



A Practical Guide

*for Forest School Leaders (or anyone, really!)
to facilitating reflection in the outdoors*



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THANK YOU!

Thanks for taking the time to pick up this guide. It's been and continues to be a personal journey of mine to attempt to explore and navigate my way through the difficult and complex topic of reflection. My goal was that in trying to learn more about this concept for myself, I could collect information sourced from many different people in order to create a resource that would make facilitating reflection a bit more accessible to those of us who might struggle with it as well as for those who wish to gain some new insight or perspective on the matter. I want to give a huge thank you to all those who contributed ideas and information to help create a resource I hope will be useful for many!

Specific shoutouts go to Roger Greenaway, Chris Holland, Jon Cree, Richard Irvine, Nikki Gudka, James Walsh, Natalie Dewhirst, Marston Vale Forest School, Rachel Summers, Coast and Forest Education, Sophie W., Joanne Cookham and all the children I work with who inspire me every day! Your advice and contributions made writing this guide possible, so thank you!

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INTRODUCTION

I was inspired to investigate the concept of facilitating reflection and the impact it has on a person's learning and development more deeply after an encounter I had with a 9 year old boy named Samuel. This is a story I shared on the Forest Schooled blog and I'd like to share it again here...

I could tell Samuel was the 'class clown'. It's a role he definitely embraced, despite knowing how much it can annoy certain adults when he causes disruptions in class or during our after school club which is where I work with Samuel. Every day the group's leaders asked him to stop 'goofing off' at least once, particularly when it was time to have snack or tidy up. They even tried telling the other children who laugh at his silly jokes and funny faces to stop because it "just encourages him." They consistently resort to the familiar practice of rewards/punishments to try to modify his behaviour (e.g. 'You can have a sticker if you behave well' or 'You'll have to sit out if you misbehave'). I watched them go through this cycle with Samuel several times, day after day. But he still didn't stop. He's just really good at being silly and, as a 9 year old, why would you stop if that silliness is making ten other children giggle and laugh? Personally, I'm with Samuel that maybe ten laughing children versus two annoyed adults tips the scales...

But anyhow, one of these days, Samuel was being his usual silly self at a time the group's leaders felt silliness was inappropriate and so they decided his punishment would be to help me wash up some dishes after snack. While we were washing, I thought I'd take the opportunity to talk to Samuel to get to know him a bit better. I thought if I could understand him maybe I could help him with his behaviour (I was actually feeling a bit sorry for him that he was getting punished so much!). The conversation went like this:

Me: "Do you get in trouble a lot?"

S: "Yup."

Me: "How do you feel about that?"

S: "Sometimes it bothers me and sometimes it doesn't."

Me: "So even though you know you'll get in trouble, you still do things anyway?"

S: "Yes, unless the adult is really scary, then I won't. But I'm not scared of the adults here."

Me: "But if you know that your behaviour bothers the adults, why do you still do it?"

S: "I like making people laugh!"

Me: "So you'd rather make people laugh and get into trouble than not do it and avoid getting into trouble?"

S: "Yeah."

Me: "But what if the adults explained that your behaviour was making them feel annoyed or upset?"

S: "Well then I'd stop because I'd know it makes them feel bad."

Me: “Hmm ok, so if they were better at communicating to you why they were asking you to stop that would help?”

S: “Yeah.”

Me: “Do you think there are times where it's appropriate to be silly and other times where it's inappropriate?”

S: “Yes, but I just can't stop myself.”

Me: “What if when you think of something funny, you stop for just a second and consider whether it's appropriate for the situation you're in before doing it? Could that help?”

S: “Maybe,” with a shrug.

We soon finished washing up and Samuel ran off to join the other kids. I thought the conversation had probably gone in one ear and out the other, but I still felt like it was a good starting point for me in terms of understanding him a little bit better.

The next time I saw Samuel I'd almost forgotten about our conversation. I greeted him with, “Hi Samuel, how was your day?” I expected the usual kid response of “Fine,” before running off to play, but instead he looked at me as if he had something exciting to tell me and said enthusiastically, “Good! I only got told off once! Usually it's around 5 times.” I replied, “Wow, really? So what was different about today then?” He said, “I took your advice.”

This was not what I expected since I hadn't been sure our conversation had even registered with him. So I asked, “What advice was that?” Samuel responded, “About thinking first before saying something.” I said, “That's great! How do you feel about getting told off less?” He smiled and replied, “Good!” and then he ran off to play.

That afternoon, there were no issues with Samuel. He was still his silly old self, but at the times where the goofing off would usually become a problem, like snack and tidy up time, Samuel stayed calm and collected. The whole afternoon felt so much more peaceful! I was a little bit taken aback by the whole experience as I had never really thought a small conversation like the one I had with Samuel could have such an impact. So that got me thinking... What happened there? Why did that conversation make such a difference?

I think we can all agree that we learn through our experiences. But what I think we can sometimes neglect to acknowledge is it's not just the experience that teaches us things; it's the processing of the information gained from the experience that takes place during or afterwards. This act of processing is what we call 'Reflection'.

To bring this back to the story of my conversation with Samuel, he was repeatedly having the experience of acting silly and getting in trouble. This experience happened over and over again and he wasn't learning how to change it despite the enticement of reward or the threat of punishment. My conversation with Samuel provided an opportunity for him to reflect on the experience and think about what he could change to create a different and better outcome next time. Without really intending to, I had facilitated a process of reflection for Samuel and the result was a simple tool for self-regulation that allowed him to alter his behaviour. This gave relief to the adults who work with him and, even better, a sense of satisfaction and improved self-esteem for Samuel who

felt good about not getting punished so much. This made me realise how important reflection is and that it is a skill that children (and adults) often need help developing.

