



# Interprofessional Reflection Guide

## What is Reflection?

Reflection has been defined as a “process that occurs before, during and after situations with the purpose of developing greater understanding of both the self and the situation so that future encounters with the situation are informed by previous encounters” (Sandars, 2009, p. 685). According to Donald Schön (1983), two basic types of reflection exist: reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Reflection-in-action occurs when professionals pause to analyze an event as it is occurring and make judgments about how to proceed. Reflection-on-action occurs when professionals analyze an event after it has occurred to reevaluate their interpretation of the event and their actions. This involves an evaluation of performance and decisions on how to handle similar situations in the future. Reflection is iterative (K. Mann, Gordon, & MacLeod, 2007), in the sense that the professional engages in a cycle of reflective analysis, planning for future action, and action. Students perform reflection-in-action when applying their knowledge and skills to their team process. Written reflections and team debriefing constitutes reflection-on-action, with a view of enhancing future performance.



## How does Reflection apply to Interprofessional Teams?

Reflection has been identified as an important component of effective interprofessional teamwork (Clark, 2009). Interprofessional teams are composed of individuals with “different disciplinary training, background and perspectives” (Clark, 2006), requiring critical reflection, a “process through which an individual becomes aware of his or her own frames of reference or meaning perceptions” (Clark, 2009). Within interprofessional teams, reflection takes two basic forms. First, individual team members reflect on their performance within the team, and their role in team performance. Second, the team as a whole may discuss and reflect on their performance with respect to an event. In this type of reflection, the team evaluates their performance as a whole as well the performance of individual members, incorporating feedback from outside sources, and making plans for improved performance. Both forms of reflection are important in maintaining effective teamwork.

## Why Reflect?

In self-regulating professions, reflection has been identified as a key component of professional self-assessment and practice improvement (K. V. Mann, 2008). Recent evidence links formal reflection by health professionals to increased diagnostic accuracy (K. V. Mann, 2008) and reduction in medical errors (Wald & Reis, 2010). Reflection-on-action that is grounded in a specific event may also help professionals to integrate feedback that they receive (Wald & Reis, 2010) in order to more accurately identify their own strengths and weaknesses and, in turn, to identify their own limitations and to pursue information or outside expertise that may be required in a given context (Eva & Regehr, 2005).

## How to use this guide

This guide presents several components to reflection. It can be used as a step-by-step guide to reflection, moving from the description of the event to implications for future practice. However, reflection does not need to be formulaic in order to be effective, as long as all components are present somewhere in the writing. In practice, many successful reflections will begin with a description of the event as a foundation for analysis, but may not follow the remaining steps in a linear way.

The guide also provides brief description of each component of reflection, and some sample questions that might be used as a tool to prompt reflection in each area. Answering all of the questions is not necessary, or even desirable, in a single reflection.

Components of Reflection	Description	Questions to consider
Description	Describe the “event, issue or situation”(Williams & Wessel, 2004)	What happened? Who was involved? What was your role in the event? What role or roles did other team members play, including the patient and/or family?
Personal Analysis	Analyze the event “in relation to prior knowledge, feelings or attitudes” (Williams & Wessel, 2004)	How do you interpret the event? What was your emotional response to the event? What factors may have affected the event? What are the broader implications of the event?
Context Analysis	Analyze the event in the context of external sources of information	What evidence supports or refutes your interpretation? What feedback did you receive from patients, community members, facilitators, team members or other peers? How does your interpretation fit within the literature? How does the event relate to your profession’s standards of practice or code of ethics? How does the event relate to your personal ethics or values? What organizational, historical or sociological implications does the event have? What were your personal or professional strengths and limitations in relation to the event?
Practice Implications	Use your analysis to identify learning needs or changes to practice	What knowledge or expertise will you seek to support your practice? How will you acquire that knowledge or access expertise? How will you approach a similar event in the future? What other implications does the event have for your future practice?

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