

# **Safeguarding in Adult Mental Health: Building Blocks towards Best Practice.**

## **Reflective Practice & Positive Risk Taking in Social Work**

SWAMH CONFERENCE 19<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2024

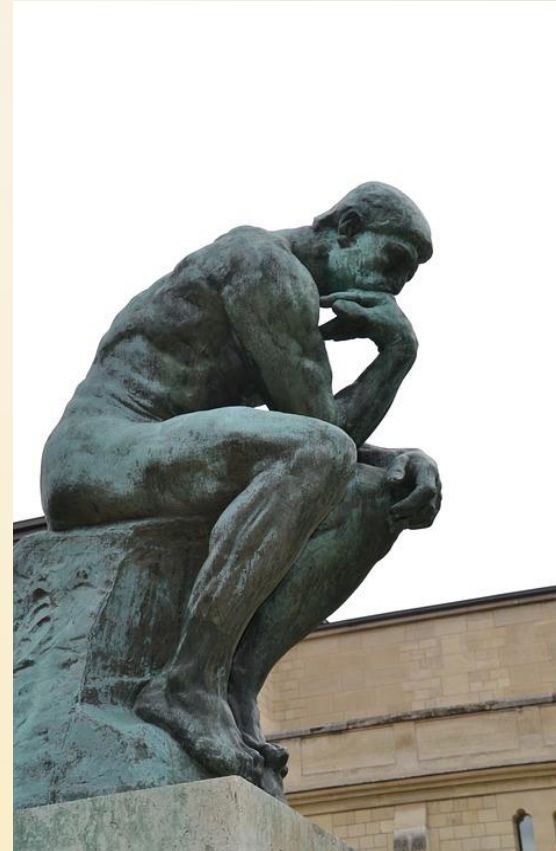
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# Let's Reflect

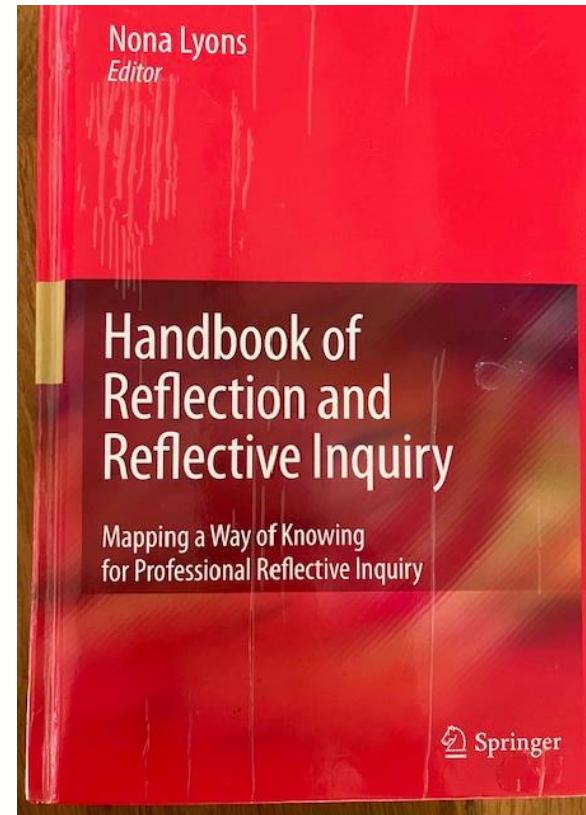
“We cannot solve problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.” (Einstein)



## Questions to Address

- What is Reflective Practice?
- How to Engage in Reflective Practice?
- Why Engage in Reflective Practice ?
- Can engaging in Reflective Practice contribute to Positive Risk taking in Social Work? How?

# Professor Nona Lyons



4/24/2024

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Reflection,  
Reflective Practice  
&  
Critical Reflection

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Dewey, J. (1933);

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Schon, D. (1983; 1987);

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Freire, P. (1970).



# What is Reflection/Reflective Inquiry?

## Theoretical Development of Reflective Inquiry : An Interpretative Framework

Theorist	Characterization	Implications
Dewey (1933) What is reflective inquiry?	Reflective Inquiry = A way of thinking	Learning is learning to think
Schon (1983) How and what do we know?	Reflective Inquiry = A way of knowing	Identifying knowing in and on action
Freire( 1970) Why is critical Inquiry necessary	Reflective Inquiry= critical consciousness; interrogation of the contexts of learning	Uncovering critical contexts: political, social & cultural through investigation

# Dewey (1933) Reflection involves two phases

1. A state of doubt, hesitation, perplexity and mental difficulty in which thinking originates, and
2. An act of searching hunting and inquiring to find material that will resolve doubt settle and dispose of uncertainty.

(Dewey, J. How We Think 1933:12)



# Attitudes/Values underpinning Reflective Practice (Dewey, 1933/1998)

Open-mindedness

Wholeheartedness

Responsibility



# Building a Reflective Space



## A Safe Reflective Space



# Spaces that Encourage Reflection

- Peer groups
- Journal writing
- Role play
- Reading groups
- Supervision
- Research





# Frameworks to Scaffold Reflection

Kolb  
(1987)

Siedel  
(1996)

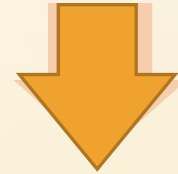
Gibbs  
(1988)

Bassot  
2016

**Experience:** What happened?  
Describe the experience. What  
were the contributory factors?



**Reflection and Observation:**  
What was I trying to achieve?  
Why did I do what I did ? What  
assumptions did I make? What  
were the consequences for me  
and for clients? How did I feel?  
How did the client feel? How  
could I tell?