Appreciating reflection as a tool for learning was great, but I still felt I had a poor understanding of how to actually facilitate it. It was a weakness of mine and I wanted to get better. So I started doing some research to find out more. I soon discovered that finding relevant information was much more difficult than I thought it would be! Not only was there an enormous load of information to sift through, it was also difficult to find methods that were conducive to the learning environment of Forest School.

In particular, I was struggling to find ways of facilitating reflection that were appropriate for the outdoors. As a Forest School leader I don't often go back to the classroom or home of the learners and don't have access or easy use of materials like paper, pencils, computers, and printers to print photos or make collages. I needed to find methods that could withstand outdoor weather as well as utilise the space and natural resources of the outdoors.

Additionally, I was finding a lot of information relevant to facilitating reflection for experiences with planned learning outcomes. The learner-led and free flowing nature of Forest School makes it hard to incorporate a lot of these because you can't exactly plan for it! Therefore, I felt I needed a 'go to' resource bank of ideas relevant to outdoor experiences like Forest School. That's when I decided to conduct a survey asking for contributions from other Forest School leaders, teachers, parents, and anyone with any knowledge on the subject about it. I also attended a course with Dr. Roger Greenaway who has put a phenomenal amount of work into promoting and creating tools for reflection (what he calls reviewing) in education (see www.reviewing.co.uk). It took a few months to gather the information together, but the result of all that research is contained within this guide.

I want to emphasise that this guide does not discuss the theories and models surrounding the notion of reflection – there are so many and I am too out of my element to even attempt to explain it all here. My goal was to create a more practical resource that would inspire us to just get out there and try stuff!

So, the aim of this guide is to give you some simple tools for facilitating reflection that can work well in an outdoor and learner-led setting. It is by no means extensive, but it takes ideas from a variety of places and collates it into one document relevant to Forest School Leaders, parents, teachers and anyone who works or spends time with learners in the outdoors. It is an attempt to take a very complex topic and simplify it to the point where we all feel we can at least get started with it. Then, as we gain experience and understanding, we can take it further and delve deeper. That's why I've listed some resources at the back if you feel you want to pursue the topic more (see *More Information* on page 30).

This guide has ideas that have worked for some, but may not work for all. It is important to find what feels right to you and to those you're working with. So sift through it and take what feels good to you. Don't worry about using everything. It is not prescribed in any way, as reflection relies on the judgement and experience of the person involved in the process and no single resource can provide for that...

Enjoy and good luck!

SO WHAT IS REFLECTION AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

If you're a teacher or in any profession that highlights the use of reflection (also known as reviewing or debriefing) you might be rolling your eyes at me already... don't worry I don't blame you! This topic is exhaustively written about. Just type 'reflection' into a web search engine and it'll come up with a zillion different articles about it, why to do it, how to do it, what to do before you do it, and so on. So I don't want to explain it too deeply here as I think I would risk overwhelming you (and overwhelming myself too!).

So, in brief... I like to think of reflection as the thinking bit that goes along with the experience, either during or after. It's where we think more deeply about the experience and attempt to gain a better understanding either about ourselves, what occurred, the world, or all of the above! It's also the part we can often neglect, usually due to lack of time or skill. We have the experience and then get distracted about what's coming next and we move on without necessarily sifting through the information we were just exposed to. But that's a shame, because exposure to information does not necessarily mean integration and true understanding. Experiences are valuable, but it's reflection that helps us to go further, reaching a much deeper level of learning.

"[It's] worth bearing in mind that reviewing/reflecting can be on prior experience (where we are at), current experience (what am I/are we doing), and future potential experience (what are we going to do?). It can be at many levels, descriptive (factual), delve into emotional response to an experience, ponder the consequences of an experience etc. etc. etc. It can happen on your own without sharing, in a pair, in a small group, in a big group (I'll do pretty much anything to avoid the slow death of circle time).

What is important is that it happens. Dewey supposedly said that, We do not learn from an experience ... We learn from reflecting on an experience? It's probably a bit more complicated than that but there is never an excuse for leaving out reviewing even if the participants are totally unaware that is what they are doing."

- Richard Irvine

Roger Greenaway has written extensively on the topic of reflection (also known as reviewing) and how to facilitate it. Greenaway (1993a) offers a number of great reasons **why we should reflect on our experiences**:

Adds meaning to experience.	Offers support – providing a safe place to celebrate successes and work through failures without fear of judgement.	Develop observation skills – maintaining more awareness during/after experiences.
Get unstuck – stop repeating the same cycles and move forward.	WHY REFLECT?	Exploring means of self-expression .
Show that we care about other's experiences , want to hear about them, learn from them and celebrate!	Empowerment – helps develop tools and ability to take charge of own self-development and learning.	Gain new perspectives – opportunity for growth, understanding the bigger picture and developing empathy.

"A recent conversation I overheard helps me to grasp the concept of reviewing and its relevance to learning in the outdoors: Someone said, 'When I worked at summer camp, all we did was the actual activities, reflection just wasn't something we did!' Someone else responded, 'Ah yes, but that was all that was expected of you and was what you were paid to do. However, for anything with education in the title I think we can expect a little bit more.'

