



Self-Reflection – an Introduction (2 of 2)

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Co-funded by
the European Union

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4. How to learn Self-Reflection?

Self-Reflection requires a certain mind-set. You need to be open for criticism, doubts, and curiosity towards your own thought processes.

But it also requires the courage to admit mistakes and the willingness to learn from them.

Furthermore, you need patience to make self-reflection work, as it is not a one-and-done thing, but an ongoing process.



4. How to learn Self-Reflection?

You learn to reflect by getting active – learning by doing.

Here are some techniques to get you started and help you on the way:

- Write a **Reflection-Diary**: at the end of each day or after important events, write down what happened, what you learned and what challenges you faced.
- **Peer-Reflection**: talk to another person about relevant events and ask each other questions (e.g. „Why was that important to you?“). Establish a „reflection tandem“ and meet regularly.
- **Supervision or Coaching**: professionally guided reflecting can help you to recognize patterns.
- **Reflection Questions**: ask yourself „What has happened?“; „How did I react – and why?“; „What did I learn?“; „How can I use that in the future?“

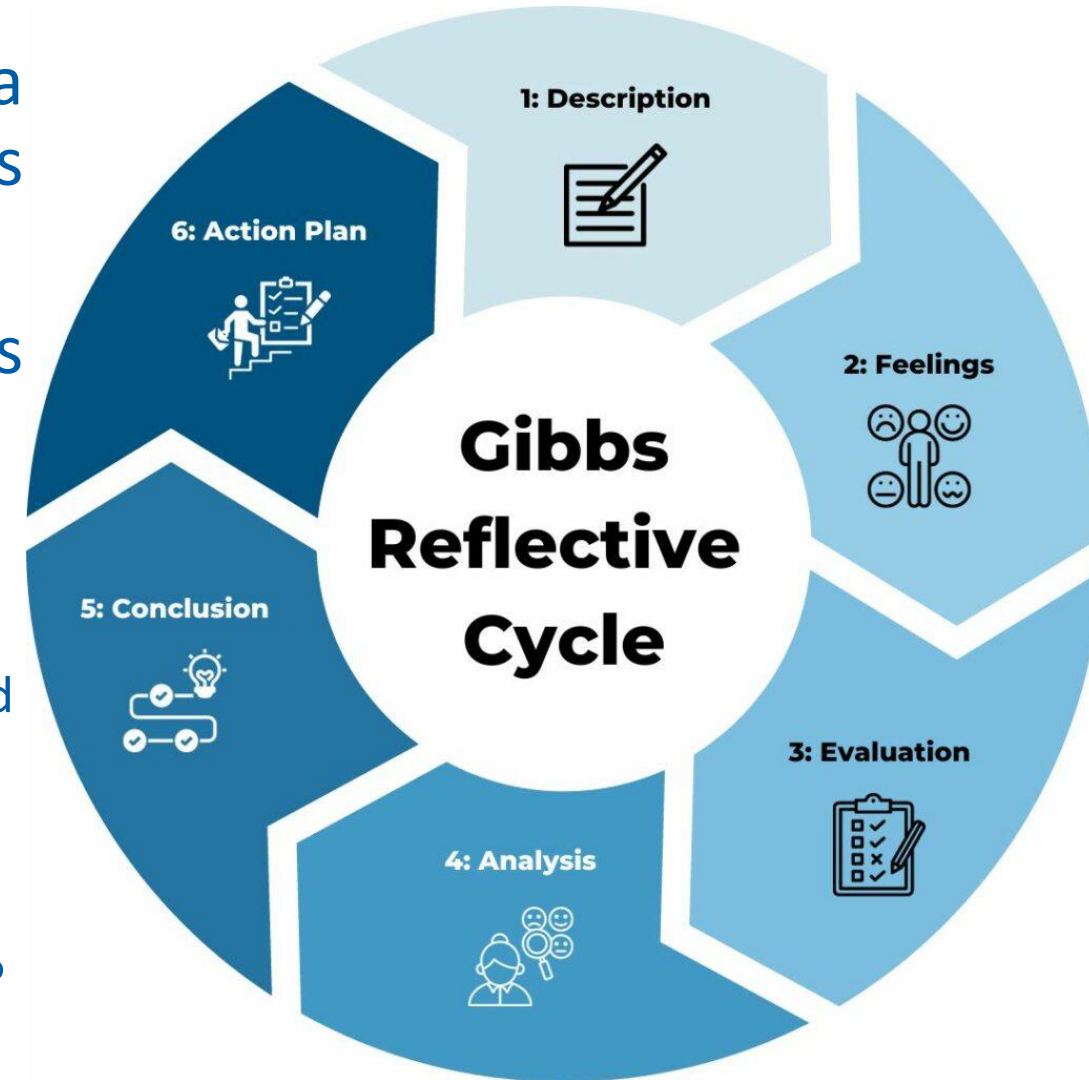


4. How to learn Self-Reflection?

In order to learn Self-Reflection, following a structure can help, until reflecting has become second-nature for you.

