

Reflection on Experience

(This aide may be used in preparing written reflections to be attached to the online portfolio. You need not answer each question systematically. However, you should address the spirit of these questions, namely, what you learned from the experience and how it has helped you in your formation as a person who is becoming part of a profession with responsibilities to serve the public and the common good.)

"Reflection" is an evaluative process that invites the person to review the progress of an experience, sorting through interactions and conversations with others, probing the meaning and significance of what has happened. Reflective conversation with oneself and others helps a person (or small group) sift through the emotional realities of the experience, connecting intellectual understanding to the inner experience of heart and spirit. As this process proceeds, understanding one's inner movements and motivations becomes the springboard for future decision-making and action.

In reflection sessions, it is always important to employ maximum adaptation to persons, places, and situations. The following questions – in these or other words – may be of help in moving the reflection forward.

A Menu of Reflection Questions:

1. Briefly relate the experience you have had, noting persons, place, situation, medical progress, etc.
 2. What is your personal reaction to the people and situation?
 3. What motivated you in this experience? What turned you off? What stretched and challenged you?
 4. How is this event similar to or different from other medical and/or service experiences you have had?
 5. What did you learn from the people you met—from their words and actions?
 6. How have the cultural values in this situation affected you – as you experience this new culture and reflect back upon our own U.S. cultural situation?
 7. Speak about the group you are working with: what did you learn together with and from one another as you shared this experience?
 8. If you disliked the experience, pinpoint the place of discomfort: what did you learn from this difficult experience as an entry point to your growth?
 9. Did this experience strengthen or challenge your deeper values? Is there any connection to what you believe and how you "live"?
 10. As appropriate, reflect on any links between the scriptures of your religious tradition and the particular experience you have shared.
→ How has this overall experience expanded your heart and connected you more strongly to your God...however you personally name that reality?
 11. What impact will this experience now have on your future, including your personal behavior and professional outlook?
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Shorthand Questions:

1. What happened today?
2. What did the experience mean to you?
3. What surprised you?
4. What stopped you?
5. What touched your heart?
6. What impact will this have for your future?

-- Larry Reuter, S.J. / 6-4795 / April 2003