

Episode 19 of the 'How We Care' podcast: Reflective Practice

Elizabeth Turp 0:01

Hello, and welcome to episode 19 of How We Care. So today's episode is about reflective practice, an essential thing for any healthcare professional. I've been thinking a lot about this and I think it's particularly interesting, the different places me and my co-host Paul are with this. So I'm thinking, contradict me if I've got this wrong, but my understanding is that as a lecturer, you are very heavily involved in teaching practitioners reflective practice (Oh, he's nodding so that's good) and obviously also uses it in his own practice.

I'm in a bit of a different position and this has been very useful reflective practice to think about this episode actually, because I did my training 25 years ago. And when you're training to be a counsellor, obviously, there's huge amount of reflection going on within the training process, and it's very intense. And then other points in a career you do, you know, formal things, but really, day to day it's all on the individual to make sure that you are doing reflective practice. So I think that makes for quite an interesting discussion. And I'm sure there's lots of crossovers where we meet in the middle, that's my perspective on this topic. So what do you think about that?

Paul Gaunt 1:28

Yeah, I think you've nailed it really, Elizabeth. I've definitely since I became a lecturer since that became my main role. It's been very much hopefully, continuing my own and refining and improving my own reflective practices. A large part of the job is through assignments through observations. In the field and through discussions in the classroom, just encouraging students to be really reflective and to be as reflective as possible. And I think when you're doing that, it inevitably rubs off on you. So if I if I developed any bad habits in practice it before I was lecturing, but when I was managing and being a careers advisor, hopefully I've managed to kind of revisit some of the first principles in terms of reflective practice, because I'm doing it so much with students.

And one thing I would say is that and I'm sure you've experienced this and probably everyone listening will have experienced this. The times in your life in your professional life in your working life and in your personal life where you don't have time to think it just kind of bombarded and you're going from one thing to another. And sometimes the idea of reflection can be treated as a luxury but this links very much the discussions we've had about. I think all of our themes tend to link back to each other. And we've had the discussion about taking care of yourself several times in different ways and it's the same principle with reflective practice in both cases. The danger is, we think, Oh, I'm so busy. I've got so much to do. I don't have time for that. I don't have time to go for a walk or take a break. And similarly, we might think I don't have time to think about what I'm doing in any great depth because I'm just doing and the kind of busyness and hustle and well, toxic productivity, we've probably talked about before as well.

One other thing I'd say about working with students is because they are new I can remember this when I trained and fresh, you're enthusiastic, you're curious, but you're also quite vulnerable. One of the ways they think in which we can support students reflections is when they feel they might do a presentation or they might do a one to one with a client that we're assessing. And sometimes the student at the end

of it will say what did you think of that? Oh, it was terrible. Think reflecting you know, immediate reflection on the back of doing something especially with somebody there to guide you. It means we can say no it wasn't terrible. There may be something you're focused on that you thought went badly that you did this. Well you did that. Well, you did that well. So we can have an emotional reaction to something it can go the other way as well. Can't you go oh, that's fab. I was brilliant. And then and then a reflection on something. Well, we'll make it we'll I think the way to think about it. You can have peaks and troughs of emotion, can't you? Oh, that really well or that went terribly badly. And in actual fact, the reality is somewhere in between, so it might have gone really well but there were probably still things that could be improved. Or it might not have gone so well. But there are things in there to build on the things in there that were good. And we've you know, I'm conscious that they can be like this or have been like this sometimes where it's either a triumph for a disaster. When actually the reality is it's on us. It's On a continuum of well, you know, it was mainly really good, but there were things that that that bit could have been better or that question that I was asked, I could have given a better answer you don't to me.

Elizabeth Turp 6:29

So there's a really good lesson in there. If we were doing this in a more formal way we might have thought oh 'there's a principle'. You know, there's a rule, but you know, so if you notice that you're either thinking something's amazing or something's absolutely terrible, then it might be a good idea to reflect on it in a more balanced way. Because when you say it's very rarely the either of those two extremes. And, you know, they're both very damaging to the individual and to the potential clients that you're working with. Because if you miss something important in either extreme, then you're not going to be able to address it. I mean, when you when you're talking about someone who thinks they've done amazing what's actually come up for me is you might think you've done amazing but you might have actually said a really damaging sentence to somebody and might not have noticed or realise and that you know, because that does happen sometimes there's like a fracture in the in the work and if you if you kind of if you're if you haven't noticed it, for some reason, it's dangerous to be definitely sure that you've done a great job. Like it's never good for anyone to be definitely sure that they're amazing at their job. I don't think because we're always evolving and learning we have to be and especially in this line of work, we have to have a little bit of humility and a little bit of realisation that we're never we're never gonna get everything right all the time. In fact, it's the opposite. We need to just keep evolving, keep developing, but it's also really not helpful to be so down on yourself that you assume that you've messed everything up.

