

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

Name: John Dray Year: 2 Date: 2-5-25

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.	All correct
2. Set clear learning objectives and monitor the extent to which these are achieved.	Clearly presented, particularly focussed on goals in client work. Well referenced to PLJ
3. Reflection on the course experience in terms of your thoughts, feelings and behaviours.	You demonstrate reflection and self-awareness throughout the PLJ and summarise your feelings in the PDP. I appreciate your concerns and also feel that you are reducing a complex group

	dynamic to one dimension. I notice you using theory well to support your internal process – particularly from TA and Polyvagal theory.
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	You chart growing awareness of how you carry traumas from your past within your body. You reflect well on a difficult process with peers and I am sorry that you did not feel there was space/validation for your perspective. I wonder whether this has been a familiar experience for you in your life? Anger rather than resignation seems a healthy response and perhaps links with your comments about having prioritised (confluent) relationship over authenticity in your personal relationships. You explore well, both emotionally and intellectually, the challenge of being the only man in your peer group, particularly the conflation of male anger with abuse. You process thoughtfully the complex situation around the leaving of a tutor and your entanglement in that ending.
5. Discussion of your ability to relate personal development to professional practice.	You explore how you have enriched your learning at WPI through other valuable training, including the important themes of diversity and race, and how this has supported both your personal and your professional development. You notice how you are becoming more emotionally available to yourself and your clients, through engaging with your own trauma. At the same time you are clearly also being supported to maintain boundaries rather than becoming muddled with your clients' processes.

6. Comment on your level of participation in experiential aspects of the training.	You recognise your enthusiasm to learn and to experiment, which is apparent.
7. Demonstrate your commitment to personal growth and development.	Well evidenced and you discuss how you are integrating additional training into your therapeutic approach.
8. Clearly demonstrate reflective practice in relation to your fishbowl and triad experiences as both therapist and as client.	For ease of correlation with the Journal entries for the Marker, could you please signpost to page numbers for when you did fishbowl (which you do for only one date). A therapist you seem to be challenging your tendency to want to be in charge and set the pace, which is perhaps borne of beginner's anxiety. I think you are starting (at the time) to integrate technique with process, such that attunement to the client is the priority, over and above 'using' methods you may have learned, or, as you suggest, less consciously introjected. You do not comment in the PDP on your experience as client, but I can see that you have explored a number of themes including allowing yourself to be more in touch with your bodily experience.
9. Comment on your learning from written assignments and identify any areas for further development.	You show insight into your essay writing block towards the end of this year and I know that you have since overcome it. It is a sign that you have engaged at depth, that the academic material brings up personal issues and your writing is all the better for integrating the academic and the emotional. A little

	communication about this may have helped!
10. Identify areas of learning and development that you wish to focus on in the year ahead.	You identify some clear externally focussed goals for your practice and some wishes for group process. I wonder whether you had any thoughts about what would be involved in a group process that would be “welcoming for all” and also what specifically you felt you had learned from a “hard” group process during Year 2?

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General Comments and Feedback from Tutor

A reflective account detailing a year which as you say, you found difficult in terms of the peer group process, but during which you also found riches and remained open to learning even when the going got tough.
Next year could you please hand in your PLJ on paper rather than on line as I find it much easier to correlate with the PDP.

Tutor Signature:



Date: 22.05.25.

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

Assignment 4 - Personal Development Profile

NB my PLJ is in two parts: PLJ 2nd year Part 1 JD Aug 2023 to June 2024 pp99-167 and
PLJ 2nd year Part 2 JD July 2024ff pp1-16

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

These are similar to last year:

1. Discern where the client wants to go - this is about listening where the client wants to go in therapy, rather than setting my agenda. (p102) suggests that I still stumble on this, but I am noticing points where I set the agenda, so can improve.
2. Give the client time to process. (p109) Again, my 'fix-it' driver often leads me to rush the client. I think this partly reflects my levels of stress this year - fortunately my work on Polyvagal Theory is giving me clues about how to work with my state in the therapy room, even if I am stressed
3. In group process look at my own process rather than rescuing the other. (p99) - this is foremost in my mind. I am making great care not to intervene and be a 'therapist' in group process. That said, I find it particularly annoying when others make therapist interventions.
4. Learn bracketing. (p103) demonstrates a physical technique to add 'punctuation' to the end of a therapy session.
5. Tempo - somewhat too fast! (p99) gives an example of me getting this better.
Through my skills practice in the year some sessions are better in this regard and others are not. Again, I think that Polyvagal Theory is giving me insights into how to work on this skill.

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

I have found this year to be particularly difficult in terms of group process.

