

3 Assessment Criteria for Reflective Practice Component - Personal Learning Journal and Personal Development Profile

Name: John Dray Year: 1 Date: _____

The PLJ is a reflection of your learning goals and personal development each day. 26 entries of a minimum of A4 (or equivalent) are required, demonstrating a commitment to daily reflection and reflective practice. This can either be hand written or typed.

The tutors will read a selection of entries to assess whether you have met the requirements below.

The PDP uses excerpts from and / or references to entries in the PLJ to support your reflection on the year. The PDP must be typed.

Please be respectful of others by writing about your **own** experience and anonymising any reference to other members of your peer group.

Criteria	Comments
1. 26 Journal entries plus 2,500 word PDP completed.	✓
2. Set clear learning objectives and monitor the extent to which these are achieved.	✓
3. Reflection on the course experience in terms of your thoughts, feelings and behaviours.	✓
4. Exploration of awareness of self in relationship: ➤ internal contact with self ➤ quality of contact with peers ➤ quality of contact with staff ➤ quality of contact with clients ➤ quality of contact with significant others	✓
5. Discussion of your ability to relate personal development to professional practice.	✓
6. Comment on your level of participation in experiential aspects of the training.	✓
7. Demonstrate your commitment to personal growth and development.	✓
8. Clearly demonstrate reflective practice in relation to your fishbowl and triad experiences as both therapist and as client.	✓

9. Comment on your learning from written assignments and identify any areas for further development.	✓
10. Identify areas of learning and development that you wish to focus on in the year ahead.	✓

PASS

General Comments and Feedback from Tutor

You have included a lot of reflection in this exercise, John – demonstrating much learning and development in a range of experiences of training, from academic to interpersonal to practice. Your PDP is nicely supported by cross-references with your PLJ (which, I wish to confirm, as you submitted it to me electronically, I have now deleted from my computer). There is a real sense here of your personal and professional growth and one of direction of where you wish to go next. Well done!

Tutor Signature: Garthine Walker

Date: 19-08-23

If this work is referred, the trainee has 4 weeks to resubmit.

Personal Development

Set clear learning objectives and monitor the extent to which these are achieved.

Learning about various modalities: I have been introduced to Gestalt psychotherapy. This was a modality that I was unaware of before starting at the WPI. My personal therapy is TA and, in the past, I had used a rudimentary form of person-centred therapy.

Discovering more about myself in process: during the year we have done a lot on process. I have attempted to engage fully in the Group Process activities. For me the challenge is discerning what is my process, what is the other person's process and beginning to spot what transferences and projections are going on.

Both of these objectives were lacking in formal ways to measure them. From a subjective stance, I would suggest that I have made significant process towards both.

Reflection on the course experience in terms of your thoughts, feelings and behaviours.

I have really enjoyed the first year. The experiential mode of training suits me and allows me to explore aspects of psychotherapy that I may have missed if taking a more 'academic' approach.

I find the written assignments to be challenging. However, I always find them interesting and the process of producing them always helps me make new connections and understand the source material in new ways. As important as the writing of the work is the feedback from the markers. Real gold-dust from which to learn and improve.

I find the course to be a 'safe space' in the way that I can discuss topics that, in another context, might cause shame. This has allowed me to explore issues that have lain dormant.

From one of the graduation speeches, I think that my work is to continue to develop my theoretical and practical understanding of psychotherapy, to learn how to better build a therapeutic relationship, and to build up structures of friends and supervision and supportive professionals and internal awareness to build a safe crucible within which to practice. In other words, learning to look after me so that I can safely and healthily work with others on their psychotherapeutic journey.

Exploration of awareness of self in relationship:

internal contact with self

After I had attended the first of the WPI weekends, a psychotherapist friend asked me, 'Are you finding that your therapy is now on turbo charge?' The answer was a resounding 'yes'. After six years of therapy, I had begun to imagine that there was little material to be mined... I was so wrong. Particularly relevant over the year has been noticing what is going on in me when others are speaking. In particular I do this during Group Process. However, I am also bringing this into therapy practice. This is coupled with a lot of work that I am doing in personal therapy to notice emotions and sensations - undoing years of learning to dissociate. Sometimes I find all this new 'information' overwhelming - 'not feeling' feels a lot safer and more predictable. That said, I am choosing to be more present in my body and less of a 'floating head'.

quality of contact with peers

I am totally blessed by the people in my year group. Over the course of the residential, getting to know them better was a real joy. They were very supportive of me and I have always felt welcome by the whole group. In the 'work' I feel that we have a great deal of openness towards each other. Although the only man in the group, I have not found that to be a problem. I try to be sensitive to moments when it could become an issue. There was a recent exercise that ended up involving touch - I ensured that I had permission before

touching others. I have realised that unbidden touch is a real issue for me (p51, 26/3/23).