And I think you're talking about students, obviously and there may be more likely to be on that end as they start off. Yes, some you know, I noticed quite a lot in discussion groups and things that a lot of quite experienced practitioners have a lot of difficulty believing in the validity of what they're doing, and things like that. And so I think that can, that can happen a lot, even if you've got a lot of experience, which is you know, that's also damaging to the work because if you're so kind of critical of yourself. I feel like that's probably going to get in the way of you kind of going with the flow of things. Maybe something Yes. Yeah, that might be something that needs addressing. I mean, in in our profession, that would be a personal therapy issue. We obviously talk to supervisor but that it's that's a dominant thing

that you're feeling. Oh, I'm not doing any you know, good here. I'm useless at my job. I'm like what's happening?

Or if there's evidence, external evidence, because you know, when I thought about this, there's so many ways you can reflect on your practice. Isn't there? One of them in my profession and probably in your profession? One of them is do your clients attend their sessions? Do you have a high DNA rate? Do you have a high or low retention rate? You know, there might be external evidence that there is actually an issue with your practice, or might be no evidence at all your clients might be doing really well and come into all their sessions and so another thing that I do regularly and I think it's probably good practice is to seek feedback from the client on a regular basis to find out am I actually doing a good job? Am I doing what this this client wants me to be doing? Is there something I'm doing that they're not comfortable with, you know, to check to not assume it's either good or bad, but to check and have that as kind of part of your ongoing practice. Embedded? Is that something that you kind of teach in your line of work but it's actually it's like an embedded part of?

Paul Gaunt 10:13

Yeah, I mean, I think one of the things I learned this kind of from practice and through a bit of honest self-questioning, in conjunction with colleagues as well, all of us who was seeing people individually as student clients, so this is when I was working as a careers advisor. And one thing I remember and I say this to students is a point at which a one-to-one session is coming to an end. And I got into the habit of saying I hope that was helpful /Was that helpful? And almost every time probably, I can't think immediately think of any exceptions they would go yes. And reflecting on this with colleagues, we were talking about how we get feedback and how we get feedback. That's useful, and that helps us to improve. And so we've developed different ways of getting feedback, both written and verbal.

But one thing I encourage students to do is to say at the end of the session, is there anything we've covered today, is there anything we did today that that's been particularly helpful or it's been useful is going to enable you to progress? So rather than saying was it was it good? Oh, because that if I'm put turning, turning the tables if I'm in a client situation or customer situation, and somebody asked me that question, I might not be 100% happy. There might be things nagging at me to think Well, I wish we could this, but I'm not going to say no, I'm probably going to say yes. That's a cultural kind of politeness.

Elizabeth Turp 12:19

So needs to be a bit more of an open question to allow for nuance to come out.

Paul Gaunt 12:24

Yeah. And, and when I started asking, was there anything that was really useful? Invariably, they came back with something that helped me to understand that was useful, because what I thought might be the most useful thing often wasn't, yeah, so I might say something that I thought was particularly profound or helpful and that kind of wasn't necessarily what it might have been something more basic

than that, but they didn't. I given them some information or clarified a question. But often then I think that enable to follow up which was Is there anything we haven't covered that you would have found useful? Or if we, if we, you know, next time, if we can meet again, what would be useful to cover? So I've described the question Was that helpful as a kind of needy question, you know, that

Elizabeth Turp:

Oh, yeah. 'Please affirm me!'

Paul Gaunt:

Yes. Please tell me it was. And because sometimes, I don't know if you've had these sometimes. I can't, you could get a sense. I know this has been useful to them because of the way they're responding. But sometimes you'd be on an off day or not feeling great are really tired sometimes. I'm not sure I've been much help here. And, but rather than catastrophizing about that, as we were saying at the start, if you've got a kind of methodology or a regular way of reflecting, it can help you to not like we were saying before, either catastrophize or, or kind of sink into a kind of complacency about it's going really well. I'm doing really well.

Elizabeth Turp 14:23

'I don't need to look at any of this. I can just go Yeah'.

Paul Gaunt 14:28

And I suppose the other thing I like to say is, sometimes we were forced to do more reflection if something goes wrong, or if we get some difficult feedback. But it's important to do it when things are going well, as well. And when it is going well, that's, you know, you can draw lots of positives from that as well.