What it is, exactly, that makes up that little bit more that differentiates an activity from a learning experience can seem like a dark art and is a great point of discussion. What most practitioners would agree with though is that reviewing/reflection has a significant part to play in delivering a learning experience as opposed to delivering solely just an activity. Activities are great and can provide some great experiences, but reviewing... well that's where the real gold is..."

- James Walsh

So, if you feel convinced that reflection is a good thing and you want to learn more about how to facilitate it, read on!

PREPARING (YOURSELF) FOR REFLECTION

While researching, I came across some information on considering the ethics of facilitating reflection. I must admit, this is not something I had thought about before. I had been plodding along with the simple belief that reflection is such a good thing that it must be a great to try to encourage others to do it too. I hadn't really stopped to consider there might be significant risks involved.

"Questioning the assumptions on which we act and exploring alternative ideas are not only difficult but also psychologically explosive...[it] is like laying down charges of psychological dynamite. When these assumptions explode...the whole structure of our assumptive world crumbles. Hence, educators who foster transformative learning are rather like psychological and cultural demolition experts."

- Reflecting on 'Reflective Practice' (Brookfield 1990, p.178 cited in Finlay, 2008, pg. 11)

Reflection can be deeply transformative. It may challenge structures and ideas we formally accepted as truth and cause us to question things more deeply. In some cases, this can be unnerving and overwhelming. As facilitators, we need to take into consideration things like the development level and emotional stability of our learners. We need to know our learners' edges and recognise that, though it is important to push boundaries, we must be careful not to burst through them if the person is not ready. Additionally, facilitating reflection is not just about how far our learners can go. It's also very much about how far we feel comfortable and confident in taking them!

Linda Finlay (2008) brings up some interesting points on this in her paper *Reflecting on 'Reflective practice'*. Finlay discusses some additional risks in facilitating reflection that should be taken into consideration, like confidentiality, privacy rights, informed consent, coerced disclosure, and the effect reflection can have on self esteem if the focus is constantly on self-improvement. We don't want it to turn into dwelling on the negatives. Additionally, reflection should never be compulsive. This can lead to the mentality where a learner may say or do what they think you want them to. This is not true reflection and therefore enforcing reflection can become counterproductive.

These are significant risks to weigh up. However, fear of these risks should not prevent us from facilitating any reflection at all. Rather, it's important to address them so that we can be more aware, careful, and considerate about the process, recognising our own influence on others and taking responsibility for that. We need to apply the same logic surrounding [risk-benefit assessment](#) to the concept of facilitating reflection (i.e. we take note of the risks involved, put measures in place to keep risk levels appropriate whilst also recognising that the benefits of taking the risk can

outweigh the actual risk itself). Understanding the risks involved in facilitating reflection allows us to wield the tool more wisely.

Now that we've discussed both the benefits and the risks involved in reflection, there are some ideas or 'control measures' we can put into place in order to keep reflection nurturing and effective. Finlay (2008) sums it up quite nicely: "Provide adequate support, time, resources, opportunities and tools for reflection" (pg. 17). This can be done in the following ways:

Be tuned in! The possibilities for reflection will depend on the time, resources, opportunities, individual personalities and mood of the group – these are hard things to interpret and balance so it essential to be tuned in to your learners (Greenaway, 2011).

Provide a space (both physically and emotionally) where learners feel safe and supported. Also provide access to people who are effective reflectors and can model it! (Greenaway, 2011).

Ensure it is learner-centred, following the learner's values and line of inquiry. They need to see it as a positive thing and see value in it (Finlay, 2008, pg. 16).

Understand that different forms of reflection are better or more suited to different contexts. It is important to provide learners with opportunities to practice different styles so that they can learn what works well for them in different situations (Finlay, 2008). If using a 'ready made' model for reflection, be sure not to present it as 'this is how all reflection is done...' because it's not that simple. Once learners understand a few methods of reflection, you can give them the choice of what reflective tool they use!

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

Now that we've talked a bit about the 'why' part of reflection, let's get to the 'how'...

The skill of facilitating reflection comes from learning how to encourage dialogue really effectively. This can be conversational (between two people or amongst a group) or internal (an individual thinking things through privately). Simple conversation is great for working through ideas, but sometimes it's hard to articulate thoughts or feelings about an experience with just words. Often a prompt or physical process will encourage deeper and more thoughtful reflection and there are many tools for doing this.

There is no one size fits all model with reflection. That's why it can be so tricky! A facilitator must use methods that are most useful and appropriate for the context, location, and people they are working with. However, judging what will work well for a particular group or setting is a skill that comes with practice and time. So how can those of us who feel like complete beginners get started with it?

It can be helpful to think about facilitating reflection as an **effective combination of 3 parts**:

- 1.** using **engaging and encouraging methods**, such as activities or exercises that keep learners active.
- 2.** asking **meaningful and applicable questions**.
- 3.** using an **appropriate strategy for your context**, considering things like group size, timing, and location.

These 3 parts can be combined in a variety of ways, creating the flexibility for you to use them in a manner that works best for you and your learners. This will be covered in the next three sections:

Activities and Exercises (pg 9) shares a variety of dynamic and interesting ways to encourage the process of reflection.

The Question Bank (pg 20) offers ideas on what questions you could ask your learners to consider and ways to take the process deeper.

Planning for Reflection (or not) (pg 23) helps you come up with a strategy to customise it for your particular group and setting.

Does all this sound like a lot of information and responsibility already? If anyone is feeling a bit intimidated, you're not alone! But hopefully the following sections will put your mind at ease as we get into the nitty gritty on how to do this more practically.