**Forward Planning:** What will I  
do next time? How could I do  
better next time? What other  
strategies could I adopt going  
forward?



**Theorising:** How has this  
experience contributed to my  
professional knowledge? What  
have I learned that I can apply  
to similar situations?

The Integrated  
Reflective Cycle  
(Bassot, 2016: 110)



# Summary

- A process of systematic inquiry
- It is a cyclical not linear process
- It is located in the practitioner's experience
- The experience is examined in its context
- It places the practitioner and their experience at the centre of the reflective cycle
- It necessitates certain attitudes of mind on the part of the practitioner i.e. openness wholeheartedness and responsibility
- It involves making the reflective process public i.e. in writing (reflective journaling) , peer groups , conversations, supervision



Reflective Practice supports  
Risk Reduction  
Safe Risk Taking  
**Not**  
Risk Avoidance  
Risk Elimination



# How does Reflective Practice support Professionals in their Practice

- Encourages the making public of uncertainty not only to ourselves but with critical friends/colleagues/peers/supervisors to promote more informed action.
- Reflection in and on practice recognizes, promotes and prompts the articulation of the questions/puzzles arising from the uncertainties/ complexities that embedded in our workplaces and practices.

# Reflective Practice = Safe Practice

- RP helps practitioners avoid falling into the trap of routinized unthinking practice that can lead to failing to notice important things about our clients/our work /ourselves/political and social influences possibly resulting in unsafe, risk taking /risk averse practice.





## Reflective Practice: Shifts the Focus

Reflective Practice shifts the focus away solely from the application of knowledge in situations of practice and onto an examination of what, why and how the way think and act in situations of practice influences our professional practice.



## Benefits of Reflective Practice



- It is about prompting, promoting and assisting inquiry, supporting curiosity and noticing in professional practice, avoiding falling into the trap of routinized unthinking practice that can lead to failing to notice important things about our clients/our work /ourselves/political and social influences.

# RP builds practitioner capacity

It helps us

- to question and wonder about our work,
- to increase our awareness of the stereotyping/mindsets that can develop in our practice
- to know what we know and what we don't yet know
- to develop a greater level of awareness of both ourselves and others in practice
- to become consciously conscious of professional, political and social contexts and structures which inform/guide our interventions.
- to understand our clients/patients and ourselves more deeply and with greater awareness (Schön. 1983, 1987; Dewey, 1933)
- to understand ourselves and what is happening to us over the duration of our professional lives in terms of our values, physical and emotional health.



## Reflective Practice promotes Safer Practice & Positive Risk Taking

- Facilitates us to clearly articulate to ourselves and to others what we observe and notice, the thoughts and feelings we have about what we observe and notice, the sense we are making out of what we see, the questions that arise for us and the opportunity to reconsider what we notice and to develop a new way of thinking that can inform our future action.



## Reflective Practice Needs

1. Time
2. Space
3. Opportunity
4. Motivation
5. Organisational and Professional Cultures of Reflection & Reflective Practice





## Building Organizational Capacity where RP can Thrive

- Reflective Practice needs an environment where workers are not afraid to acknowledge uncertainty and engage in open dialogue with trusted colleagues/supervisors/managers. Professionals need to feel safe to articulate their doubts and uncertainties towards the advancement of more informed practice and practitioners.
- RP results in better informed risk taking, safer practice and more confident professionals.



## Questions that Prompt Reflection

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I wonder whether ... I think that ...

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I observed that .... I noticed that ...

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I heard that ...

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I felt .... I sensed ...

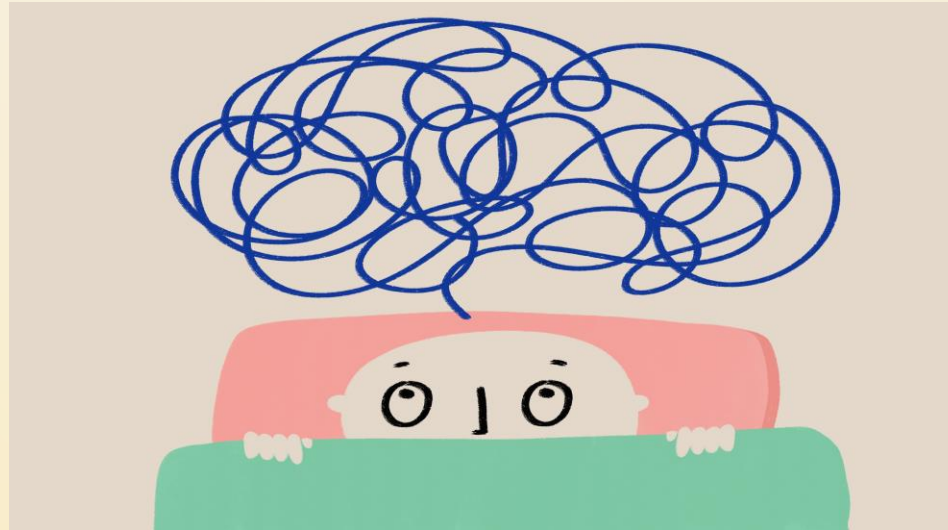
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Could this be a case of ...

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My understanding of (theory, research, ethics code, policy, local practice, etc.) is ....

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Thank You

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