

# A Guide to Independent Reflective Practice

Roger Abbott – WY-FI Workforce Development & Learning Coordinator

# Introduction

Reflective practice is usually carried out face to face and in groups. However due to the unprecedented measures currently in place to combat the spread of COVID-19, this may not be possible.

If you're working remotely and have reduced contact with your colleagues, you can still do your own independent reflective practice. Reflecting on your work in this way can be really beneficial, for both your health and wellbeing, as well as your ongoing professional development.

This guide has been designed to support you with your independent reflective practice, and contains everything you need to get started.

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I hope you find this guide useful. If you have any questions or want to discuss independent reflective practice in more detail, you can email me at: [roger.abbott@humankindcharity.org.uk](mailto:roger.abbott@humankindcharity.org.uk).

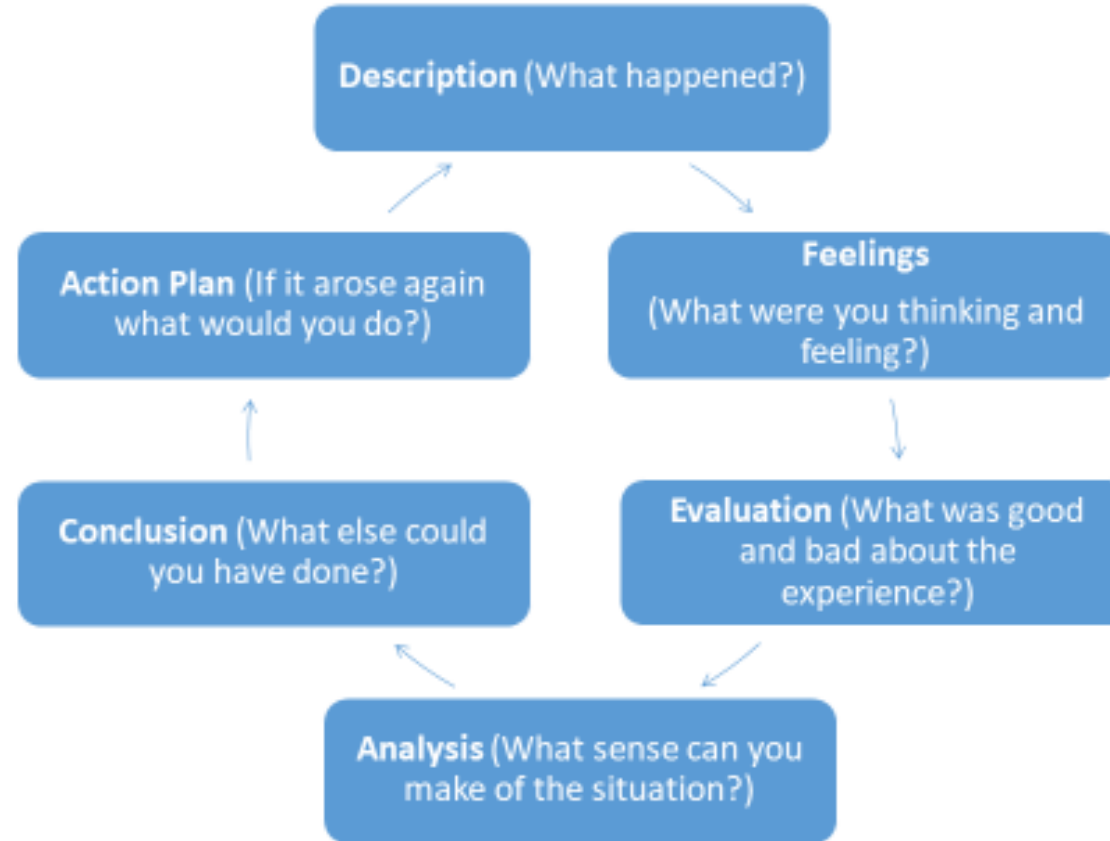
# Steps to prepare for independent reflective practice

Reflective practice is a stepped process, so it's important to give it your full attention for it to be as useful as possible.

We suggest taking the following steps to prepare for your independent reflective practice session:

- Dedicate time to your practice, for example at the beginning or the end of the working day. It might be a good idea to add your sessions to your calendar.
- Find a quiet, comfortable space where you are less likely to be disturbed.
- Practice some relaxation, meditation or mindfulness first – something to separate your reflective practice from the rest of your working day
- Have all your reflective practice tools to hand: the reflective cycle; your reflective practice log and a pen/pencil; useful reflective questions; and the competency framework.
- Once you've completed your practice, save your reflective practice logs somewhere safe (electronically or on paper), so that you can refer back to them if needed. Keeping a record will also help you to demonstrate how you've been maintaining your professional development during these unprecedented times.

## The Reflective Cycle (Gibbs, 1988)



## Reflective Practice Log (Part 1)

(Adapted from Gibbs 1988)

**Description:** Describe something you have done in practice that you will be reflecting on (Avoid making judgements, simply describe)

**Feelings:** What were your reactions and feelings? How do your feelings relate to your thoughts and actions?

**Evaluation:** What was good and bad about the experience? What are the implications / complications? Consider different perspectives e.g. you, service users, colleagues, family, carers etc. Is there another point of view that you could explore – are there alternative interpretations to consider? Are there any ethical / moral / wider social issues?

## Reflective Practice Log (Part 2)

(Adapted from Gibbs 1988)

**Analysis:** What sense can you make out of the situation? What does it mean? Why did I respond as I did? What was really going on? Draw on some theory about good practice that you have learnt.