Elizabeth Turp 14:51

Well, yeah. As you said, often it is the thing that you didn't really notice or didn't you know/ intend to be that is the profound thing and I think there's a few processes I have about if you at the end, because I you know, I don't work in a set timeframe with clients, but I do have an ending process. So regardless of whether I've done six sessions with somebody or three years of therapy with somebody, at the end, you review the therapy and it's really interesting, because we look, we go back to the first session, and we look at where was the person in this, you know, mentally and whoever else at that point in time and where are they now?

But we're also we're mainly looking at what did they get because if they've chosen that means pressing aside people who have a set amount of sessions dictated if they have a choice on the amount of sessions they have, the ending process most usually is because they've they don't need to come anymore they finished they feel better, achieved their goals obviously, we're looking at the goals. And sometimes they'll say, Well, it was when you said this, that things shifted for me. And you'll be like, oh, whoa, okay. And it's not that the thing you said was, like silly or frivolous, it'll be something important, but it wasn't? I mean, you're not necessarily going to know that that's the thing that that unlocks something for an individual person.

So yeah, so that kind of type of learning is really good, because it also shows how we've spoken so much on this podcast that we about person centred working is kind of where we both landed in life because you cannot prescribe what is the most useful intervention for an individual person based on external metrics. You can't go this step and that step and it will definitely be better because it everybody's different. Once it was it was the fact that something that was going on in the room, which obviously won't get into because protect confidentiality, but it was the fact that a tear formed in my eye, listening to the person telling me something. That was what was profound for that person. Wow. Yeah. So, you know, it was a human, you know, that wasn't an intervention. That was that was my human response to something that they were that you know, and that was amazing. I mean, that was just really, it was great feedback. But it was also acknowledgement of how many levels of things are actually going on in the process as well. So wow, there's so much in this.

I wanted to come back to when you were making your introductory bit there. I wanted to come back to when you were saying about it's easy sometimes to not have space for reflection, basically. And yeah, getting on with things and all of that and I wanted to sort of talk a little bit about space, and how important is to make space for reflection. In this work. And you know, again, we acknowledge every time we talk about any of this stuff, we always acknowledge that if you're working in a you know, an employed setting or in the NHS, sometimes you are expected to do so much work that you don't have space for reflection, whatsoever.

So we're you know, we're are acknowledging that, but within that, you know, there's a level, for example, online, there's often conversations between therapists and a lot of them are American therapists and they've got a different culture, but the principles important they often have conversations and like, jokey threads on Twitter, about how they haven't written their notes. So I know that there are people and there are people in the UK as well, who write their therapy notes, like at the end, either at the end of the day, after they've seen like five or six or however many people or, they don't write them until like another day. And like for me, again, everybody's different. But for me, I've kind of always found it really helpful to capture the essence of a session immediately after session, partly because I would be concerned that if I didn't do that, I would forget what had happened in the session. And so it's kind of miraculous to me that people can write notes after, like such an amount of time. And for me, if I see five people in a day, by the end of that day, I ain't going to be able to distinguish between each person enough to you know, so that so, so when I was working in the NHS, we had like 10 minutes between sessions that was like standard, which is hard because you need to have a wee, need to have a snack, you need to make a phone call. It's hard, but like I would always prioritise making notes and in part of that process is also that if something that needs further reflection is coming up, then I would make a separate note either to spend some time on that later or to take it to supervision. So there will be like an even if I didn't have the time there and then I would make sure I'd

attended to the issue and acknowledged the issue and captured it by writing it because writing is a really important way of capturing something that needs to be either it's something that's been said but a lot of the time as well.

It's something that's been felt I think so if you have a session, and you feel very uncomfortable, like bodily or you know, and you're not quite sure why means doesn't happen very often, but occasionally might happen. That definitely needs to be reflected upon, doesn't it? So, instead of like allowing it to pass and not, you know, because you might want to allow it to pass as well. You might not want to inquire into it, but it's quite important to capture it and make the space now I work for myself and I have health issues so I need to pace myself. I have at least half an hour between phone sessions and that's not just for reflection. It's partly for self-care and managing my energy etc. But it also allows for a bit more time. And I've also thought a lot about for me I mean I'm sure most people do this before you see your next client as a way of shifting your mind to their time. Obviously reread the notes from the previous session. So there's reflection in that because there's like, Okay, where did we leave off? You know what was going on in the session? And it's not that you dictate what happens in this session. It's that you've got one minute like one eye on either what they said they wanted to continue to work on, or what was going on, you know what needs to be and then and then I still see what happens, but it's like that's a way of reflecting on where am I now where do I need to be now for this next person and like let letting go of the previous whatever, which is especially important if you've had a really difficult session for it with a previous client for some reason, either they're in a really bad place or, or you've got something going on yourself.

