

Reflective Writing

Assignments involving reflective writing, such as journals or reflection papers, are still considered to be academic writing. This means that most professors and instructors are looking for more than just your feelings on a particular subject. There should always be at least two components to any reflective writing assignment: **analysis** and **personal reflection** that have significant depth and breadth. This document is short guide describing various components of reflective writing. Note that this style of writing is *not* a linear process; there is no defined order for the components, and a writer may consider incorporating components of analysis and personal reflection into each paragraph, depending on the assignment.

Analysis

Description

What is the topic? What is going on? Who was involved? When did the topic occur? Is a physical description needed? What behaviours were observed? What do you know about the topic? How is the topic connected with the course outcomes?

Benefits

How does this subject contribute to society? To people's beliefs? To the future? To the present? What makes the topic so great? What are some strengths? Why is it important (to you)? Who might benefit from exploring this topic? What are some specific examples?

Limitations and logical inconsistencies

What could be improved about this topic? What are some weaknesses in the subject? Are there gaps in the arguments presented? How could this subject be harmful or detrimental to people, society, or other areas? What are some specific examples?

Applications

What is the real-world meaning for this topic? What are specific areas in which this knowledge or topic could be used? How is this subject useful? Why is it useful? What are some specific examples?

Personal Reflection

Initial reaction

What were your first thoughts when learning about this subject? What have you learned from this? What impressions do you have, positive or negative? Why do you think the subject was presented? What are you thinking and feeling about the topic?

What resonates with you?

How does this topic fit with your own beliefs and philosophies? Why does it fit? What do you like about the subject? What is important for you? What do you hope to take away or remember about this subject?

What does not resonate with you?

In what ways does this topic not fit with your beliefs and philosophies? What don't you like about the subject? Why not? What is causing you to feel negatively? What needs to be changed in order for you to enjoy this topic? Are your dislikes something with which everybody would agree?

Examples from own life

Where or when in your life do you see this subject? What are some specific examples of you experiencing the topic? Have you previously considered the link between the topic and your life? What are some specific examples of times that contradict the subject? If you have no examples of this topic in your life, why not?

Integration with own life

How might this affect your thoughts, feelings, and behaviours in the future? How could you improve your own life with the knowledge you have gained from this subject? What have you learned from this? How has this subject affected you? What are some specific examples of how you will integrate this topic into your life?

Questions

What questions do you still have about this subject? What would be important to know? How could you find the answers?

Sample of Reflective Writing:

As it turns out, there are quite a few reasons that the decision to seek out information could be considered unethical, especially when looking at possible resulting situations. First and foremost, as a counsellor, contrary to a psychiatrist or other clinical professional, I have no professional responsibility toward diagnosis. Technically, it shouldn't matter whether or not the client in this case has FASD; I am counselling them as they present in the counselling situation. Learning more about a suspected diagnosis may give me biases, either positive or negative, which could potentially affect how the counselling sessions proceeds. It is possible that by learning more about FASD, I may assume that the client has (or should have) this diagnosis, and may inadvertently lower the expectations of the relationship. This potential for bias brings up the guiding principle of *fidelity*, where the integrity of the relationship may be harmed. As the adage goes, knowledge is power; a power differential in a counseling setting can be very harmful indeed.

On the other hand, there are quite a few ideas which may support the idea of information-seeking in this context. According to *utilitarian ethics*, everyone should be happy as a result of the decision, and this includes the counsellor! I am definitely an information-seeking individual, and thrive on knowledge and facts. If I was curious about a certain diagnosis outside of a counselling situation, I would definitely be looking up everything that I could. I believe that based on the guiding principle of *justice*, respecting the equal treatment of all persons, there are positive implications for the future if I were to look up a certain diagnosis and its description. By researching available information now, it gives me a wider breadth of information to pull from in the future if I encounter clients who are curious about their diagnoses. Though power resulting from knowledge could be harmful to the fidelity of a relationship, gaining further knowledge could also be seen as...