Kolb’s Cycle of Reflective Practice

For managers supervising practitioners who work with children, young people and families

Kolb’s cycle of reflective practice is a theory which argues we learn from our experiences of life. The cycle consists of 4 stages which are illustrated in the diagram below, reflection is seen as an important part of the learning process.

Kolb’s Learning Cycle

![Kolb's Learning Cycle Diagram]

**Experience**
Do something

**Plan**
Bearing in mind your conclusions

**Reflect**
Think about what you did

**Conceptualise**
Make generalisations

**When would you use it?**

Kolb’s cycle is a useful Tool for managers to use in reflective supervision with staff who work with children, young people or families. Reflective supervision is a learning process in which the supervisor engages with the supervisee to:

- Explore a supervisee’s practice and factors influencing their practice responses (including emotions, assumptions, power relations and the wider social context)
- Develop a shared understanding of the knowledge base informing their analysis and the limitations of their thinking.
- Use this understanding to inform next steps.

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1. [https://skillsforlearning.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/preview/content/models/02.shtml](https://skillsforlearning.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/preview/content/models/02.shtml)
How would you use it?

The sections that follow will take you through each of the four stages and give some example questions that supervisors can use to help guide supervisees through the stages.

1. Experience

Supervisees can be assisted to recall more than they think they can recall if the right questions are asked. Here the emphasis is on facilitating an accurate and detailed recall of events. A partial description of the situation will undermine the rest of the cycle.

2. Reflect

Reflection helps the supervisee make links between the current situation and his/her prior experiences, skills or knowledge. Here the emphasis is on eliciting feelings, and patterns. This may bring out further information, or may reveal the supervisee's underlying attitudes. Reflection gives clues to other personal factors complicating the supervisee's experience.

3. Conceptualise

Here the emphasis is on analysis and explanation, probing the meanings that the supervisee and others involved attribute to the situation. This includes consideration of other possible explanations, the identification of what is not known or understood, and areas for further exploration.

4. Plan

The focus here is on translating the analysis into planning, preparation and action. This includes identification of outcomes and success criteria as well as consideration of potential complications and contingency plans.
KOLB’S LEARNING CYCLE

EXPERIENCE (do something)
- How are you today – what your day been like so far?
- What happened before the event/issue/situation started?
- What was your role in the situation?
- What was your aim? What planning did you do?
- What did you expect to happen?
- What happened?
- What did you say? What did you do?
- What did the other people involved say, do or display?
- What observations or concerns do other agencies have?
- What went according to plan? What didn’t happen?

REFLECT (think about what you did)
- What did you feel at the start of the situation?
- What feelings did you bring into this situation?
- What previous work, processes, skills knowledge are relevant?
- Describe the range of feelings you had during the episode?
- What did the situation/your feelings remind you of?
- Where have you encountered similar processes?
- Who/what does the other person in this situation remind you of?
- What feelings might you be carrying on behalf of the user/victim/other workers, e.g. what transference or projection might be occurring?
- What feelings were you left with?

PLAN (bearing in mind your conclusions)
- In light of the reflection and analysis we’ve done, what’s your overall summary of where things are at and what needs to be done next?
- Can you identify what you are and are not responsible for in managing this situation?
- What training, supervision, mentoring and support needs have been raised for you?
- What is urgent and essential?
- What is negotiable and what is non-negotiable in this situation?
- What would be a successful outcome to the next situation from your perspective?

CONCEPTUALISE (make generalisations)
- List three assumptions you/others might have brought into the situation
- How else might you have managed the situation?
- What did not go well and why?
- What was the critical moment? What went well, and why?
- Did power relations shift during the situation – if so why?
- What other, possibly unexpected outcomes, did the situation produce?
- What tasks or responsibilities in this situation were or were not addressed?
- What conclusions are you drawing from this situation so far?
- How do you define your role in this situation?
The Practitioner’s Tool Kit is a resource of Tools which can be used by practitioners working with children and families. The Tools support practitioners in their day to day work and can be used to support work already being done by them to identify and understand what is going on within a family.

It should be noted:

- This is not an exhaustive list of Tools
- Not all Tools are appropriate for all families, individuals or situations.
- Practitioners should use the Tools which best support them and the family in appropriately identifying, assessing and responding to their needs.
- Practitioners can and should be creative about how they use or adapt these Tools to make them appropriate to the individual, circumstance or situation.

If whilst working with children, young people and families practitioners are concerned about a child or young person being at serious risk of harm they should, following their own agency procedures:

- Discuss their concerns in the first instance with their Safeguarding Lead or line manager if they are unsure if they are suffering significant harm
- Inform the parents and / or gain their consent to make this contact unless doing so would put the child at risk
- Gather initial information using the Contact Form as guidance which is available from the LSCP website www.leedsscp.org.uk/Concerned-about-a-child
- Call the Duty & Advice Team
- If you believe a child is in immediate danger and at risk of harm call the police on 999.

If the child or young person is not at risk of being significantly harmed practitioners should consider an Early Help response.