It's quite important to have systems in place which allow for that, and space even when there isn't much space, some space, even if it's only a minute of space. Because if you don't what you described earlier is going to happen and over time your stress levels will ramp up and up and up. Which is kind of what happens for a lot of people anyway in work, isn't it and then potentially you've made mistakes or you know, you're not attending to and I think in my profession you we've talked about this loads don't like it basically left on your own to get on with this. I mean you do have supervision but we've talked about the choices that we make when we go to supervision. Basically you can do what you want nobody's really going to notice if you're not attending to all this stuff, you know, so it's all it's all on the individual which is a lot of responsibility. And I think the routes to working are very different as well like if you work in an organisation you've hopefully got support systems around you. But if you work for yourself, especially if you work for yourself straight out of training, which is becoming more common. I don't know how you're supposed to learn all this stuff. I mean, it's not some of its taught on the courses but not enough. I don't think so.

Paul Gaunt 23:21

We don't have supervision. As such, and I think we've discussed this before in the careers profession, but a lot of people kind of take mentors on and that becomes something that becomes a regular practice, but I think I know of mentoring relationships that haven't been sustained because of time pressures. And you know, because but both the mentee and mentor were willing but weren't able to make time or somebody that you know that their roles changed or whatever but yeah, I think you're right. I think it's very, it is easy to fall into that kind of habit of not reflecting if you're very busy and like you say if you're working on your own and I can identify with what you say in terms of working as a self-

employed practitioner that you're left to it. You know, there's a sense in which, if you don't have a reflective practice, nobody's going to impose it on you. Nobody's going to check in on you and your left here and I think that's true often in employed situations as well even in that supposedly pride themselves on you know, we encourage coaching and reflective practice and all that sometimes the reality is quite different. So that's in there, kind of, yeah, that's in the policy documents and it's in what the organisation says about itself, but then people are working like so hard and so long in terms of hours that they don't have time to actually put that into practice.

Elizabeth Turp 25:13

Yeah, absolutely. I think it's really dangerous. Some of this stuff that the kind of I mean, we'll probably talk about we will talk about this on the professional standards episode, won't we? Because although there is policy and there is ideas around what is a good like standard of you know, supervision or you know, even though in our profession there is quite, you know, well recognised amounts that you're supposed to do with certain reflective things. There's no regulation. So there's lots of practitioners that operate completely outside of even those basic standards, you know, and I was thinking when I was thinking about doing this episode, I was thinking a lot about mavericks for some reason. There's quite a lot of maverick practitioners in the therapy world who like really pride themselves and it's obviously it's a personality thing, they really pride themselves on not doing all the things that you're supposed to do around you know, they'll do things which can result in, you know, potentially damaging effects on vulnerable clients and all of that, and they're like, Well, you know, 'we're not concerned with rules' basically Yeah, people who don't like to be, you know, and I'm not saying you should be completely rule bound, but when you're working with people who are coming to you for assistance with their vulnerability and, you know, potentially very damaged histories, you have a responsibility to be doing reflective practice, to the very minimum, so ensure that you're not doing further damage to people, you know, and if there's anything that you need to work on, as an individual and develop, then you're you know, you need to make sure that you're aware of that as much as can be

so I've also been thinking this week about times in my career where I've really appreciated a formal opportunity to do reflection. I mean, obviously supervision is a monthly formal opportunity for that. So that's that, but so in my profession, you can do accreditation, to your whatever professional body you're signed up to, and there's a few different ones now. But I did my BACP accreditation, though, I don't know. 15 years, I don't know, a long time ago. Anyway, I really enjoyed that. I mean, it's challenging, but you have to do case studies you have to write rationale for your like model of working you have to really, and I thought well, this is really useful. I mean, it's hard. But you have I enjoyed the fact that you had to take a really overview of all your practice up to that point, because I think I'm not very good with dates but I think at that point, I think I'd had, I don't know, let's say eight years of practice, I might have been. But yeah, I found that a really useful opportunity to have to have to kind of conceptualise and talk about how I work, and I am going to do the senior accreditation at some point as well. I mean, it's actually up in the air at the moment because they're doing a mapping project. So but once that's in place again, I think I would I would actually welcome doing that. You know, I mean it has positive impacts for the work you can do obviously as well but as a as a form of reflective practice. I personally, listeners are not going to like this, I don't think but I would welcome having to do something like that a bit more regularly. Maybe not to that degree because it's a huge document, but like some kind of saying where

you have to, in whatever way works for you as an individual. Not everybody likes writing so it can be a different form, but like some kind of formal reflection where you have to engage with where you're up to with your work. Because it's one of the things that can happen without anyone really noticing including the individual like moving towards burnout. Or, you know, stagnating or working with a client group that you're actually getting a bit sick of because you're if you're working only with the same issues that's potentially not healthy. So there's lots of reasons why it's useful to take a good overview. So yeah, I'm intrigued to know once someone is qualified in careers guidance, is there a formal kind of process that happens going forward or...