I had known that something was wrong, but I had not been able to discern what (p4). One member of the group was under repeated attacks throughout the year, while the attacker hid behind her 'inability to process that now'. I hope that I have learned from that experience and will be more sensitive to such issues in the future. In an organisation that prides itself on anti-oppressive practice, I feel that the organisation has failed and I feel guilt for being a part of that failure. It reminds me that it is often difficult to see abuse when you are in the midst of it and that an outside view can help untangle such things. (e.g. the game on p105)

Exploration of awareness of self in relationship:

internal contact with self

Back in January 2023 I uncovered some trauma that had lain dormant for decades. I mishandled it by moving too fast. This increased my trauma still further to the point where I could no longer work in my normal job. This has had a significant financial impact, as well as a huge dent to my sense of 'competence'. Gradually, I have worked on this process and it has been hard. I would have liked to share it with my peers, which I was able to do in the first year. In the second year there was no space within the group process to do that.

Subsequently, I have discovered some pre-verbal traumas. (p117, 119, 125) I have learned from my previous mistakes. I am really taking dealing with them slowly. I am not broadcasting details of them. I am trying to listen to my somatic child. Previously, I had the naïve expectation that messages from child would come through the medium of English. I am now discovering that aches and pains and backaches and headaches reveal a lot more about the disposition of my child. I am discovering that I have certain actions that will calm and soothe my child. With this new information, I am beginning to discover comparable processes in clients. This new mode of communication through 'body language' - infants soothing themselves in the same space - is a very special process to be part of. I can feel myself welling up with tears as I contemplate the beauty of this connection. (p111)

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quality of contact with peers

In general, I really enjoy being with my peers, especially those whom I started with. There is a real joy of mutual care and 'looking out for each other'.

Joining the third year integrative students was hard. I felt as if I were encroaching on someone else's turf. The content of group process often referred to matters of hurt within the

group that predated us joining them. (p115) I felt excluded. I noticed this. I mentioned it. I shouted about it. Still I felt that my concerns were hushed over and ignored. I am left feeling that I should shout and persist more if my needs are to be catered for. For me this is parallel to a child that yearns to be noticed in any way possible and will take negative contact as being better than no contact at all.

I noticed my peers from the second year remaining silent. One was grinding her jaw, the other looked white with rage. I mentioned this, and was silenced. I was told that I could not assume that I knew what they were feeling. My colleagues suggested that they might have been too scared to voice their actual feelings during the group process. (p126)

So I am left in a situation where my peers are too afraid to speak up in group process. I can either collude with that fear, or speak out and have them deny what is going on with them... and in the process be invalidated.

quality of contact with staff

This is difficult. An important process for me happened on the weekend when we had two facilitators in our group process. One of the members of staff 'saw me' when I was engaging in a painful process. (p139) Unusually, I corresponded with them a few times that week. They then resigned. I was left wondering if my behaviour had led to them leaving. I felt extremely vulnerable. I felt that there was no-one to turn to at WPI. Until the residential, I was, to my mind, left hanging in my relationship to WPI. (p146)

I did take this process to my therapist, and she was overjoyed that my free child had revealed itself. While that was a very positive affirmation, I was still left in limbo by WPI (p148-9). I felt very unsafe and unprotected. I wondered if there is an internalised assumption at WPI that only men are perpetrators and only women are victims. I am sure that that is not the stated position of WPI, but it did feel like part of the process of this year.

During the residential I managed to concuss myself. That coupled with a 4th year ethics presentation led to me having a trauma response. I needed to leave and received wonderful support from a staff member (p153)

quality of contact with clients

It is a real joy to have begun seeing clients. With my first client, I had a new experience: a male client who was reticent to take part in the process. (My triad 'clients' were all female and relatively forthcoming.) This is in stark contrast to my subsequent clients who have tended to be voluble.

One aspect that I did not expect was the level of grief I felt when a client came to the end of therapy. The thought that I could never see this amazing person again was almost too hard to bear. I also accept that the boundaried nature of therapy is part of what gives it its energy - helping people create boundaries where their boundaries have been violated in the most heinous ways.

I am enjoying putting the trauma work of Babette Rothschild into practice in the field. I am finding myself visiting Transactional Analysis and Gestalt Therapy regularly. With this I am also learning some creativity - exploring the use of fidget gadgets[^ I was advised not to use the term 'toys' with adults] with highly anxious clients reveals how these can help people regulate their anxiety. Interestingly, I encouraged a client who had ceased to use a fidget gadget to use one again. They immediately became more forthcoming. It was interesting seeing how the fidgeting helped with their emotional regulation.

quality of contact with significant others

This has been a difficult year in terms of significant relationships. At the beginning of the year, I broke up with my partner of two years. I did not have a lot of grief about that.