ACTIVITIES AND EXCERSISES

I've gathered together some ideas for activities or exercises you can use to facilitate reflection. The ideas listed on the following pages come from a variety of sources, including contributions made by other Forest School leaders, parents and teachers. They are not my own ideas, I just put them all together in one place to make it more accessible and easier for us to use! I'm sure you will have heard of or used some of these before, but I hope there's a good mix of tried and tested methods along with new and creative means for facilitating reflection.

I encourage you to use a variety of these methods in your practice (not all at once of course, but from day to day, week to week, or year to year!). Varying the structure of reflection so that it's different each time can make it more interesting and thought provoking for both you and your learners.

"By making reviewing active, mobile and outdoors, the reviews themselves can be at least as memorable as the outdoor experiences being reviewed. This makes the learning as memorable as the experience in which it is grounded."

- Roger Greenaway (Greenaway, 2004a, pg. 106)

GET GOING.... (QUICK & SIMPLE)

The following ideas may work well with younger groups or if you need a quick reflection when you're running low on time.

SONGS & RHYMES

Sing a song or say a rhyme together that sums up what has occurred (or will occur) during the session.

Example of a rhyme - This is a great for working on memory:

*The forest is deep.
The forest is wide.
The forest has lots of things inside.
It's got _____*

(This is where you ask the children what did you do or see in forest today? If someone says, "A squirrel," for example, you repeat the rhyme and add in "squirrel" at the end. Repeat as many times as your group wants to, adding in a new animal/item each time whilst also repeating in sequence all those that came before it!)

- Marston Vale Forest School

Example of a song - This song incorporates thinking about how we use our five senses (come up with your own melody – whatever works!):

*We went to the woods.
We went to the woods.
What did we see today when we were
in the woods?*

Repeat, but replace 'see' with smell, hear, feel, taste on each subsequent round until you've covered all five senses.

- Nikki Gudka

THUMBOMETER

Have everyone close their eyes then ask a question such as, "How much did you enjoy today?" Learners can rank their experience by either putting their thumbs up for 'enjoyed it', thumbs pointing sideways for 'neutral' or thumbs pointing down for 'did not enjoy it'. This is a simple way to gauge the feelings of individuals and group overall without anyone necessarily being put on the spot. Try to follow this up by giving the opportunity for them to discuss their answer if they want to, either in pairs or with the group. For those whose thumbs were not pointing up, you could ask them "What would have made it better to make your thumb go up?"

TALKING PARTNERS OR 'FRIENDLY NEIGHBOUR'

Present the group with a question or prompt and then ask everyone to find a partner to discuss it with. You can suggest they turn to the person next to them, find someone across the circle, choose someone they don't work with often, or whatever works well at the time. You can give the opportunity for partners to feed back to the whole group afterwards if they want to share.

WALK AND TALK

If you have the opportunity to walk anywhere with your learners after the experience, such as walking back to school from the woods, you can walk alongside various children and just chat to them as you go. This is a good way to make reflection feel more natural and informal. Talking side by side rather than face to face or in front of a whole group can reduce anxiety and make conversation easier for some.

PASS THE SQUEEZE

Everyone holds hands in a circle. Someone starts by squeezing the hand of the person next to them. The second person must pass the squeeze on to the next person, and so on until it goes around the whole circle. Tell participants that as the squeeze passes through them, to think of something they enjoyed/are proud of/etc. They can share these at the end if they want to. - Rachel Summers

GIVING GRATITUDE

"Gratitude is in some way a reviewing tool. In some cultures, the words that come before all else, at a meeting, feast, celebration or ceremony (to give some examples), are words of Gratitude. By giving thanks out loud or having a grateful attitude in the heart, there is the opportunity to remember our place in the cycle of life, alongside the elements, land and organisms we are in relation with. This kind of reflection can help us understand where we have come from, see the gift of the present, and appreciate the value and consequences of our actions in the future."
- Chris Holland

GET TALKING... (GOING DEEPER)

The following activities and exercises give you the opportunity to go a bit further. You may need to set aside a good portion of time for them.

ROUNDS OR CIRCLE-TIME

I wanted to address the 'round' or 'circle-time' first because it is the method of sharing in groups that we tend to use most often. When sharing in groups, even without being directed to do so, we usually resort to taking turns to speak by going around the circle. This method can get tedious and stale so I would highly suggest that you don't use it every time or even all that often!

However it can be useful in certain contexts like when participation is unbalanced, rounds give everyone a chance to say something. If you do use it, just be sure to give time for everyone to come up with their answers to the question first before starting. Otherwise they will be concentrating on what their answer will be rather than listening to others. Also give the option to pass if someone does not wish to share (Greenaway, 1993b).



MEXICAN WAVE

Here's a way to make rounds more exciting. Do a Mexican wave around the circle. Go twice around with just standing up and sitting down again. The third time individuals stay standing when it's their turn and say their feedback to a question or prompt. Then then sit and the wave continues. They can stand and sit without speaking if they wish so they are still engaged but not anxious about speaking – Coast and Forest Education

ROLLING DICE

"I use a dice around the circle at the end. On each face is 'best, worst, next, learnt, thanks and felt' and they take it in turns to roll and talk about whatever it landed on. Now they are used to it some of them choose what to say rather than rolling the dice. Others still use the dice to give them a gentle nudge and prompt. Of the different methods I've tried so far it's worked the best as the kids see it as a game and everyone says something, even the quietest." - Sophie W.