Paul Gaunt

Yeah, that's a really good question. I think the answer is probably that it kind of varies greatly based on the feedback we get from recent graduates from a course. So some straightaway go into environments where there's a lot of kind of informal mentoring that goes on so they get taken under someone's wing. They're in a very, kind of open communicative. They're their contributions are valued from the start. Or, they're not treated as well. You're the junior so you know, just do what you're told. Other others either it's a kind of in a working on their own or although supposedly not working on their own but they're in a particular environment find themselves feeling on their own, with a lot of stuff and left to their own devices.

So it's a real mixed but we have had contact from some people who've said they miss being part of a learning community, and I think that one of the things about courses professional training courses is I think you know, and I like to think this is partly because of the environment that we create, as a team as a team of as a teaching team. As they feel that the course gives them an enormously positive opportunity to reflect on their practice and to build and to grow their own ideas about how they're going to practice and so as so the other aspect to touch on I suppose, is although we don't have supervision, you know, if they're employed they'll have PDRs like personal development reviews or whatever they might be called. No, you've had those and I've had those. I've had the full spectrum of somebody who really listened and really picked up on nuances of what I said and fed back and appreciated and gave me ideas to someone who basically spent most of the time talking about themselves. So they would say something and they would say, yeah, yeah, well, I can relate to that because I know So, All the things you shouldn't do really.

So that that's the thing when people finish a professional training and then go into the field. They're going to there's the whole landscape isn't that different, different working environments, different people. So the experience can be very varied. And I suppose the message I would want to give to people starting out is that that is a very good reason to build your own kind of reflective practice and way of reflecting Absolutely, yeah. So that regardless of whether informal or formal reflective practice is valued and given time for that, try and make sure that you do it for yourself. Yeah. Because that's something that you wasn't, nobody can take that away, if that makes sense.

Elizabeth Turp

Yeah, it's that responsibility, isn't it? of knowing, and I think I can't speak for what people learn on their counselling training now, because I did mine so long ago. So you know, I mean, again, some courses are

a lot better than others and all of that. So, you know, let's assume that people are taught some really good processes and ways of doing this. But again, once you're out there as you say, in some organisations, you're pretty much on your own or if you literally in private practice on your own, you have to make these things. Work for yourself. And I think some people are better at that self-led stuff than others naturally. I don't know like some people, some people benefit from, like you've mentioned mentoring earlier, didn't your peer supervision, stuff. Some people really benefit like everybody benefits from that, but some kind of, it's almost like you've got to work out as well.

What your needs are, what sort of person you are, what your needs are, in order to support a reflective practice. And then try and build something that works. And that you know, and it's so complicated, like when I thought of all the different things and ways that a person can reflect on what they're doing. They're so like, multifactorial, and they some of them we've talked a lot about all these in different contexts. I think one thing that's coming up for me is actually in the moment reflection with it. We talked about this maybe last episode. Yeah, we did about reflecting on how you're feeling physically, in in a session with a person like what's you know, checking in what's actually going on for me right now in this moment. That's reflective practice, isn't it? That's live, live reflective practice, because sometimes what you're feeling in your body is got something very important to tell you about what's going on between you and the client. Sometimes it's sometimes it's just telling you, there's something wrong with you, you know, and you've got something to deal with. But quite often, it will be indicating quite strongly something that's happening in the room and if you are not able to attend to that, you're not going to hear it because you know, the body can tell us things just as much as the mind can so if you're someone who's done a lot of body work stuff and breathwork stuff, you'll be skilled in that area. If you're not, maybe not so much.

So it's like there's things that you can do which are not even necessarily directly related to work, you know, like mindfulness practice and whatever that can then feed back in to this. And then there's lots of other things that some people use for reflector reflective practice, that are really powerful, which again, are also just wellbeing tools like journaling is a really big one. And I think I've never done this particularly but I know that some practitioners notes will be in the client's file. Yeah, you know, so especially if you're in an organisation or now in the NHS, I think people put the notes actually on a database. Yeah. So obviously, you're not going to put much in that because it's accessible for other people. So some people I mean, you don't put details in notes anyway. But then some people will also keep separate process notes about the client, and how they feel about the process and how they, you know, kind of make sense of it, and then that's a completely separate process. So I think I do that more in mentally and then in a different way. But yeah, there's two separate things going on there isn't there that you that you can capture by writing something down? So there's yeah, there's all kinds of ways of doing this.