A well-known model for that is Gibb's Reflective Cycle:

1. **Description:** What has happened?
2. **Feelings:** What did I think and feel?
3. **Evaluation:** Which parts of the experience were good? And which were bad?
4. **Analysis:** What does this situation mean? What makes sense?
5. **Conclusion:** What should I have done different / not at all?
6. **Action Plan:** What would I do differently next time?



Gibbs (1988), www.tsw.co.uk



5. What does it mean to „self-reflect“?

Reflection means to think about your own experiences, actions, or learning processes, and to draw conclusions for your future behavior.

Critical Reflection goes one step further. It does not only ask “what has happened?” and “how to improve?”, but also why a certain situation developed in a particular way, and what preconceptions, values, and frameworks were involved.

Critical Reflection includes societal, cultural, and structural influences.

Within Critical Reflection you question your own convictions, look at certain situations from different points of view, and ask yourself what norms and expectations influenced your actions.



5. What does it mean to „self-reflect“?

Critical Reflection aims at recognizing **blind spots** and questioning usual mindsets. It helps with understanding situations more holistically and with acting with **more awareness and responsibility**.

There are three levels of “reflection depth”:

Level	Focus	Example (student perspective)
1. Technical Reflection	How can I do something better?	„How can I make my presentation easier to understand, so that my fellow students can follow the content better?“
2. Practical Reflection	Why do I do something in a particular way?	„Why did I choose a certain presentation technique? Why do I think that group work or visualisations support better learning experiences?“
3. Critical Reflection	Which values, balances of power, or norms are behind this?	„Why are some students more active than others during a course? Which expectations and course structures could lead to some voices being heard more clearly than others?“



5. What does it mean to „self-reflect“?

Critical Reflection includes questioning your own way of thinking and your actions, and to see things in a larger context.

In order to achieve that, you have to gain awareness of your own **values**, **convictions** and possible **prejudices**. These can be influenced by cultural, social, or political circumstances, and often influence our perceptions and decisions.

Furthermore, questioning **what we take for granted**. Things, that we see as „normal“ or matter of course, should be checked consciously. Why do we do these things in that way? And who dediced that for us? These questions can reveal hidden assumptions.



5. What does it mean to „self-reflect“?

In addition to all of that, Critical Reflection also includes dealing with **power** and **responsibility**. In many situations, the question arises, whose perspectives should be heard and taken into account, and whose voices are less acknowledged. Analysing that helps with better understanding the dynamics in the involved groups and institutions.

And finally, critical reflection combines **personal experiences** with **societal contexts**. Your own experiences are not only looked at individually, but in combination with social structures, cultural norms, and institutional frameworks.

This leads to a deeper and more holistic understanding of the situation in question and your own possible courses of action.



- Self-Reflection is an important future skill, supporting your personal growth, helping with navigating our complex world.
- Self-Reflection includes questioning yourself and others for constructive development, recognizing underlying behavioral and value systems, and evaluating the consequences of your decisions and actions holistically.
- Self-Reflection analyses what has happened, why it has happened, and what can be learned from the experience.
- Typical steps are: describe, notice, analyse, evaluate, draw conclusions, and transfer.



- Self-Reflection requires an openness for criticism, doubts, and a curiosity towards your own thinking processes.
- Self-Reflection techniques include reflection-diaries, peer-reflection, supervision, and reflection questions (what, how, why, ...).
- Gibb's Reflective Cycle: Description, Feelings, Evaluation, Analysis, Conclusions, Action Plan.
- Critical Reflection also includes societal, cultural, and structural influences.
- It aims at blind spots, values, convictions, prejudices, and societal context and power dynamics.



Gibbs, G. (1988): Learning by Doing – A Guide to Teaching and Learning Methods. Oxford Brookes University Press.

