

Reflective Practice

Reflective practice is a process of stepping back; analysing our thoughts, actions and feelings, identifying what has affected them, and how we can improve our practice.

Critically reflecting on your work improves casework practice, produces better outcomes for children, young people (child) and their families and helps you learn and grow. It assists you to recognise your biases, discover new information and explore different options and outcomes for a child and their families.

Reflective practice requires self-awareness, insight and exploratory and creative thinking. It is not just about reviewing; it is also about planning and putting thoughts and ideas into action.

Reflective practice helps us to:

- consider ways to work smarter and prioritise
- explore options that may not have been considered
- use curiosity and questioning to find a better way
- reduce stress and cultivate resilience
- explore basic assumptions underpinning our work
- make sure we practice in an ethical and fair way
- separate our practice from feelings
- identify strengths and gaps in information, skills and knowledge
- analyse relationships and improve communication.

“Reflection in a mirror is an exact replica of what is in front of it. Reflection in professional practice, however, gives back not what it is but what it might be, an improvement on the original” (Biggs, 1996:6)

Changing Your Practice Through Critical Reflection

We constantly look back on experiences so we can learn from them. Reflective practice goes beyond thinking about past events or experiences. It helps us look not only at what is happening in our work with a child and their family, but also the influence of our practice and personal and professional position. The 'critical' aspect of reflection challenges us to consider the impact of your own life experiences, including power, gender, racism, class and oppression.

Our knowledge, expertise and work mean there is a disparity in the power between families and practitioners. Critical reflection provides tools to better understand the impact that power has on us and others. It also ensures you are not unconsciously disempowering families and children.

Critically reflective practice requires self-awareness, insight and exploratory reasoning and creative thinking. It is a more structured way to undertake thinking, learning, and practice.

The reflective process helps practitioners to consider what has occurred, what is currently happening and what might happen. The process is described as:

- Reflect-on-action (past experiences)
- Reflect-in-action (as an incident happens, for example, 'thinking on your feet')
- Reflect-for-action (actions you may wish to take in future experiences).

“Don't just reflect on things that didn't go so well. Also reflect on positive experiences and outcomes”

Achieving Best Learning – Reflection Model

Using a model allows critical reflection to occur through a structured process to achieve best learning. An example is given below. It describes a process that allows you to step-by-step reflect on your work and incorporate new knowledge.



Source: NSW Department of Communities and Justice

Reflection In Your Everyday Practice

PSP Service Providers should have policies in place to support critically reflective practice. Critical reflection should be a regular part of day-to-day practice. Individually, with colleagues, in a team or with your manager. Sometimes it can be helpful to have a consultation with other professionals, such as in supervision to assist reflections on a family, and to bring new perspectives.

Reference:

Biggs, J (1999). Teaching for quality learning at university. Open University Press, Buckingham.