TALKING STICK

With talkative groups, you might find that some talk over each other. This can make it hard for certain individual's to express themselves or prevent them from feeling heard. To ensure each person who wants a turn to talk is given the floor, you can introduce a talking stick. Whoever is holding the talking stick is given the chance to talk and be listened to by the rest of the group. The stick can be passed around a circle or, to mix it up, you could swap the stick for a ball or other object that can be tossed across the circle.

ROPE LOOP

Tie a rope into a loop – it needs to be large enough for everyone to stand in a circle and hold on to it. Everyone closes their eyes and uses their hands to shuffle the rope along in one direction. A designated person (this could be you) stops the rope at random. Whoever is the one holding the knot of the rope can feed back if they wish. Continue until everyone feels content they've had a chance to answer. - Coast and Forest Education

An alternative to this is passing the rope with eyes open and individuals have the option to stop the rope when the knot comes to them if they have something to say – Roger Greenaway

Tip: be sure to always pass the rope in the same direction. If you keep switching directions it could mean some individual's have to wait longer periods of time for a chance to stop the knot and talk.

FEEL IT OUT

Put out pictures or objects with happy, sad, laughing, and flat faces on them (you can choose to add more emotions if suitable for your group). Allow learners to choose the one they relate to the most and then give the opportunity to talk about why. You could combine this activity with rounds, talking stick, or friendly neighbours for the sharing part.

(Tip from Coast and Forest Education - use wood cookies with faces drawn on!)

LINE UP

Place a rope or draw a line on the ground. The line represents a spectrum. One end is strongly agree, the other end is strongly disagree and the middle is neutral. Agree which is which in advance. Then make a statement (e.g. "I enjoyed [insert activity] today" or "I learned something new today") and ask the learners to place themselves on the line according to how much they agree or disagree with that statement. After each statement you can ask if anyone wants to share why they placed themselves where they did. They can share with the whole group or with the person closest to them (Jens, 2007).

HORSESHOE

This is a variation of Line Up but using a curved line to form a semi-circle (like a horseshoe shape) rather than a straight one. The difference is that "in this method, you simply define the two ends of the spectrum and ask everyone to stand at a point on the line that represents their point of view. The benefit of the horseshoe shape is that everyone is more likely to be in eye contact with each other - which makes facilitating whole group discussion much easier" (Greenaway, 2002). You could mark out the horseshoe shape using a rope if needed. - Roger Greenaway



FIRE EXTINGUISHER

“When it's fire week we pass a cup to extinguish the fire and they choose one of the 6 words [best, worst, next, learnt, thanks and felt] to talk about as they pour. It's my favourite part of the session now. I love it 5 or 6 weeks in when the group are settled and they start to properly listen to each other” – Sophie W



OBJECT TALK

Give your group a prompt and ask them to look for objects that symbolise or represent their response to it. You could do this whilst walking from one place to another or just give everyone time to go explore and look for things. Once everyone has an object, you meet back together and each person presents their object and explains why they chose it. - Roger Greenaway

“All you need is a good question or two. But whatever your questions, you are sure to get better quality responses than if you ask the same questions to the group or in a round” (Greenaway, 2011).

SIT SPOT

This activity is well-known and loved for a reason! It's a great way to inspire private reflection for individuals.

Each individual finds a spot (usually a somewhat secluded and private place) to sit. They can take nothing to their sit spot and just listen to the sounds and watch the world go by around them. Or they could bring a journal to write any thoughts down or to draw in. You can give your learners a prompt or question to ponder at their sit spot or leave it open ended for them to revel in their own thoughts and imaginations. This can be a really effective reflection tool if is done as a repetitive exercise spanning multiple sessions, in which individuals can go back to the same spot each time. That way, they become more comfortable at their spot and can settle in better each time.

JOURNALLING

Journals or diaries are a great way to reflect. Sometimes the transference of thought to paper can help people articulate or solidify concepts and ideas in their own head. Whether it's doodling or writing, having a journal to jot things down in can be a great tool for facilitating reflection. Giving time for journalling can also go along really well with time spent at a sit spot. You could also have a group journal that a different child takes home each week to write or draw in. At the end of a series of sessions, looking back through the group journal could be a great way to remember all that you did and learned together.

Note: Obviously, there is a downside to journalling in the outdoors - there is often a battle between paper and rain and rain tends to always win. I would recommend a journal that's a bit more heavy duty and at least waterproof on the outside.

SIMULTANEOUS SURVEY

If you have to walk anywhere with your group, this method makes great use of the time you have walking to reflect!

Firstly, decide on a few questions and have individuals assign themselves to one of the questions. Each question should have approximately the same number of people assigned to it. The number of questions depends on the size of the group but, as an example, for a group of 10 you could have 5 questions with 2 people assigned to each question. As you are walking to/from wherever you're going, everyone has the task of 'interviewing' others in order to collect answers to their question, like a survey. They do not need to interview everyone – the goal is to get answers of quality, not quantity! Depending on the length of the walk, an individual might collect only 2 or 3 answers to their question. When you reach your destination, take some time for discussion and feedback. Individuals can get back into a group with those who had the same question as them and discuss the answers they 'collected'. These small groups could then feedback a common theme or prominent point to the whole group. - Roger Greenaway

GET CREATIVE... (ART, DRAMA, AND STORIES)

NATURAL ART

Collect natural objects and materials and use them to make natural art. You could give specific prompts or allow them to follow whatever inspires them. This could be done either in groups or as individuals and there's the opportunity to go around to see other people's work and share any thoughts at the end.