And another really big one that we talked loads about was Peter Blundell. In that episode about keeping on top of what's going on in the world. We've talked a lot about how it's very important to go towards the things that you find difficult and uncomfortable in our profession specifically, I guess that you know, if there's an issue happening in the world, that you that you get, get have a really strong reaction to as a person, then it's worth actually going and seeking out some learning about that issue. Because the potential for it to come up in the in the therapy room with a client, you know, is it's risky, isn't it? If you've got like something that's triggering something from your history, or something that's politically very difficult for you or you really feel passionate about, and you don't attend to that that what comes up when you let it go watching the news or reading something, then you risk it coming up when you're

working with a client and if it's not something you've worked through, and you made sense of it's harder to put to one side when it comes up. So there's all these like other I mean, I just, um, you said you mentioned the word curiosity at the beginning of this episode, and that like that, to me, that's like a core thing. I've always been very curious person and I just love to read, like I read so much. Sometimes I read so many articles and different things. I can't remember where I've read one particular gem or thing that I've read that week, you know, don't just read all the time about human experience that you know, and I find that a really useful way to kind of attend to what's important to me and learning more about things that you think you know a lot about as well. I think it kind of comes from that. Obviously listening to podcasts is another way to do that. Yeah. So have you got any other sorts of ways of, you know, things that you do that external that help you with reflection, I think

Paul Gaunt

sometimes after a teaching session or an individual client session, like don't use settle out, even if it's just a mad five minutes scribble just capturing the essence of it, capturing the immediate feelings, what went well, what didn't go well. Or an idea for something to do next time I do that. So and the other thing I was thinking about, you were saying about reflecting while you're doing something so quite often now. If I, let's say I've got a two hour teaching session and I'll, you know, be doing something participative like or get people to split into pairs and discuss something often while they're discussing that thing. I often make a change. I've used that time to change direction and change the plan. So I'm just gonna cover right? I might go in with a with a with a kind of plan either written down or in my head. And but I'm, I suppose it's just picking up signals that that's going well. We need more time on that. I'm not sure I'm not sure that thing that I'd planned. It worked well. Last time, but it's not it doesn't fit in the way that the direction that this is going very live or do something different. Yeah. And um,

I suppose you just got experienced at doing that and comfortable doing that. Whereas I think when I first started out that would be really scary to think I'd have the thought, I'm not sure I should do this next exercise. But I would do it anyway. Because okay, I kind of didn't have the agility or the confidence to suddenly you know, to just switch it. Whereas now I kind of do that frequently. Yeah, yeah. I enjoy doing that. And I think it's kind of I suppose it just kind of feel much more comfortable in like a classroom situation to do that. I feel like I'm trusted by the students and I trust them that you know, that they'll understand the direction in which I'm going if that makes sense. So definitely reflection in action. That's what I was gonna say, that doesn't mean I was getting it right. You know, because sometimes we might think, Oh, I actually, maybe I should have stuck with that. You know, I should have given that exercise a try. But most of the time, I think I can kind of when I'm reflecting on it afterwards, I can justify that. I'm glad I did that because it made sense in the context of what we needed to cover and what and how we were going to cover it and how the students are responding to stuff.

Elizabeth Turp

Yeah. Oh, that's great. I mean, that's making me think about it in my practice, which is predominantly one to one work. It's a bit similar, because you like every single thing you say is based on reflecting in the moment, obviously, what the clients just said to you, but also a combination of other things. Like a

sense of what's right and previous experience and knowledge. If somebody mentions a particular, like, way of thinking or because I've done lots of different trainings over time, and I would I don't ever impose a particular idea or way of working on somebody I would only bring, for example, mindfulness practice would only ever bring that in if the client has mentioned it in some way, whether they've mentioned it in a in a direct way, or whether they've said something like, oh, I want to get better at living in the moment. When I said that, yes, you know, and from that, I would then go, oh, well, I'll maybe offer this bring this in bring, you know, and then you know, so it's, yeah, there's so many different decisions being made. It like moment to moment isn't there?

Where the reflection and the process of reflection is, is what is what the work is. So it sounds like it's very similar to what you're doing because you are changing different parts of what you're delivering based on the needs of the group at any given time. And it's very fluid in a way even though there's a structure maybe more of a structured plan, but still responding aren't you to the individuals in the room and their needs? And yeah, and it's a lovely thing, isn't it? And it's, it is person centred as we've spoken about and it's responsive and it's dynamic, and it's exciting. And it kind of it relies on having the ability to stay tuned in to, to everything going on, because some of this is a feeling, isn't it? It's an instinct and then if you tune into that, then you're like, Oh, well, it's because this doesn't feel right. Or, you know, or I'm gonna go down this path instead of this path or, you know, so it's actually yeah, talking about this, we're realising how embedded reflection is in the work as all the time anyway.