There was a fellow student who often touched me and I discussed this issue with them.

We keep in contact on WhatsApp and I think that I have fairly even contact with the entire group. As we split in modalities, I am sure that the dynamics will change - as I will spend more time with some folk and less with others. I will miss those going to Gestalt and will miss the continuation of listening to their journeys in Group Process.

quality of contact with staff

I bring to contact with staff my characteristics of: people pleasing, deferring to authority, not stating my needs, feeling of unworthiness and fear! I am thinking of the fishbowl where I went too deep into childhood trauma (p75-76) and, at the point of typing this, wonder if my child was trying to send a message to the staff about my fear and distrust of teachers!

Outside of the sessions, I have had good conversations with staff. I have managed to raise various situations and I have had an attentive, informed conversation. I have also been able to raise my needs: asking for 'screaming therapy' at the residential, and asking about what could have improved therapy practice. I have found my tutorials to be excellent, allowing me to ask questions that were important to me and having my growing edges delivered with grace and sensitivity. I have felt 'seen' and rarely 'missed'.

In other words, whereas my historically-based fears set certain fearful expectations of my interactions with staff, the reality of the situation was one of support, and help, and approachability where I was able to voice my needs.

That said, I reflect on my last tutorial where I asked if I had been allowed through to the second year. My tutor emphatically said that I had. My experience was of surprise and relief.

quality of contact with clients

This has been challenging, as I have high standards. With feedback I am not quite sure of what the standard is - am I doing well/badly for a first year? well/badly for me? Generally, I

feel that I have good contact with clients. Where I need to concentrate is on: * listening to what they are contracting within the session, * discerning what is actually happening in the session, rather than my analysis, * and attuning to them.

I am sure there will be plenty of opportunities to work on that in the second year and beyond. One of the most powerful learning experiences was seeing a member of staff admitting to getting a therapeutic intervention wrong, analysing what had been going on for them and their client, and seeing how they built on that. I could have cried at the beauty and intimacy of that contact.

quality of contact with significant others

My partner is very supportive of me doing this course. His work as an emotional support teaching assistant is complementary so it is interesting to discuss my process and theory with him. I also have a lot of friends who are psychotherapists and correspondingly few who are in IT, my current career. Perhaps there is a message in there.

Discussion of your ability to relate personal development to professional practice.

In my initial application to WPI I reflected that my 'weaknesses' may in fact be 'strengths' in terms of my development as a psychotherapist. This first year has allowed me to discover many more such 'weaknesses', particularly in the area of trauma. The danger is that one generalises ones own experience to that of clients. In reflecting on my trauma, I have had the opportunity to reflect on the various works of Babette Rothschild and I am currently listening to 'The Boy Who Was Raised As A Dog' by Perry and Szalavitz.

My approach in therapy practice has become much slower paced, with me allowing the client to do more of the work, but there is still a distance to go. I do love TA, but Gestalt intrigues me and I have a need to know more about it. In the not-to-distant future, I would like to experience Gestalt therapy as a client, but I am currently in an interesting phase with my TA therapy. Researching for my last essay gave me an opportunity to start looking at the

Gouldings and where they overlap TA and Gestalt. It was also exciting to discover Hargaden and Sills and how they are working to make TA more relational. That's a first, being excited by academic study. I think that reflects my past academic experience: e.g. excelling in IT when I had no teacher and gained the qualification through self-study, whereas I struggled in subjects that had teachers but did not inspire me (e.g. French). The WPI course has a lot of latitude for self-study and shaping the course to oneself. As I continue to read, I hope to integrate the works into my personal, integrated modality.

Comment on your level of participation in experiential aspects of the training.

I think that the whole of the attended course at the WPI is experiential, from the time boundaries, to the bracketing of different exercises to the specific sessions. e.g. 'fluffy' in breaks, process in process groups, engagement with theory in 'theory slots'. I feel that I am well engaged in all the experiential aspects. A significant point of learning has been discerning the difference between therapy practice sessions and group process sessions. In the group process I am learning to look at my process, rather than engage with the process of others and 'therapize' them. I am enthusiastic about engaging in therapy practice and gradually moving away from 'fixing' people to providing a space for them to draw out their process. I am also finding that I need a few minutes before sessions to 'centre' from the 'fluffy' talk in the kitchen. Getting to a session at the last minute has an adverse impact for me. I hope to bring this learning to my therapeutic practice.

Demonstrate your commitment to personal growth and development.

