**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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>“The experience”</strong></th>
<th><strong>“Sense-making” and “Futures-planning”</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In this section you might include:</td>
<td>In this section reflect on:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• notes about the type of activity (ie meeting, professional development) and/or task;</td>
<td>• what the experience meant to you, and what it might mean for you in the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• location;</td>
<td>For example, the experience may:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• date;</td>
<td>• affirm particular behaviours or strategies;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• duration of activity;</td>
<td>• identify new ways of looking at similar experiences in the future leading to the utilisation of different concepts and practices.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• who is involved in the activity/ task;</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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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? (e.g., self and others)

What do I think helped or hindered my learning? (e.g., 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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