

Exploring a learning journal

Why keep a learning journal?

Sometimes people's eyes can glaze over at the thought of keeping a journal. However, a learning journal can be:

- a "treasury of good practice";
- help evaluate actions tried;
- a way of capturing things which have been learned;
- a way to demonstrate impact;
- it's not the only way but it is one way that makes you think.

The premise behind keeping a journal is that you cannot improve and change something you are not aware of in the first place! As a method of reflection, a learning journal can help you "slow-down" and evaluate a learning experience at your own pitch and pace.

How can a learning journal be used?

A learning journal is essentially a learning tool for the individual. A learning journal might be used, for example, by individuals to "make" notes about an experience. This is different from "taking" case notes. The emphasis on the former is on "sense-making", while the emphasis on the later tends to be on description of the event. Over time, patterns and themes emerge about your experiences.

A learning journal can become a tool which opens learning beyond the individual. It is sometimes useful to share issues with others. This might be in conjunction with other reflective practices, such as within a coaching or mentoring relationship.

What does a learning journal look like?

There is no set "look" to a learning journal. Essentially a learning journal structure and form will be what works best for you. What follows are some examples of a learning journal. These may provide a basis from which you develop your own.

Learning journal examples

Example 1: Note taking and sense making

“The experience”

In this section you might include:

- notes about the type of activity (ie meeting, professional development) and/or
- task;
- location;
- date;
- duration of activity;
- who is involved in the activity/ task;
- purpose of the activity/ task;
- new ideas/ resources/ concepts.

“Sense-making” and “Futures-planning”

In this section reflect on:

- what the experience meant to you, and
- what it might mean for you in the future.

For example, the experience may:

- affirm particular behaviours or strategies;
- identify new ways of looking at similar experiences in the future leading to the utilisation of different concepts and practices.

Example 2: Guided questions

Some people find staring at a blank journal page intimidating. The questions below may help you get started.

Learning Journal

What happened? Describe the experience.

How do I feel about the experience (before, during, after)?

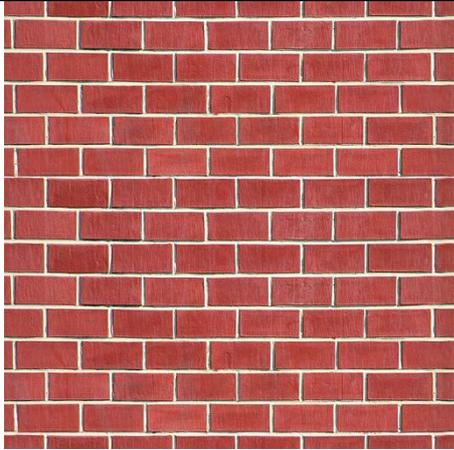
What insights have I gained through this experience? (eg. self and others)

What do I think helped or hindered my learning? (eg. other people's learning)

What will I do the same/different because of this experience?

Example 3: Photo journal

A picture may be a useful demonstration of an experience/event, and support you to reflect. The picture may represent the experience or your feelings.



Notes:

- What happened and why do I feel like this?
- What have I learnt?



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- What have I learnt?