

Reflective Practice

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Learning from Experience



What is Reflection?

Reflection is an active process of witnessing one's own experience in order to examine it more closely, give meaning to it, and learn from it.

Reflection involves three elements:

- Returning to experience
- Attending to feelings
- Evaluating experience

Reflection can be of two main types:

- Reflecting *on* action
- Reflecting *in* action ("thinking on our feet")

Why Reflect?

We had the experience but missed the meaning.

- T.S. Eliot, Four Quartets

Reflection is about getting the meaning from everyday experiences.

- Jonathan Gosling and Henry Mintzberg, Reflect Yourself

Benefits of Taking Time for Reflection



Enables individuals to think more deeply and holistically about an issue, leading to greater insights and learning.



Connects the rational decision-making process to a more effective and experiential learning process.



Challenges individuals to be honest about the relationship between what they say and what they do.



Creates opportunities to seriously consider the implications of any past or future action.



Acts as a safeguard against making impulsive decisions

The Process of Reflection



- What happened?
- Description, facts

- What did the experience mean?
- Interpretation
- The feelings involved
- What was learned

- What are the next steps?
- Seeing the bigger picture
- Applying the lessons learned
- Planning future action

On Reflective Practice

Reflective practice is the application of the skill of reflection to our practice in order to improve performance.

It involves creating a habit, structure, or routine around reflecting on experiences.

Data, Information, Knowledge, and Wisdom

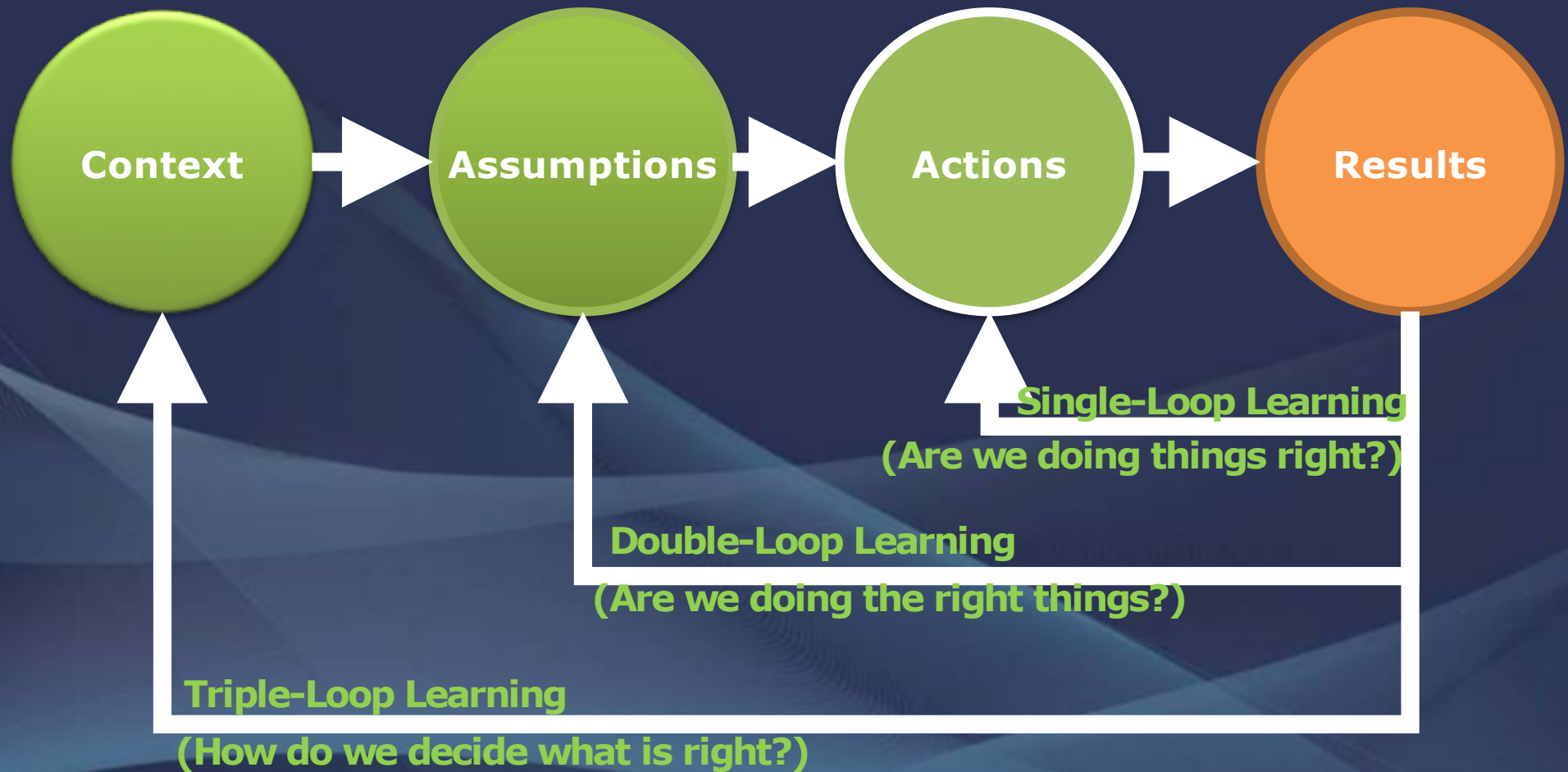
Data are the raw facts and figures.

