



REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

WHAT'S THE POINT?

Active learning is a cornerstone to professionalism and reflective practice is truly a foundation of professional development. It not only demonstrates that you have not passively just attended an event and sat there checking your emails or social media rather than actively engaging in the session, but it also means that as a professional you gain experience and insights which supports your personal and professional growth.

Learning is sometimes regarded as something which can be compartmentalised as a discrete pocket of activity, such as the reading of books, attending courses, workshops, giving talks, reviewing articles, etc. However, we are constantly learning. We learn from everything we do – each conversation we have, each time we read or watch something – every moment we are receiving more information that we can learn from.

As children we need these experiences to develop our understanding of the world around us and help shape us into having the knowledge and skills which make us the professionals we are today. As adults, however, we need to sometimes reorganise our thoughts/beliefs and make new connections, so that we can develop our knowledge and skills further in order to be able to continue to grow as both individuals and professionals. 'Reflective practice' is one way which can enable us to recognise and articulate what we have learnt, so as to maximise its learning potential.

Reflective practice enables us as learners to restructure and re-order our thoughts and beliefs about what is known and unknown. It requires the learner to actively engage in the learning process, to think about the practical and personal value of it and therefore to connect the learning activity with

personal and/or professional goals and aspirations.

By doing this, research has shown that the learner will gain substantially more than is possible from purely passive learning.

Difference between reflection and reflective practice

Reflection is when you go through the process of thinking about the activity you have undertaken and possibly what the strengths and weaknesses of this were, what you gained from it, etc., but you do not record this in any way. Reflective practice is the process of documenting your reflections. It is this process of formalising your reflections that helps to cement the learning, thoughts and skills, which makes the difference and provides the learning advantages of reflective practice.

What does reflective practice look like?

Reflective practice can take many forms. It will depend on the activity being undertaken what will be the most appropriate format. However, some examples are simple processes such as on the back of attendance certificates reflecting on: What were your 3 key take home messages? How you will be able to use these in your work? What areas of development/further learning has the learning identified for you? Or, at events you have been involved in writing a reflection on: What was positive? What would you definitely do again? What was not so successful? What would you change next time?

So next time someone mentions reflective practice, please don't regard this as a tick box exercise to just get through, but embrace it as part of the learning experience which supports your continual development as a nutrition professional.



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