So yes, it's in the moment to moment stuff, which is kind of why it's so important that we look after ourselves as practitioners. Because if we don't look after our own basic needs, and I'm talking about really basic needs now like sleep, hydration and food, if we don't look after those most basic needs it's very difficult to stay in, in the kind of, yeah, I used that we're talking about here when you've got to be pretty sharp, and really be fully reflecting. I mean, it's interesting, you can do a pretty good job when, you know, under a lot of stress and challenge because I mean, I should know that I've worked for years when I was very unwell. I still managed to deliver good work, but it's, it's important to kind of do as much as you can to keep yourself in a very good reflective state, I think. Yeah, so that you can let go of everything else in that moment. That's not relevant to the task at hand and really be in it. Yeah, that's great. That's a great kind of parallel, isn't it between what we're both doing?

Paul Gaunt

Yeah, and something else you said a few minutes ago, around curiosity. And I think the phrase you used was something like you might think you know a lot about something but you can read and find out more or go see it from a different angle. And I think as part of reflection, that is incredibly important. With all the benefits of technological advances, social media, kind of the access we have to news and information. I think one of the dangers of that and I'm conscious of it with myself is we almost have a kind of culture where we prize our opinions very highly and I know I've got some strong opinions about things and as you say, if I carry those into certain situations, I may encounter someone who's I've had this experience recently, someone who has the opposite opinion or a different opinion or a different perspective. And that's been a, you know, that was a source of great reflection because I was so convinced and so passionate about my perspective on this topic. And this person presented a kind of an opposite an opposite perspective, which when I reflected on it, I thought, you know, there's validity in both points of view and I'm kind of got very attached, almost very attached to and so that that

sometimes that that tension between somebody else's perspective and your own can be very productive and it can be really helpful to help reflect on the bigger picture. And I think, a difficult question for us to ask sometimes, especially if we're as experienced and knowledgeable as we both are. Might I be wrong about this? Or might there be a different perspective on this? I haven't considered

Elizabeth Turp

the courage to be potentially wrong. Yeah. Oh, I love that. Yeah. Yeah. The openness to be challenged and the willingness to be having your mind changed. Oh, yeah. No, I like I like that, though. I see. I find that exciting. But you what you're describing before is a very human thing, isn't it that we get very wedded to our ways of being and we you know, and they're reinforced because obviously we all surround ourselves with people who agree with us generally. Yeah, especially social media. That's what social media is, but like, generally, socially, we mixed with people who are similar. So yeah, so to actually have ways to try and challenge that doesn't mean you've got to change your opinions. Your opinions are wrong, but it's about being open, isn't it to things because I think, again, referring back to the episode about challenging CPD, the world is changing all the time.

And so especially for people you know, our older people like us at a certain point in our careers, you know, it's even more important that we make sure that we don't get stuck in ideas and opinions that were formed, I don't know, potentially 30 years ago or something like that. Yeah, that's not okay. If you work with people from all ages. It's not justifiable to not do some really deep work and reflection on how you respond to new ideas in the world or changes in language or, you know, different ideas and concepts. Like that needs reflection, because it will come up, like it will come up in, especially in the therapy room, it will come up. And you know, as we sort of hinted at before, there are times where one word or one sentence can have a profound effect on a client. Now that might be a really positive, profound effect. It might be the thing that shifts everything or it might be a really, really, I've heard so many stories about this from friends who've had therapy, and there's been like one thing that the person has said about sexuality or something which has set them back years. That's the power we're talking about here, isn't it?

So it's like, being able to reflect in all these different ways is to not to never make a mistake, obviously, because we all make mistakes. We're human, but it's about minimising the risk of making mistakes and then being aware when and if we do make a mistake so that we can act on that and using all these, like so many things we've talked about in this episode, bits of each of them in whatever ways suit you as an individual. You're doing yourself and your clients best service I guess. Yeah. So that feels like a bit of a place to draw it all together. Does that have you got anything else you'd like to say?

Paul Gaunt

No, I'm just reflecting on what we've covered.

Elizabeth Turp

Yeah, great. Brilliant. So many different points.

Paul Gaunt

Yeah, so part of my reflection is and it touches on what we were talking about before. We don't kind of pre plan these episodes to any great detail. So there's no scripts involved in this. There's no fix list of topics and I think that it's fair to say I wasn't sure what we would cover today. And we've covered a lot of things I wouldn't necessarily have expected us to cover but I think that we've we were demonstrating reflection in action. I think. Absolutely.