Information is data that has been collected and organized.

Knowledge is information which has been systematised through processes of filtering, testing, comparing, analysing, and generalizing in order to create understanding.

Wisdom involves uniting the information and insights of knowledge with the fruits of experience in a way which can usefully guide action.

Three Learning Loops



Learning Loops

Single Loop

Adaptive Learning

Applying existing rules/procedures; coping; dealing with symptoms of problems

Efficiencies; improved application of rules/procedures

Double Loop

Generative Learning

Examining underlying causes; questioning assumptions and rules/procedures

New knowledge and insights; revised rules/procedures, systems, and strategies

Triple Loop

Radical learning

Examining core values and identity; rethinking purpose and principles

Renewed statement of core values and purpose; renewed identity

Three Types of Reflection



- Content—Reflecting on the content or description of the problem.
- Process—Analyzing the methods or strategies that are being used to solve the problem.
- Premise—
Considering why the problem is a problem in the first place.

The Reflective Practitioner

Someone who

- Takes the time to step back and make sense of what has done and why.
- Tries to understand the (often implicit) "theories of change" that guide actions.
- Is not afraid to challenge assumptions—both their own and those of others.



Characteristics of Reflective Practitioners

Reflective practitioners:

- Are *intellectually curious* about their work.
- *Actively reflect* on their experience.
- Develop experience-based *theories of change*
- *Test these theories* in practice.
- Use their understanding and initiative to *contribute to knowledge development*.
- Understand their *strengths and limitations*, and work on these.
- *Use a range of tools, methods, and approaches* for individual and collaborative learning.

Reflective Practitioner Competencies

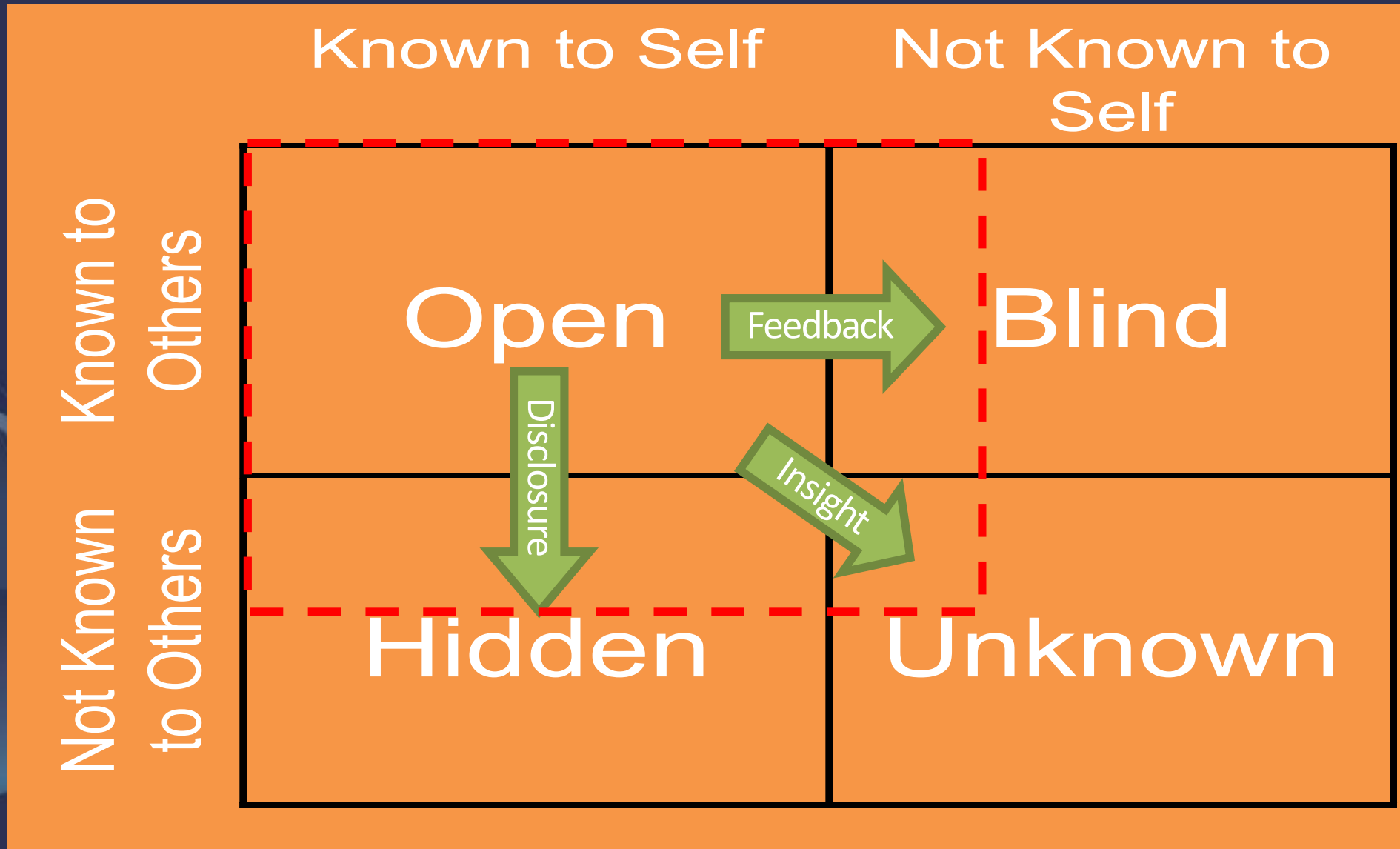
Self Knowledge—
Understanding of and insight
into one's self-worth,
motives, character, and
capabilities.