SCULPTOR

Provide your learners with mud or clay. The idea is to sculpt the clay into whatever they feel represents their thoughts or feelings about something. You could give prompts such as 'What you accomplished', 'What you learned about', or 'How you felt when...' Once they've finished, they can share their creations with a partner or with the group (Jens, 2007).

REFLECTION TREE

“The children found a large branch that resembled a small tree and it was transformed into a reflection tree. After each session they discussed what they liked or disliked and recorded it on a paper leaf then attached it to the tree with string or wire” – Joanne Cookham (From the book *Developing a Forest School in Early Years Provision* by Jenny Doyle and Katherine Milchem).

Note: You might want to use an alternative to paper if you want to leave your reflection tree outside or it's a wet day. For example, learners could write or draw their ideas on a wood cookie and hang it on the branch. This could be extra meaningful if they sawed and drilled the wood cookie themselves!

ROLE PLAY

Don't just talk about it, act it out! You can use reenactment of what happened (or could happen in the future) to clarify and gain a better understanding about a topic or incident. To examine interesting events, "the learner recreates critical moments through action replay. Typically, participants replay themselves. New information emerges when the replay is paused and people are interviewed about what they were doing, feeling and thinking at the time. This re-staging of key moments tends to bring out greater honesty and understanding." (Greenaway, 2013) This could also be extended by acting out what they would do differently the next time, using it like a rehearsal.

STORYLINE

To help share an experience, learners place a length of rope on the ground to chart an experience or journey they had. They use the rope to make a line on the ground that has peaks and troughs, perhaps representing the ups and downs of their experience (like emotions, motivation, teamwork, etc.). Individuals could share their storyline with a partner. Encourage them to ask questions about their experience, like "What helped you overcome your low point?" or "What helped you reach your high point?" You could also adapt this to do as a group together as a way to conclude a series of sessions or experiences you've all had together. - Roger Greenaway



STORYTELLING

Stories can be used in a variety of ways to inspire reflection. You could tell a story to the whole group, maybe with a moral or a lesson that's relevant. You could also combine telling a story with another exercise in this guide to inspire further reflection.

Example: "If there has been an unfolding narrative to a session and it is coming to a natural close I may then use this for a storymaking session and even get into some hot seating to explore what each learning situation was like and what the learner got from it, but in the context of the story (less threatening). Recently I was out with a nursery group who got into army stalking and ended up stalking an iron man and leaf man..this went on for an hour. We stopped for hot chocolate and they were all happily slurping and munching when I started a story about a bright leaf person who needed to get to a tree of fruit but the army surrounding the tree were hiding... and I wondered what that was like... Noah one of the defenders was on the floor. I asked Noah, "What was that like, weren't you crawling earlier?" "Yeh," exclaimed Noah and "it was damp but smelly and was all scrunchy but good to be hidden and waiting to pounce"... then they all started wading in on the story reflecting on their own previous experiences as we went along... I was gobsmacked at the language for these 3 and 4 year olds!" - Jon Cree

"I've heard that the Navajo discipline their children through storytelling. If a young child behaves badly, instead of confronting him about his conduct, adults will tell a story about a child of the same age who acted in the same way. Since children love stories, they listen with full attention. As he lives the story through the other child, the misbehaving child sees the consequences of his actions."

- Joseph Cornell (Cornell, 2015, pg. 165)

So there's a handful of activities and exercises you can try. Now it's just a matter of thinking about some good questions to ask... And that leads us on to the next section – The Question Bank!

THE QUESTION BANK

“Try to let the answers out of people, guide them along from one logical question to the next, and throw them tidbits of partial answers on the way, until they arrive at the answer they seek for themselves. This doesn't mean to never give answers to questions. Just remember that answers can bring about a swift end to curiosity. Sometimes, you do want to give answers and pass on information and clear instructions. However, try to wait to give answers until you see real, sincere readiness to receive them. The art of questioning is like planting seeds. No one throws seeds on unfertile, rock-hard ground. You prepare the ground for the seed before you plant it.”

- Coyote's Guide to Connecting with Nature (Young et al., 2010, pg. 95)

To understand how to ask the 'right' questions for reflection I personally like to think about it in terms of Roger Greenaway's stages of the learning cycle (Greenaway, 2002). He states there are four stages of the learning cycle:

1. FACTS
2. FEELINGS
3. FINDINGS
4. FUTURES

This format gives you a starting point as well as the opportunity to build upon each stage to extend the reflection as you go. How far you make it through the cycle with your learners can depend on a variety of factors like age, abilities, group size, how much time you have, and so on.

So, I've used Greenaway's stages as an organisational tool to create a question bank. The questions on the following pages can be used as prompts to help you facilitate reflection. They can build upon or combine with each other (or with additional questions you come up with) so feel free to adapt them as you see fit! You can then use the activities in the previous sections to help present these questions in creative and effective ways.

Note: these are only a handful of questions to get started with. There are so many other good questions not listed here, but I wanted to keep it as simple as possible for now. Please incorporate different questions of your own choosing if you feel it will work well for you and your learners.

1. FACTS

What did you do today?

What did you see/hear/taste/smell/feel?

What did you (or someone else) achieve today?

What went well/not so well?

2. FEELINGS

What did you enjoy the most/least?

What will you remember best about today?

What's one (or more) word(s) that describe how you felt about [insert situation or event] ?

Did anything leave you feeling negative or unhappy?

How did you feel about [insert situation or event] ?

What did you find challenging/easy?

What do/did you appreciate most?

3. FINDINGS

What did you learn?

What/who helped you achieve something today and how did it/they help?

Did you discover something about yourself you didn't know before? Perhaps a passion or talent?

