framework for reflection by Rolfe et al. is a simple three-stage model that is based on three questions:
- What?
- So what?
- Now what?
The three parts of the framework are described below.

**What?**

Describe the situation; the achievements, consequences, responses, feelings and problems.

Questions that you might ask yourself are:

- What is the problem/difficulty/reason for being stuck?
- What is the reason for the way I feel?
- What was my role in the situation?
- What was I trying to achieve?
- What actions did I take?
- What was the response of others?
- What feelings did it evoke in me? In others?
- What was good/bad about the experience?

**So what?**

Discuss what has been learned; learning about self, relationships, models, attitudes, cultures, actions, thoughts, understanding and improvements.

Questions that you might ask yourself are:

- So what does this tell me, teach me or mean to me?
- So what does this tell me, teach me or mean about other people?
- So what was going through my mind as I acted?
- So what did I base my actions on?
- So what other knowledge can I bring to the situation?
- So what could/should I have done to make it better?
- So what is my new understanding of the situation?
- So what broader issues arise from the situation?

**Now what?**

Identify what needs to be done in order to improve future outcomes and develop learning.

Questions that you might ask yourself are:

- Now what do I need to do in order to make things better/stop being stuck/resolve the situation/feel better, etc.?
- Now what broader issues need to be considered if this action is to be successful?
- Now what might be the consequences of this action?
Schön's Model of Reflective Practice

Schön's Model of Reflective Practice has two types of reflection – reflection in action during the situation, and reflection on action, after the situation. Schön called this double-loop learning.

The person ‘thinks on their feet’ assessing situations as they do their job. They use their past experience, training, knowledge and understanding to deal with situations as they arise.

**Reflection in action – during the situation**

After the job is done, the person thinks back to how they reacted and how they handled it. They reflect upon the causes of the situation and think about different ways they could have handled it.

**Reflection on action – after the situation**
The person learns on the job and they also learn more about themselves as they reflect again after the job is done.
Boundaries of self-reflection

Another important part of self-reflection in the workplace is to be aware of and operate within any legal or organisational boundaries that may exist.

Legislative boundaries

In the workplace, the self-reflection process may involve other people contributing to feedback. This feedback will be in the form of their thoughts, opinions and reactions to the actions, with the attitudes and performance of the person at the centre of the process.

Remember that you must respect the privacy and confidentiality of anyone who is involved or provides input into a self-reflection process (whether it is your own or another person’s). This means acting in line with the Privacy Act 1993 and not discussing a person’s feedback with anyone else. You must use any feedback only for the purpose for which it was provided.

Organisational boundaries

Your workplace will have its own policies and procedures. These may include rules that also affect the self-reflective process.

Example:

Support workers have a responsibility to always maintain a professional boundary between themselves and the people they support, their family/whānau and others in the team.

In these situations, it may not be appropriate to ask a person who your organisation supports to provide documented feedback for the self-reflection process. You will need to check your workplace policies and procedures to be sure about the rules on this.

It is essential that you make yourself aware of any rules, boundaries or guidelines in your organisation’s policies and procedures that relate to the self-reflection process.

If the self-reflection process identifies something that could be seen as crossing any boundaries, discuss this with your manager as soon as possible.
Applying self-reflection

This part of the learning guide covers two very important aspects of applying self-reflection that must happen during the workplace self-reflection process. These are seeking feedback and considering your colleagues.

Getting feedback from others

If you want to improve your skills or performance in the workplace, you need feedback from others. This feedback could come from your team leader, supervisor, manager, mentor, peers or other professionals. Feedback could also come from a person you have supported or their family/whānau.

Without feedback, you’re limited to your own perspective, which might not be very helpful in the long run. Learning what others think of your performance is very valuable. It can help you to frame appropriate questions to ask of yourself so that you can understand why you do things as you do.

Your workplace may have a formal feedback process. This could be in the form of an annual review or a task-specific evaluation. Depending on your organisation, there will be different policies and procedures for this process – for example, how it is carried out, by whom, who can be asked to provide feedback and what happens to any written records.

If your organisation does not have a formal process for giving and receiving feedback (or even if they do), ask for feedback from a peer, team leader or supervisor. It doesn’t have to be formal or written.

Remember that the feedback will not always be positive – you need to prepare yourself mentally and emotionally. Try and remember that feedback is an opportunity for improvement rather than a form of scrutiny. Knowing what others think of you is important so that you can:

- identify your strengths and weaknesses.
- compare any feedback with your own assessment of your performance, that is, are you being realistic in your own assessment?
- learn from what went right and what went wrong in a particular situation.
- identify problem areas that need attention.

If you are part of a team, find out how your team is performing and your part in that performance.

Do it

Does your organisation have a formal feedback process? If so, find out how it works.

If you’re not sure whether they do, carry out some research to find out.
**Working in a team environment**

A team is ideally made up of people working to achieve a common goal. The success of that team depends on how well each team member performs.

You might find working as part of a team rewarding or frustrating, or somewhere in between. In either case, it is important to look at the reasons why you feel this way about teamwork. Are you concerned about your effectiveness as a team member? Perhaps you dread team meetings or find that they get hijacked by one particular member?

