

Reflective Practice

Reflective Practices and Listening to the Head, Heart and Feet

Based on the *Barefoot Guide to Working With Organisations and Social Change* (Barefoot Collective 2009, www.barefootguide.org)

Reflective practices play a key role within knowledge management. Reflective practice means reflecting on actions, in order to develop a continual process of learning. By incorporating reflective practice into our everyday routines, into our projects, and into our organisations, we can ensure we learn from experience, and continue to improve and develop our programmes and practices.

As humans, we think about the things we see and hear about, in order to understand them. We experience through the world through our emotions. And we have needs and desires which motivate us to act.

Thoughts, feelings and motivations all affect our experiences. By being able to reflect on these, we can learn from our experiences more deeply. Reflective practice includes the ability to reflect on ourselves as individuals, and to listen to and understand the different thoughts, feelings and motivations of other people.

To help us do this, we can think about reflecting on and listening to 'the head, heart and feet'.

The Head: The Thinking Level

Includes perceptions, thoughts, facts, concepts, arguments, ideas and insights. Listening non-judgementally means being open-minded and genuinely interested in where the other person is coming from, how they think and what assumptions they make.

The Heart: The Feeling Level

Includes emotions, moods and non-verbal experiences. Listening for feelings, paying attention to tone of voice, facial expressions, eyes and gestures. Empathetic listening means putting yourself in the other person's shoes. Listening to the silences can reveal feelings of disagreement or inadequacy, boredom or anger.

The Feet: The 'Will' Level

Includes needs, desires, intentions, motivations – what people 'really' want. Often, speakers themselves are only dimly aware of their own intentions and desires. It's surprising how few people are fully aware what motivates them and what they actually want in a situation. Skilful listening uncovers what lies 'behind' their thoughts and 'below' their feelings. Body language can reveal the will – a strong body presence may demonstrate a strong will, while a withdrawn body may reveal a weak will.

Listening to Ourselves and Others

People all have their own ways of experiencing the world. To help us learn more deeply from our own experiences, and to listen to others, we need to be able to listen to ourselves. What do we think? How do we feel? What is motivating us?

When listening to others, be careful not to assume they see things the way you do. Listening to someone's true feelings gives you important clues about what really matters to them. The will level is where resistance to change usually resides. Helping people to listen to and transform their own will is one of the deepest challenges of change.

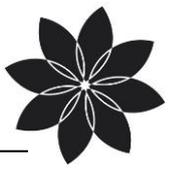


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