

# Reflective Practice

## Practice Tips

There are many ways you can apply critical reflection to everyday practice. Here are some helpful questions to assist you in your reflective practice:

### **Reflect-on-action (what can I learn from past experiences?)**

- How can I practice conversations to learn from my past experiences? Consider role plays or case scenarios to plan for how you might talk to families in the future, especially if you are feeling worried or nervous.
- What have the children, families and carers I've worked with taught me about my practice, my knowledge and my skills?
- When have I been of use to children, families and carers previously? What difference did I make to them? How did this change me as a person and as a practitioner? How can I remember this experience when I make mistakes?

Tip: It's helpful to find a colleague who you trust and can buddy up with to engage in reflective practice discussions. When we refer to a critical friend or colleague, we are not suggesting someone who will criticise; but who will help you critically reflect. Taking turns to lead the discussion is a great way to learn and strengthen reflective skills.

### **Reflect-in-action ('thinking on your feet')**

- What is the best use of me with this family? How can I make my practice purposeful and meaningful?
- Am I being as transparent as possible to build trust with the children, family and carers?
- Am I noticing my power in this situation and using it sensitively and wisely?
- Am I challenging my views and considering information from different perspectives?
- Am I separating any feelings of frustration or anger from my decision-making?
- How can I safely harness any worry or 'gut feelings' into my analysis of this situation?
- Am I being responsive to new circumstances and adjusting my work if needed?
- How can I stop and take time to think about all possible options and solutions before deciding on one?

Paraphrasing and reflecting what is being said during difficult situations will help give you more mental space to think about what is happening. Be honest and say that you're not sure or are uncertain about why or what is being said or happening. Breathe and centre yourself and your thoughts.

### **Reflect-for-action (what can I learn for my future practice?)**

- a) What can I learn from this experience? What did I do well? What lessons can I take so I can do my best for families in the future?
- b) How can I invite critique from my colleagues, supervisor and the families I work with to guard against common practice errors?
- c) Am I exploring research and thinking critically about it?
- d) Do I draw on specialist knowledge and experience, from a psychologist or specialist in the area of concern?
- e) How can I continue to be inspired, challenged and transformed by my experience with this family? How can this help me to resist burnout?

## **Critical Self-Reflection – Identifying Your Bias, Attitudes, Privilege and Power**

Biases can create barriers in the way you see information that does not support your existing judgement or being selective in what information is being addressed.

- Am I challenging my own biases and assumptions? Am I surprised by any of my biases?
- Do I understand the differences between my beliefs and the people I am working with?
- How does my privilege affect my practice?
- What are the intersections of my own power and privilege with the disadvantage of the children, families and carers I work with?
- How do I learn to be ok with feeling uncomfortable? How can this help me address my position of power?

## **Helpful Questions to Support Reflection**

Below are helpful questions you can ask yourself when reflecting on your casework.

WHO	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• benefits from this?</li> <li>• is this harmful to?</li> <li>• holds power in this?</li> <li>• has a right to a view about this?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• makes decisions about this?</li> <li>• is most directly affected?</li> <li>• have you also heard discuss this?</li> <li>• would be the best person to consult?</li> </ul>
WHAT	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• experience of our system have they had?</li> <li>• are my assumptions about this/them?</li> <li>• views am I holding that may be guiding my thinking?</li> <li>• emotions does this bring up?</li> <li>• are the strengths/weaknesses?</li> <li>• might they be responding to?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is another point of view?</li> <li>• could be a counterargument?</li> <li>• is the best/worst case scenario?</li> <li>• is the most/least important?</li> <li>• can we do to make positive changes?</li> <li>• is a barrier or challenge?</li> <li>• evidence is there that contradicts this perspective?</li> </ul>
WHERE	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• might help to balance the power?</li> <li>• are there similar situations?</li> <li>• is there most need for this?</li> <li>• can we get more information?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• do we go for help with this?</li> <li>• will this plan or goal take us?</li> <li>• are the areas for improvement?</li> </ul>
WHEN	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• do I feel differently about this?</li> <li>• is this acceptable/unacceptable?</li> <li>• would this benefit families?</li> <li>• would this cause difficulties/challenges?</li> <li>• is the best time for each given action?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• will we know we have succeeded?</li> <li>• has this played a part in the family's history?</li> <li>• can we expect this to change?</li> <li>• should we ask for help with this?</li> </ul>
WHY	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• am I holding this view?</li> <li>• do I feel this way about this person/situation?</li> <li>• is this important for the child?</li> <li>• is this a difficulty/challenge?</li> <li>• is it relevant to me/others?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is this the best/worst scenario?</li> <li>• are people influenced by this?</li> <li>• do people need to know about this?</li> <li>• has it been this way for this long?</li> <li>• have we permitted for this to happen?</li> <li>• is there a need for this today?</li> </ul>
HOW	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is this similar to ...?</li> <li>• does this interrupt things?</li> <li>• do we know their 'truth' about this?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• will we move toward this safely?</li> <li>• does this help us/others?</li> <li>• does this harm us/others?</li> <li>• do we see this in the future?</li> </ul>

### Explore and learn:

Project Implicit tests from Harvard University have been specifically developed for the Australian context to help you identify and understand your implicit biases and attitudes.

Mapping your privilege guides you through mapping privilege. Understanding your privilege can assist decision making and build your empathy skills and relationships with children and families.

Mind maps are a great way to creatively explore options, unpack issues and break down areas for analysis.

## Reflective Journal and Reflective Prompts for Critical Reflection

Keeping a reflective log or journal is an easy way to debrief and work independently through challenges or issues as well as reflect on your experiences to help you learn from them.

Here are some prompts or questions to help you reflect on your work:

- What have I learnt over the past 6 - 12 months of working with children, families and carers?
- What has been my most proud accomplishment?
- What might I do differently when given a second chance? Why?
- When did I challenge my own biases and assumptions? When did I consider information from other perspectives? How did this help my practice? When didn't I challenge my own views? How did this affect the people I work with?
- How am I keeping accountable?
- How is my life and relationship with myself different from doing this work?
- How has this work transformed how I see the world? Has it enriched my analysis?

### Podcast: Critical reflection

Critical reflection: in conversation with Jan Fook is a Podsocks podcast exploring the deeper process of critical reflection in practice. Jan Fook, an expert in critically reflective social work practice, is interviewed about its application in practice.