If you worked with someone else today, how did you do as a team? What were people's responsibilities? Did they take care of them?

What were your high points (to celebrate) and low points (areas for growth)?

4. FUTURES

What would you do/not do again?

What would you do differently next time (in a similar situation)? Can this extend to other situations too?

What could help you next time?

What do you want to learn more about or do next time?

There are also some really good questions that can help extend a person's answer to almost any of the question on the previous page. Here are just a few that you can use when you think it would be helpful to draw more out of a learner:

What do you think about that?

How do you feel about that?

What do you think that means?

What else did you notice?

What else were you thinking?

What else went well?

Why/Why not?

"One trick to successful questioning is to ponder every question with our own real interest, as if for the first time. Authentic curiosity is the fertile soil for the Art of Questioning."

- Coyote's Guide to Connecting with Nature (Young et al., 2010, pg. 95)

PLANNING FOR REFLECTION (OR NOT)

There are some things you should consider before you begin facilitating reflection. It is not necessary to plan every little detail in advance, but it doesn't hurt to think about a few things before you start.

For example, the size of the group can have a massive impact on the process and quality of the reflection. Greenaway (2004b) points out that in a group of 10 an individual will need to listen for an average of 90% of the time and will speak for 10%. That's quite a lot of listening and not much sharing! This doesn't mean it's not valuable, but in some cases working alone or in pairs where listening and speaking are split more evenly can work better.

Think about what group size might benefit the individuals you work with the most. For example, reflecting solo is a more personalised exploration of our own emotions, thoughts, and behaviours which allow us to making meaning for ourselves. Thinking about things privately, without the need to share them, gives us freedom from the influence of others and the fear of being judged. There are also benefits to working in groups, such as a chance to collaborate and work together to solve problems as well as gain perspective through other's viewpoints (Finlay 2008).

However, you don't necessarily have to make an either/or decision about group size! Many of the activities listed earlier in this guide can benefit from a mixture of the solo, pair, and group work. For example, 'Object talk' (pg 17) could start with an individual collecting an object in response to a question. They could then share their thoughts with a partner before eventually feeding back to the whole group at the end.

In addition to group size, you should also consider the timing and location of the reflection activity. You need to utilise opportune moments as well as areas that have the space and resources needed. And what sort of mood or climate do you want to create? Will it be more formal or informal, for example? In a lot of ways this comes down to personal style, but can also be dependent on the personalities of the individuals or dynamic of the groups you work with. Lastly, consider how the reflection will end. This will help keep you to schedule if you've got limited time with your learners (as most of us do) and also ensure you can offer some closure on the activity too (Roger Greenaway 1993a).

This is quite a lot to remember, so I've created a tool you can use to plan for reflection that helps you think about all of these factors which you'll find on the next two pages. **Please take the interpretation of the word 'plan' loosely though.** The nature of this work means nothing really ever goes 'according to plan'. The aim is that it helps us think things through, rather than acting as plan to be strictly followed. And ultimately, the more experienced we get, the less we'll need a plan as we'll be better able to rely on our own skill and judgment!

REFLECTION 'PLAN'

ACTIVITY: _____

QUESTION(S): _____

HOW MUCH TIME MIGHT THE REFLECTION TAKE?: _____

(Remember reflection can be just as, if not more, important to the learning process as the experience itself so be sure to create enough time for it. Ultimately, how long you spend on reflection will depend on the size, age, and dynamic of the group. For a 2 hour session, 15 minutes at the end might feel right. However, some of the activities listed in this guide could take up to 45-60 minutes, so don't be afraid to dedicate a decent amount of time to it as long as your learners are enjoying the process and are happy to be engaged.)

HOW MANY PEOPLE?

- One
- Pairs
- More than two _____
- A mixture of solo, pairs & groups

TIMING?

- Directly after the experience
- After a short break
- On the spot

Comments:

Comments:

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LOCATION?

- Same place as experience
- Designated 'reflecting' place
(fire circle or sit spot)
- On the trip back (walking, driving)

MOOD OR CLIMATE?

- Formal
- Structured
- Free-flowing
- Fun
- Informal
- Unstructured
- Challenging
- Serious

Comments:

Comments:

THE ENDING

Who and what decides when you're finished?

Will you all agree about this before you start the reflection?

Will you provide a summary of the important points? How could you do this?

Also think about any follow up - are there any emotional needs that require tending to afterwards? How can you assist and support learners with the 'where to go from here' part?

(OR NOT)

You may have been wondering why I included “(or not)” in the title of this chapter, *Planning for Reflection (or not)*. The reason is that sometimes the most opportune moments for facilitating reflection are the ones you can't plan for.

“Often those casual rather than formal reflections are the most effective and genuine, particularly with the one to one dialogue... I once did one in the tree where the whole group had been tree climbing and decided just before a natural break for all to climb to a point in the tree that showed how challenging they found it and then talked to closest neighbour to say why this branch. Then there is just the casual chat around the fire over a cup of tea and the art of open and non judgmental questioning.”

- Jon Cree

Unplanned opportunities to ask good questions or facilitate reflection will occur. It could be during or after a critical incident, maybe mid-activity at a place where there's a natural break or if intervention could benefit individuals who are struggling (Greenaway 2011). Or perhaps you find a moment when a learner or group of learners just happen to be in a good place for it. These unplanned events can be really valuable moments of reflection. Just because we haven't planned for them doesn't mean we can't take advantage of them when they happen.

Having an awareness of this possibility makes us more prepared to recognise those moments and do our best not to let them pass us by!