I have found the first year very challenging. Within group process I uncovered childhood trauma that had laid dormant. It caught me unawares and has been a significant part of my personal therapy this year. It even managed to turn up when I was a therapist in a triad (p73, 2/6/23). I realise that what is not in my journal is that the client had mentioned feeling like a six year old and I had suddenly stopped mid-sentence as it had set off something for me,

outside of awareness. It was as if time had stopped for a moment. I also realised that I was not available to offer warmth and empathetic support to the client at that time.

This year has brought challenges for my mental health and the state of my business. It would have been very easy to give up. In short, I have found the new awareness of my internal processes difficult to cope with. I am sure that this is part of what the training is about - becoming more aware of internal processes and, in the therapy room, learning to distinguish between my process, the process of the client and how they interplay. It may be tough, but I would rather be doing this than anything else. This is also alerting me to the importance of self-care and building strong, resilient networks of colleagues and friends. Part of this has been hosting an online discussion for queer psychotherapists. We contracted to six 90 minute sessions. I hope to revisit this in the new academic year, as well as build new networks of support.

I notice that where, in other disciplines, I shied away from reading, now I am looking at bibliographies as treasure hunts. This is aided by the modern technologies of Audible and being able to read books on computer. I have also invested a lot of time putting together a note-taking strategy, based on Zettelkasten, that will enable me to build my psychotherapy career on the notes gathered now and in my continual professional development.

Clearly demonstrate reflective practice in relation to your fishbowl and triad experiences as both therapist and as client.

I remember my first fishbowl (p17, 9/12/22) when I listed about 10 things I was working on with the client in 10 minutes. I have taught beginners how to preach and they try to cram their entire experience into their first sermon. I was somewhat disappointed that I had fallen for a comparable beginner's mistake. I am learning to be kind to myself and remember the words of my flying instructor, 'if you are not making mistakes, you are not learning'. My tendency is to take feedback as criticism. Despite that, I am learning to listen to the feedback and quiet the negative critical voice in my head.

In a more recent fishbowl (pp 75-83, 3/6/23-4/6/23), as client, I went far too deep into the process of my childhood trauma. The feedback from this session gave me a lot of insight into how to 'apply brakes'. When reflecting on the session in the PLJ I realised that I had not considered the impact on myself and, as importantly, the impact on the other people in the room. In a subsequent triad on that weekend I applied the brakes a lot - and that was empowering - I had control. I am learning that working with trauma is not about having the client tell all the details and being re-traumatised, but that it is about enabling them to have a sense of control.

In a fishbowl as therapist (pp 39ff, 25/3/23) I brought a lot of 'stuff' from outside the session. I had been watching the 'Gloria tape' of Fritz Perls in a live psychotherapy session. I had an urge to include that material in the session. I brought in earlier material from the same client into the session. I was also in some pain from a recent fall and was suffering with anxiety. I learnt a lot from that fishbowl session: 1) Ask myself if I am fit to be a therapist today (pp46-7), 2) Whatever is going on for me should be recognised and bracketed outside the session, 3) Listen to what the client is contracting to address in that particular session (p48), 4) Attune to the client.

Comment on your learning from written assignments and identify any areas for further development.

First is the importance of integrating personal experience, ethical and anti-oppressive practice with theory and practice. As I progress through the written assignments, I am attempting to calibrate the balance of these areas. The first essay and its feedback, allowed me to gauge expectations in these areas. The second was a wake-up call as it did not seem to call for much theory and practice - but it is clear that I am expected to bring theory and practice to every area of my work as a psychotherapist.

It is over 20 years since I last wrote an academic piece of work. In my first degree the expectation was that essays would be handwritten. A lot has changed! The changes in terms

of the precision of referencing, the need to have proof for every point, to define every term are challenging. I must admit that when I first saw the length of the essays I thought that they would be easy to accomplish in a short time, having once written three 8000 word essays in a week. Having said that, I have always prepared over the course of weeks for each of the WPI essays. I have found them very challenging, as each of the titles seems to require a vast array of different concepts to be brought together. I expected this to be challenging in the Gestalt essay, as that was a modality that was new to me. However, I found the TA essay even more challenging. Part of the difference was seeing how I had received TA in personal therapy, how I had understood the TA during my TA101 course and then having to get into the workings of it for my essay. Three very different perceptions of the same modality. My conclusion is that I need to do more reading and reflexive practice.

Identify areas of learning and development that you wish to focus on in the year ahead.

- 1) Discern where the client wants to go
- 2) Give the client time to process
- 3) In group process look at my own process rather than rescuing the other
- 4) Learn bracketing

These come from both my own assessment of my progress, and the 'growing edges' offered to me by staff members. I think that some of this will come from developing my knowledge of the theoretical underpinnings of the modalities that I practice. More will come with practising with clients and analysing the sessions in supervision.