Chapter 13. Reflective Journaling

Discursive and non-discursive practices regulate what we accept as ‘normal...We are often unaware of this normalising process as we are products of it’
Ann Cunliffe.

12.1 Introduction
This Chapter covers an introduction to reflective journaling prepared by the Royal Australian College of Medical Administrators (RACMA), and includes material from the Mentor Guidelines posted in Library No 1, Part A, Vol 4. The RACMA examines the candidate’s reflective journal as part of their competency assessment process.

12.2 Rationale
Reflection is a powerful tool for self-improvement. A habit of reflection is essential to effective self-directed learning and development during CPD. You are therefore encouraged to start the practice from the earliest stages in your learning pathway.

12.3 Reflective Cycle
Diagram 1 depicts the reflective cycle that you are embedding in your Journal.

Diagram 1. Reflective Learning Cycle.

12.4 Developing the Habit of Reflection
Approaches you can use to develop a habit of reflection include:
- focus on or ask yourself about the ‘how’ rather than the ‘why’
- ask ‘leading’ questions that prompt descriptive responses in your mind
- assess the outcomes of your actions honestly (viz., be critical of yourself)
- ask yourself consciously ‘is there another way of looking at this issue?’
- mentally challenge taken-for-granted practices
- follow links from your source documents to discover new knowledge
- reflect on the applicability of new knowledge to other cases
- make notes and, to facilitate future reference, catalogue them

12.5 Process
Some tips about reflective journaling follow:
- Start by taking written notes as your client ‘tells their story’
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• Then, when you are alone, distil the facts, relate them to relevant URL, and plan your future actions.
• As you take your planned actions, identify the outcomes, compare them with your intended outcomes, and modify your plan.
• Synthesise your reflections and write them up in your journal.*

* Reflective journal entries will facilitate CoP ‘lessons-learned’ sessions and, if posted on-line, are valuable source material for others’ self-directed learning.

Annex A: Introduction to Reflective Journaling, Royal Australian College of Medical Administrators (RACMA)
Royal Australian College of Medical Administrators

Reflective Journal Writing Guidelines

1. What is Reflective Journal Writing?
Reflective journal writing is evidence of reflective thinking and involves a description of an issue or experience as well as an exploration or critical analysis and explanation of events. Reflective writing is a process where you can learn from your experiences and is often used to 'reflect forward' to the future as well as 'reflect back' on the past.

In her discussion of using journals in learning through reflection, Jenny Moon (1999a) identifies many purposes of writing journals. These include:

- To deepen the quality of learning, in the form of critical thinking or developing a questioning attitude
- To enable learners to understand their own learning process
- To increase active involvement in learning and personal ownership of learning
- To enhance professional practice or the professional self in practice
- To enhance the personal valuing of the self towards self-empowerment
- To enhance creativity by making better use of intuitive understanding
- To free-up writing and the representation of learning
- To provide an alternative ‘voice’ for those not good at expressing themselves
- To foster reflective and creative interaction in a group

2. How reflective writing enhances reflective practice
The process of exploring how journals assist their writers learn is commonly described in terms of how they can enhance reflective practice. Reflection has been described as a process of turning experience into learning. That is, of exploring experience in order to learn new things from it. Reflection has been described as 'those intellectual and affective activities in which individuals engage to explore their experiences in order to lead to new understandings and appreciations.' (Boud, Keogh and Walker 1985:19)

3. How can Reflective Journal writing assist in developing leadership skills?
The task of submitting two reflective journal writing pieces is given to candidates because of the established link between reflection and deeper learning. As well as facilitating learning, the intention of the task of reflective journal writing is for candidates to acquire a habit of reflection, achieve high levels of self-awareness and grow in the profession of medical administration. The key role competencies of Medical Leader and Communicator are the focus for this requirement of the Fellowship Training Program and are more specifically described in RACMA’s *Medical Leadership and Management Curriculum.*
The Reflective Journal Writing will be:

- Contextualised and relate to an event/s, situation/s that have impacted on the Candidate’s work and have caused him or her to learn more about themselves, and/or about becoming a professional medical manager and/or improving the way that they work in the context of the RACMA competencies for a medical administrator.
- A reflective self-analysis/critique of the personal journey located within the context and the events/situations alluded to.
- An explication of what the Candidate has learned about themselves, and how they have changed their behaviour and/or thinking as a result.

References:


Reflective journals. [https://www.dlsweb.rmit.edu.au/lsu/content/2_assessmenttasks/assess_tuts/reflective%20journal LL/index.html](https://www.dlsweb.rmit.edu.au/lsu/content/2_assessmenttasks/assess_tuts/reflective%20journal LL/index.html)


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