Elizabeth Turp

Thank you so much for pointing that out. Well, that's exactly right, isn't it? So yeah, even as you're doing this is doing what we're talking about. Yes, we're challenging each other to think differently about what we do because we do slightly different things. So that conversation because of course, that's another one if you if you do have colleagues or peers that you can regularly talk to about work, then that is a really great way of reflecting on your own and being challenged because people do things in different ways. So perfect. No, I think that's really great. So I know you've got an ending exercise for the listeners. Is that right?

Paul Gaunt

Yes, I have. So I'm the course I teach at Coventry University, we give the students some resources, particularly around reflection and part of what they're doing is writing assignments. So there's quite a lot of stuff on reflective writing that we also encourage and actively involve them in conversation or reflection. One of the models we use this is a model from 1988 So very commonly used model, the Gibbs model, and it's from a book that was called 'Learning by doing 1988 A Guide to teaching and learning methods'. And it's quite I like it because it's fairly simple and straightforward. It's not overly complex. But so we'd like to invite listeners to maybe note down these questions and to think about a day they've had or something they've or something they've done professionally like an event or a therapy intervention or a presentation or whatever it might be and to follow this model, so the first element of it is description.

-So what happened: a factual description of what happened. And the next bit is very pertinent to what we've been discussing feelings.

-What were you feeling?

-What were you thinking? So, just noting down different feelings you might have had during the event, different thoughts, you've had different ideas you had. And the next bit is evaluation.

- So what was good about the experience what was bad about the experience? So I like this because it picks up on what we were saying before about, it's never all good, and it's never all bad. So and I think if you feel if you feel that it was brilliant, then maybe think about was there anything that could have been

better? And if you think it's terrible, you know, look for what was it totally terrible or was the weather some good things about it?

-So what went well and what went badly? And then next one is really interesting because it's going I think, just a slightly deeper level. So it's analysis,

-what sense can you make of the situation? So that might be the sense making the situation might be actually this was the first time I've done this event. And it was it was challenging, so I've got to be kind to myself and recognise that it was a new situation. So it's the first time so it was a lot of learning involved. And maybe there were parts of it that didn't go so well. But I what I can salvage from this is there were things that I did really well. And also I've got ideas that I think I can incorporate into the next time I do this. Okay, so that might be what's so what's what sense can you make of the situation? And then, in conclusion, what else could you have done? I suppose that could be what additional thing could you have done or maybe is there anything that you did that you wouldn't do it feature so I suppose that as well. Then there's an action plan. So what if it arose again, what would you do? And I've certainly find that mech that that way of thinking helpful. So if I've done something and I'm reflecting on it, and I know I'm going to be doing it again or doing something similar again. It's really helpful for me to kind of note jot down upon. So I've got very recent experience of this. I did some I've got a new role which involves marking a lot of assignments in a short space of time. So I did it for the first time, around Christmas time. And it took me longer than I thought because it was the first time I'd done it so I was getting my head around it. So when I eventually finished doing all the marking, the first thing I did was write down a plan because I know I'm going to be doing it again soon. I just wrote down a plan a sequence of how I was going to do it when I was going to do it. So put it all in my calendar and oh now how long it will take rather than my kind of overly optimistic view of how quickly I would get through it. So that's worked for me. Fantastic. So yeah, I'll just recap the Gibbs reflective cycle description: what happened feelings What were you feeling? What were your thoughts? What were you thinking? Evaluation, what was good and what was bad? What went well and what went badly? analysis what sense can you make of the situation? Conclusion What else could you have done? Or what did you do that you might not do again? And finally action plan if it's if you do this in this situation again, what would you do?

Elizabeth Turp

Okay, great. So that's something to take forward. And, yeah, okay. That sounds like a really good process that if you do it enough times, it becomes an automatic process. Yes. Yeah. Okay.

Paul Gaunt

Yeah. I'll share it. That's the Gibbs model. I'll share some other models as well that we use that because sometimes people prefer their older models that people prefer to. We'll put these on the show notes.

Elizabeth Turp

We've got an announcement: they'll probably hopefully be a transcript of the episode of the show notes this time. Yeah. If you'd rather read it. Wonderful. Well, thank you for listening. And we're just going to announce next episode, which will be episode 20. We're going to be talking about deep listening. So there's plenty to talk about in that. So, thanks for listening and see you again soon.

Paul Gaunt

Thank you. Bye.

Transcribed by <https://otter.ai> Checked & edited by Elizabeth Turp