



Activities to aid reflection

Questions

Ask yourself questions like ‘what was good about the experience?’ and ‘what was bad about the experience?’. Asking (and answering) questions can help you get started, and provide a basis for drawing out your own opinions and ideas.



Stepping stones

Here, the idea is to think of a topic and list several experiences related to the topic chronologically. This helps you to generate other ideas. The topic could be a person, a place or an object (Progoff, 1975, as cited in Moon, 1999).

Dialogues

The writer composes a dialogue between himself/herself and another person or part of self. This could start with a greeting and then develop into a conversation, putting forward a different viewpoint or exploring a problem. One speaker could give ‘guidance from wisdom’, i.e. represent someone in the writer’s life who has been a source of wisdom and influences his/her thoughts (Progoff, 1975, as cited in Moon, 1999).

Double entry techniques

One part of this is descriptive and the other part consists of reflection on this description (Elbow, 1973, as cited in Moon, 1999). Holly (1984) suggests using a double page: on the left, description, and on the right, analysis and reflection. This format lends itself to a series of dated entries.

Free writing

This is when you write for a set amount of time (e.g. 5 minutes) without planning what you will write or thinking about your spelling or grammar. The idea is to put pen to paper, or fingers to keyboard, and simply write. This is a good technique for times when you feel there is a barrier to writing, because it helps your ideas to flow.

Highlights of the day

Describe and analyse either a high point in your day (Field, 1951, as cited in Moon, 1999), e.g. a pleasant or rewarding experience, or a negative experience (Miller, 1979, as cited in Moon, 1999).

Course handouts and readings

Take a look at a piece of material or a short reading from your unit. Read it closely and use it as a prompt to reflect on how you feel and what you think about as you read the text. Material such as questionnaires on learning styles and learning cycles can also be useful to prompt reflection.

Rehearsal

Write about a problem or dilemma which has been worrying you, and visualise and reflect on possible ways to deal with it (Moon, 1999).

Concept maps

Graphic techniques are a powerful way of exploring ideas (Moon, 1999). Concept maps/Mind maps generate ideas and contribute to understanding.

References

Holly, M. (1984). *Keeping a personal, professional journal*. Victoria, Australia: Deakin University Press.

Moon, J. (1999). *Learning journals: A handbook for academics, students and professional development*. London, England: Kogan Page.