Critical Thinking—The
application of logical
principles, rigorous standards
of evidence, and careful
reasoning to the analysis and
discussion of claims, beliefs,
and issues.

Inquisitiveness—Thee
willingness to be curious and
inquiring, e.g., by asking
reflective questions


Emotional Intelligence—The
ability to identify, assess and
manage one's own emotions
and those of other
individuals and groups.

The Jo-Hari Window



What is Critical Thinking?

Critical thinking is purposeful reflective judgment concerning what to believe or what to do.



A critical thinker

- Raises important questions and problems, formulating them clearly and precisely.
- Gathers and assesses relevant information, using abstract ideas to interpret it effectively.
- Comes to well-reasoned conclusions and solutions, testing them against relevant criteria and standards.
- Thinks open-mindedly within alternative systems of thought, recognizing and assessing, as need be, their assumptions, implications, and practical consequences.
- Communicates effectively with others in figuring out solutions to complex problems, without being unduly influenced by others' thinking on the topic.

Characteristics of Critical Thinkers

Critical thinkers

- Understand larger patterns, dynamics, and interrelationships.
- Use a systems approach.
- Examine issues from different perspectives.
- See beyond established ways of thinking.
- Challenge assumptions.
- Attribute meaning to information.
- Identify the root causes of issues.
- Are aware of cultural and contextual issues.
- Value intuition, emotions, and empathy.



Inquisitiveness— The Benefits of Seeking Answers

Seeking answers to questions helps

- Identify issues of key importance.
- Acknowledge prior knowledge
- Uncover issues on which to focus further inquiry
- Develop a culture of curiosity
- Challenge current knowledge and understanding
- Stimulate continuous learning
- Lead to deeper levels of understanding and knowledge.



On Structured Reflection

1. Select a critical incident

2. Describe the experience

3. Devise powerful questions

4. Draw a rich picture to engage your creativity

5. Reflect on and interpret the experience individually and with others

6. Explore alternatives


7. Decide what to do next

Using Powerful Questions

Powerful questions

- Assess the current situation
- Discover the big questions
- Create images of possibilities
- Evolve workable strategies

On Emotional Intelligence



Emotional intelligence is the ability, capacity, or skill to identify, assess, and manage the emotions of one's self, of others, and of groups.

Emotional intelligence comprises five domains:

- Self-awareness
- Self-regulation
- Self-motivation
- Social awareness
- Social skills

If your emotional abilities aren't in hand, if you don't have self-awareness, if you are not able to manage your distressing emotions, if you can't have empathy and have effective relationships, then no matter how smart you are, you are not going to get very far.

—Daniel Goleman

Of Journals and Rich Pictures

Journaling is a term coined for the practice of keeping a diary or journal that explores thoughts and feelings surrounding the events of one's life.



Learning Before, During, and After

- Knowledge is what you learn from experience before, during, and after the event.
- These three phases are concerned with feedforward, concurrent, and feedback control. In each phase, the focus is on inputs, ongoing processes, and outcomes, respectively.



Obstacles to Reflective Practice

Organizational

Open to control

Open to influence but not
control

Open to neither influence or
control—can only
acknowledge

Personal

Open to control

Open to influence but not
control

Open to neither influence nor
control

Common Obstacles to Reflective Practice

Organizational

- Performance pressure
- Task culture
- Reflection undervalued by colleagues or leadership
- Competency traps
- Limited leadership support
- Absence of forums or structures
- Blame culture

Personal

- Perceived lack of time
- Reflection undervalued
- Under-developed competences
- Limited experience of using reflection tools
- Fear of feedback
- Fear of failure
- Lack of awareness of expertise
- Undervaluing expertise

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