

# FACILITATING REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

## Mentoring Toolkit Tip Sheet #3

Developed by the Early Childhood Community Development Centre and its Mentoring Pairs for Child Care project, based on the Partners in Practice Mentoring Model

### What is Reflective Practice?

*'A professional activity in which the practitioner reflects both in-action and on-action, in order to enhance or improve practice.'* (Donald Schon, 1983)

### Why engage in reflective practice?

The ability to reflect on professional practice is seen as a viable avenue to foster growth in child care practitioners (Partners in Quality: Tools for Practitioners in Child Care Settings, Canadian Child Care Federation/CCCF, 2000).

Therefore, reflective early childhood education practitioners and by association, children's service providers, are more likely to experience personal support and growth, professional development, and improved programs and services if they:

'are invited to tap into and share their individual wisdom in an ethic of care, an environment that demonstrates honour, respect, and modesty and recognizes practitioners' needs, which allows individual wisdom to be acknowledged and respected and additional knowledge and skills to be developed.' ~ Animating and Sustaining Mentoring in Communities, Partners in Practice

### How is it done?

Reflective thinking involves a lifelong, critical examination of our intentions and behaviours. Reflective practice is this type of thinking applied to our professional activities and involves regularly noticing and considering:

- what we are intending and doing;
- what is actually happening;
- what the different reactions are to what is happening;
- what we should and can change; and
- what the consequences are for taking any of the different options being considered.

Those acting as mentors are most effective at facilitating their mentees' reflective thinking when they also analyse their own practices.

For a reflective practice tool that can be individually completed by early learning and care professionals and then shared and compared within programs or groups, please refer to the Self-Assessment Checklist based on National Statement of Quality Early Learning & Child Care (CCCF) which is included in this Toolkit.

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## Tips for encouraging reflective practice (in self and others)

- Ask questions
- Encourage journaling (for additional information see [Tip Sheet #4 – Tools & Strategies](#))
- Give/receive feedback
- Adopt an 'appreciative inquiry' approach.

### Different types of questions to ask

**Descriptive:** questions that elicit details about a situation - *Can you describe more about \_\_\_\_?*

**Predictive:** questions that help explore different options and their consequences - *What would happen if \_\_\_\_?*

**Analytical:** questions that help assess or evaluate the options - *What are the positive aspects or risks associated with this approach?*

**Synthesis:** questions that help weigh and synthesize the situation - *How can these options be arranged and/or the range of suggestions be organized?*

**Evaluative:** questions that help choose the most appropriate option and identify the criteria for choosing - *What criteria should be considered when deciding on any option(s)? What appears to be the most appropriate option?*

Building and maintaining momentum for change takes plenty of positive relationships that generate constructive feedback and positive images, ideas, and solutions. Why? Positive experiences and images drive positive action and development.

### **An appreciative inquiry approach supports 'reflection-in-action', effective feedback, and ongoing development because it looks to:**

- identify, value, and support the best of what is;
- imagine what might be;
- build knowledge of what is possible;
- engage in dialogue to determine what could/should be; and
- inspire innovation and develop plans for what will be.

*"... Reflection is a gift we give ourselves... (because) the wisdom embedded in our experience is revealed."*

(Killion & Todnem, 1991)

### **Affirmations that support Reflective Practice**

- You can and will find a way that works for you when you are ready
- You can change it if you want to
- You can grow and learn at your own pace
- You can know what you need and ask for help
- You can experiment and explore - I will help you
- You can learn from what doesn't work for you
- You can feel and learn from your feelings
- Your needs and reflections are important
- I like talking to you about this