Self-reflection can be a valuable way to look at your role, behaviour and performance within a team. Some questions you could ask are:

- Do I like being part of a team? Why/why not?
- Do I contribute to the group? Are my contributions recognised?
- How do I behave as part of a team? Am I submissive, or do I like to take control? Do I positively influence others?
- How do other members of the team behave? Do they like to take control? Or do they sit back and let others do the work?
- How well does the team function? Are there things that work well? Not so well?
- How well does the team perform? Does it achieve its purpose and goals?
Reflecting on your role

Reflecting on your own role within your team could have a significant impact on how your team members approach you and how they receive your input and feedback. Your behaviours have a direct impact on individual team members and, potentially, team objectives.

Practising self-reflection, becoming self-aware and applying a reflection process could benefit your engagement with your team and influence the team’s effectiveness. You could address issues constructively by:

- writing down actions you can take, based on self-reflection results, and reporting back to the team to show how these can help reach common goals.
- exchanging feedback within the team to identify how certain behaviours are impacting the team.

The team self-reflection process can be difficult, so it will be important to stay focused on positive changes to support team success.

Your own role and the way you behave in a team can affect other team members as well as the team’s ability to achieve its goals.

**Example:**

If a person is often rude and abrupt, this behaviour may mean that other team members do not approach them for ideas or advice. This can cause communication breakdown between team members, which will, in turn, prevent the team from achieving its goals.

Below are some examples of the questions you could ask yourself, if you work as part of a team.

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**Question**

Think about your own role and behaviour within a team in your workplace. In what ways, both positive and negative, do you influence:

- other team members?
- the effectiveness of the team in achieving its goals?
Effectiveness of self-reflection

To be able to evaluate the effectiveness of your self-reflection process, it is useful to revisit its purpose and possible benefits (as mentioned at the beginning of this learning guide). You might like to refer back to these now.

At the conclusion of your self-reflection, perhaps some of the most important things you could ask yourself are:

- Have I increased my self-awareness?
- Have I identified my own strengths and weaknesses?
- Have I identified problems that are holding me back?
- Have I identified and given myself credit for what I have achieved?
- Have I identified the things I am currently happy and/or unhappy about?
- Have I identified opportunities for change and improvement?

The effectiveness of self-reflection for you and your colleagues can be measured in improved relationships, better communication, more positive team dynamics, more efficient team processes and more successful work outcomes.
Self-care

Being aware of your feelings while supporting a person is important. You may have been supporting a person for a while and you will experience feelings of loss if they deteriorate or as they face challenges. It is important for you to recognise these feelings and find a way of dealing with them – for example, by talking to your supervisor or other colleagues or writing a journal.

The ‘iceberg model’ is a good way to describe your wellness. Your current state of wellness is just the tip of the iceberg. Think of an iceberg with a top layer and three more layers underneath:

**Tip of the iceberg:** This is your state of health and wellness. This is what people around you observe.

**First layer of the iceberg:** This is your lifestyle and behaviour layer. This is what you eat, how you use or exercise your body, how you relax and how you keep yourself safe from hazards.

**Second layer of the iceberg:** This is your psychological and motivational layer. This is what moves you to lead the lifestyle that you do.

**Third layer of the iceberg:** This is your spiritual, your being and meaning layer. This is where your real meaning of life and your place in the universe sits. Depending on your religion and culture, your spirituality may very well penetrate through all of the levels of the iceberg.

You can choose your own wellbeing. Whether that is increased energy, greater enthusiasm, an enhanced sense of wellbeing or a greater sense of joy. The choice is yours. All of these layers work together to make you the person you are. One aspect can affect all of the others. For example when feeling emotional or stressed you can get a headache.

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1 Content adapted from the Hospice New Zealand Fundamentals of Palliative Care Programme
You need to be able to recognise signs of stress. These could include:

- fatigue and/or sleeplessness.
- depression and/or a pressing need to have some space.
- no sense of humour.
- indigestion, overeating to cope and/or a lack of appetite.
- headaches.
- decreased sexual interest.
- inability to concentrate.
- anger.
- anxiety.
- burnout.
- muscle tension.
- high blood pressure.
- irritability and/or mood swings.
- the need to buy something.

If you know your whole self (physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually) you will be able to recognise if any one of these parts is out of balance. Your whole self includes:

**Physical you** (your body): your tangible structure and five senses which enable you to touch, see, hear, smell and taste the world around you.

**Emotional you** (your feelings): your range of emotions from fear and anger to love and joy.

**Mental you** (your thoughts): your knowledge, attitudes and beliefs, your analytical self.

**Spiritual you** (your spirit): your relationship with yourself, your creativity, your life purpose, and your relationship with a higher power.

Managing stress and preventing burnout consists of finding the optimal level of stress which will individually motivate but not overwhelm you.

Know how to recognise stress. Once you can recognise it, you may be able to deal with it. Practice self-care through:

- eating well, exercising and sleeping.
- journaling.
- positive self-talk and using affirmations.
- treating yourself with dignity, respect and love.
- body-mind relaxation, visualisations and meditations.
- creating goals to achieve.
- reducing the effects of stressors.
## Glossary

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