MODELLING REFLECTION

"You have to start with yourself. No matter how much information you offer through games, questioning, stories, or songs, your biggest influence will be who you are and how you live your life. As soon as you get opportunities to mentor children, they will watch you like a hawk and often imitate your ways of being. When you work with youth, their watching and imitating can be even more profound; they will imitate the faces you make, voices you use, how you walk, whether or not you actually visit a Sit Spot, whether or not you will get muddy and play games with full abandon."

- Coyote's Guide to Connection with Nature (Young et al., 2010, pg. 91).

I recognise this topic comes with a risk of sounding cliché or even patronising, but I feel it's too important to ignore. I hope you agree, because 'modelling' could possibly be the most important tool you have as a facilitator of reflection - the best way to inspire behavioural change in others is by setting the example and demonstrating the behaviours yourself. So I just want to touch on that briefly here in a way that I hope is encouraging rather than critical!

Roger Greenaway (2011) offers some advice on how to be a role model while facilitating reflection:

Be open about your own questions and learning goals.

Participate in the reflection activities and exercises with your learners too.

Actually demonstrate rather than just give verbal instructions for the exercises or activities.

Following these suggestions will help to build trust and empathy between you and your learners, which can be incredibly powerful.

Just remember there is a balance too. Greenaway (2011) states, "Watch out. While joining in as a learner can be an influential facilitation strategy, it can be too influential if there are not also times when you let go, step back and leave space for others." Do your best to find that balance of involvement whilst also leaving space for your learners to grow too.

Lastly, try to practice the process of reflection on yourself in your own time to be as familiar with it as possible. After a session, ask yourself good questions about your own experiences as a teacher/leader/facilitator (and a human being!) too. Perhaps even reflect about how you facilitated reflection on a particular day – whoa that's deep!. I find talking things over with a colleague or friend post-session incredibly helpful. I also like reflecting solo by writing about what I experienced (hence the existence of the Forest Schooled blog!). I recognise this is not everyone's cup of tea and finding the time to do it can be a major challenge.

You don't have to reflect on an experience the same day it happened or even the day after. Sometimes processing and sifting through can take days, weeks, or years even. Let it sit if you need to, you can revisit it later. However important reflection is as a tool for learning, we don't want it become a chore. There is, of course, no need to be reflecting about everything that happens to you on a daily basis. So don't agonise over it. Just work on what feels important and try to find ways to make it fun too! That way you'll be more motivated to continue doing it.

Okay, I'll leave it there and just wish you all the best on your own personal reflective journey!

FINAL THOUGHTS

I realise that after reading this guide, some readers might feel intimidated. Learning about it all definitely made me question, “How will I know whether or not I'm doing it 'right' - at the right time, at the right place, at the right level, and so on.” Feeling fear of 'doing it wrong' could prevent us from taking the plunge at all (I know I feel it!). But it's important to note that we will all get better at facilitating reflection by practicing. With experience, we will become better at anticipating what will work/not work in different situations and with different people. This means trying things and making mistakes! So, let's be kind to ourselves. Let's allow ourselves to try things out (and reflect on them, of course) and we'll get better and more confident over time. Ultimately, I hope this guide has provided some useful ideas to help us build up a 'tool kit' that we can access when we need it.

There is still so much more to reflection and its facilitation than what's been outlined in this guide, but I wanted to keep it as practical and applicable as possible in the hopes that the information can either get you started or help you try something new if you felt you were stuck in a rut. However, there is a wealth of information still out there for those who wish to go deeper. I've accumulated a list of resources I feel are really useful for understanding the theories, models, and practicalities of participating in as well as facilitating reflection, should you want to know more. They are listed on the next page under 'More Information'.

Also, it would be great to have an ongoing dialogue going about the concept of facilitating reflection. This is a topic we can always be learning about so please get in touch with your thoughts about it! Let me know what you've tried, what worked, what didn't, or something new you've done. You can get in touch at www.forestschoolled.com, by email at forestschoolled@gmail.com or through Facebook, Twitter or Instagram (@ForestSchooled).

Thanks again and good luck to us all!

MORE INFORMATION

This gives a good overview of the history of reflection theories: Finlay, L (2008) *Reflecting on 'Reflective practice'*, <http://www.sencen.net/Symposia/SSI2015/documents/Finlay-2008-Reflecting-on-reflective-practice-PBPL-paper-52.pdf>, 13/11/2016.

This looks at some early reflection theorists with great suggestions for further reading: Smith, M (1999) *Reflection, learning and education*, <http://infed.org/mobi/reflection-learning-and-education/>, 19/01/2017.

You can find a whole host of information and activities related to reflection/reviewing on Roger Greenaway's website at www.reviewing.co.uk. This was my go to site for activity ideas and tips for facilitation. It is well worth a visit!

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Young, J, Haas, E, McGown, E and Louv, R (2010) *Coyote's guide to connecting with nature. 2nd edn.*, OWLLink Media, Santa Cruz, CA, United States.

Reflection is an essential part of the learning process, but can be challenging to facilitate. This guide gives concise and practical advice for facilitating reflection in an outdoor setting that's suitable for learner-led educational approaches like Forest School. It's a good introduction for those who are new to the topic and wonder where to start, but it's also useful for experienced folk who wish to take a fresh look at their practice.

Written by a Forest School Leader with a passion for learning along with contributions from a variety of people in the field, this guide is sure to light a fire (possibly even literally) and inspire you to find creative ways to encourage reflection in those you work with. Kindling and fire strikers not included...



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