

The background of the top section of the page is a light grey, textured surface with a repeating pattern of dark grey fountain pen nibs. The nibs are oriented in various directions, creating a sense of movement and focus on the theme of writing.

ANN ROWE

**REFLECTIVE WRITING: A
PERSONAL, PROFESSIONAL, AND
EDUCATIONAL JOURNEY**

I was first introduced to reflective writing by Gillie about twenty years ago and, in all honesty, was very sceptical about its value at first. Like many nurses, I had been ‘taught’ reflection as a process that could be tamed via a number of models produced by experts in the field and graded by academics along a pass/fail gradient. This view of reflection as a ‘performance’ was heightened by my experiences of clinical supervision, which in those days were less about ‘wondering’ and more about moving from story to action (bypassing reflection or hypothesis-building and exploration).

What Gillie enabled was a freedom from those constraints. I can still remember the room I was sat in as she carefully guided a small group through the process of enabling the mind to wander and the pen to roam across the page without editing or too much conscious thought. The surprise of what this process elicited has remained with me since that day, and reflective writing has since been a key part of my professional working life. The freedom to write without self-censure has enabled me to explore experiences, events and relationships in a way that other formats cannot, and has, I believe, had a positive impact on the way I have been practising as an educator and leader since that time.

In my current role as Clinical Director of a national public health programme provided by nurses, I have been able to influence the way in which reflection is embedded in the expectations of day-to-day practice. Reflective supervision, guided reflective writing, and group discussion are all facets of the approach taken to embed a thorough exploration of the working practices and experiences of the clinicians. These activities also provide an opportunity for empathic enquiry and exploration of the experiences of the families they serve.

Helping action-oriented nurses to see the real practical value of reflection for their working lives is an enduring passion and it is wonderful to see a new generation of nurses turning back to reflection as a key ingredient of their professional practice through our work in the programme. My personal journey of scepticism to enthusiasm has been repeated many times over as we have introduced the programme across the country. I have been delighted and humbled to see the bravery of experienced clinicians as they explore and re-examine a range of taken-for-granted working practices with the aid of reflection.

I hope that others are encouraged by Gillie's new text to 'take the plunge' and open themselves up to the experience of reflective writing. It is my firm belief that it provides the opportunity to enrich both professional practice and one's working life.

Ann Rowe