**Conclusion:** What else could you have done? What other choices did I have? What could you have done better? Draw on and relate to some theory about good practice that you have learnt.

**Action Plan:** If the situation arose again what would you do? What would you do differently? What steps are you going to take on the basis of what you have learnt?

## Helpful questions during reflective practice...

- What inner conversations are you having?
- What would happen if you did nothing?
- What are you expecting to happen and why?
- What are the consequences of doing that?
- What is your instinct about what is going on?
- What was the high point for you?
- What was the low point for you? What is it that is challenging about this issue?
- What opportunities can you see in the situation?
- What would success look like?
- What part of the problem needs working on urgently?
- What have you thought of already?
- What have you tried? Why did/didn't it work?
- Who have you involved?
- Who can give advice and information on the difficulty you are facing?
- What are the effects of this on others?
- Is there another way of working?
- What more do you have to learn?
- What are the pros and cons of your behaviours?
- What skills do you need to develop to cope with this?
- How can you improve the situation?
- What will you do next?

# Core Competency Framework for Multiple Needs Workers (Part 1)

## Accepting People as they Are

- Uses active listening skills.
- Communicates consistently with a warm, friendly, welcoming and interested attitude.
- Tries different and creative ways to engage clients who do not want to engage. This includes talking about interests and 'problem free' talk.
- Validates and acknowledges the points of view and emotions of clients.
- Understands the impact that trauma has on people's willingness to engage with help. Applies this knowledge to engaging with clients.
- Demonstrates an understanding of how the experience of multiple needs is affected by race, culture, disability, sexual orientation and/or gender.

## Believing People can get Better

- Communicates a realistic hope for a better future with people who are lacking hope.
- Helps clients to break down their goals and plans into smaller, realistic steps and stages.
- Holds positive conversations with clients to help them 'reframe' problems they present within the context of the better future they wish for.
- Understands that recovery is not linear and to remain alongside clients rather than leading them.
- Supports clients to value the progress made however small the steps appear to be.
- Understands the impact that trauma has on people's levels of motivation. Applies this knowledge to the way motivation is built with clients.

## Collaborating to Solve Problems

- Helps clients to describe problems from their point of view and reflects with them on different ways to see it.
- Helps clients develop their own plan for solving a problem collaboratively in ways that draw on the strengths and skills of their support network.
- Reflects with clients on how well their efforts to put a plan into action have gone.
- Works cooperatively as part of team with colleagues in and outside of the organisation.
- Understands the impact that trauma has on people's problem solving skills and their ability to work collaboratively.

## Developing Trusting Relationships

- Demonstrates reliability to do what has been agreed and without overpromising.
- Repairs breaks in the relationship with clients when they occur. This may include: admitting when mistakes are made, or; reflecting on an incident that has led to a loss of trust in a service.
- Communicates that they trust clients around appropriate topics and tasks.
- Shows consistency in approach with clients to avoid giving "mixed messages" and maintains a consistent approach with other staff and services.
- Understands the impact that trauma has on people's ability to trust others. Applies this knowledge to how trust is built with clients.



## Core Competency Framework for Multiple Needs Workers (Part 2)

### Establishing and Maintaining Roles and Boundaries

- Explains role and the realistic limits of what can be done within it.
- Says “no” to requests for help from other services that are outside of the usual role and explain the reasons why.
- Consistently checks in with colleagues when activities fall outside of the usual role.
- Is appropriately flexible around boundaries.
- Understands the impact that trauma has on people’s ability to maintain healthy interpersonal boundaries. Applies this knowledge to how boundaries are established and maintained with clients.

### Reflecting on Practice

- Has an awareness of, and is able to reflect on, their own responses and behaviours.
- Is constantly reflecting on their own practice and committed to learning and continuous professional development.
- Understands how emotions, thinking and behaviour are linked in themselves and others.
- Learns from the experiences of others and is able to apply to their own practice.
- Recognises the impact of the work and understands when to seek appropriate support within and outside of work.
- Can draw on personal and professional experience appropriately.

### Advocacy Skills

- Able to identify where system change or service flex is needed and able to communicate this to others appropriately.
- Able to communicate people’s skills, assets, needs and priorities to others.
- Demonstrates assertiveness and ability to work with people to promote and gain inclusion.
- Challenges services on behalf of people where it is needed.

### Self-Care

- Willing to engage with employing organisation’s support offers (formal supervision, case conferencing, reflective practice meetings).
- Engages in informal, regular debriefs with colleagues.
- Able to maintain clear identities between work and personal life.
- Recognises when a difficult thought or emotion is their own, or whether it is the result of transference of a client’s (or colleague’s) emotions or trauma.
- Actively puts activities in place to manage their own wellbeing, rather than responding to stress only when it occurs.
- If they have lived experience, demonstrate that they are at a stable point in their recovery journey and have the resilience to support others.

# Resources

- Video ["What is Reflective Practice?"](#) – Ray Middleton, Workforce Development Lead at Fulfilling Lives Newcastle Gateshead
- Forward Leeds Guides
  - [Using Mini-meditations](#)
  - [Relaxation Techniques for Stress Relief](#)
- Further Reading
  - [Finlay, Linda \(2008\). Reflecting on 'Reflective practice'. Practice-based Professional Learning Paper 52, The Open University.](#)
  - [Knight, S \(2015\) Realising the benefits of reflective practice. Nursing Times.](#)
  - [Birmingham University – A short guide to reflective writing](#)