It is only in the last few weeks, when addressing issues around my relationship with my father, that I have begun to realise how I discount myself in intimate relationships. A big

element of this is the notion of red flags. (p16) I had grown up in an environment that was so hostile to my existence that as long as I was 'just about surviving' then I took that as the only success criterion. Life was not about avoiding 'red flags', but coping with the red flags that were around and grading them. The question was, 'is this situation survivable?' or 'How red are those flags?'.

In relationships, as long as there had not been too many red flags (as in, the number of red flags was 'survivable') then I would continue a relationship and discount myself to continue in the relationship. To quote my therapist 'attachment trumps authenticity', which in turn comes from Maté & Maté (2022). In processing a particular event with my father where expression of his anger, in physically assaulting me with a garden spade, was more important than my survival.

The fact that my partner's, seemingly trivial, transgression of my boundaries in a way that triggered flashbacks to my father's behaviour. I had told my partner about this. He persisted in his triggering behaviour and transgression of my boundaries. I became increasingly anxious, to the point of not being able to continue my IT work. I had to terminate the relationship.

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

The big themes this year have been sexual violence and trauma with a dose of dissociation.

I have had six months of training with New Pathways, much of which was targeted at sexual violence and trauma. These issues have been live in my personal therapy as well. It has felt like I am able to explore the themes of the training in my own life.

This has brought a richness (and painfulness) to the training. Almost like having a read-along book while listening to the training. I realise that my experience has made me more alert to signs of trauma in my clients. At the same time, I realise that there are bound to be other 'tells' in clients that I am not yet attuned to. When working with clients, having my own 'playbook' of trauma has helped in my empathetic connection to them. With my supervisor, I am ensuring that I do not project 'my stuff' onto the clients, but keep 'one foot outside the therapeutic experience'. I did notice that I was on the edge of tears when working with one client. I think this was due to the energy of what she was talking about but not expressing. I did bring that to supervision and I am alert to such phenomena happening again. I never had a similar occurrence when working as a clergyman, so I am conscious of this change.

I am really enjoying the application of theory (e.g. Transactional Analysis, Babette Rothschild's methods of working with Trauma, Gestalt Therapy) to the live situation. So powerful!

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

I have always offered to do fishbowl as therapist at every weekend. Some people may think of this as rescuing the others who are more reticent at offering. That is not my motivation. I want as many opportunities to try out being a therapist, in a safe environment, as possible.

I see the fishbowls as an opportunity to explore approaches to therapy in a space with there is a protective 'safety net'. This is different to the situation in the therapy room where I am more likely to pick a more conservative approach. As pointed out in supervision, the 'clients' at WPI are better trained as clients than those I meet at New Pathways or ATS.

Demonstrate your commitment to personal growth and development.

I have committed a lot of time and money to Continuing Professional Development (CPD) this year. This amounts to more than 120 hours in addition to my time with WPI.

Flash Technique for Trauma (PESI) LGBTQIA+ Awareness (New Pathways) Money...
(Martin Capp) Marian Fry Lecture (Managing Your Blackness) Group B Safeguarding (Adults at Risk) New Pathways Induction Course Deb Dana's Polyvagal Theory in Action: Creating Safety and Connection with Trauma Clients OU Online Counselling: Getting Started

In addition to my personal therapy, I have also engaged in some group therapy facilitated by my therapist.

I have also taken part in the steering group for a research project undertaken by New Pathways into LGBTQ access to their services.

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

This has been more of a year of noticing what I have taking into my 'psychotherapist parent ego state' and deciding what I want to do with the techniques I have inherited. This has been particularly interesting when I have used techniques that I have seen my therapist use, that I have used, land well with the client, but colleagues on the course have balked at.

This process has helped me reflect on how I want to be as a therapist. My competitive nature means 'the best', but that is almost meaningless in this context. The exploration of relationship with a client is at the heart of my practice. This was most notably demonstrated in a fishbowl with someone I know very well over two years, from my work with her in WPI, but most of 'the room' only know her superficially for one year. As the relationship is pre-existing to that fishbowl, I was able to use techniques with her that I would not necessarily use with a client. I most likely only use with a client when I knew them very well. (p130)

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

I always find the essays challenging. They seem to touch on issues that have been live at the time of writing the essay. This makes for a challenging time writing them, as I often find myself stepping away from the computer to process something particularly live in my process at that moment.

At one stage in the year I hit a real block on writing essays. I set aside many tens of hours to complete them and would find ways to look at virtually anything else.

I know that I enjoy writing the essays. I am always challenged by the material. I enjoy the learning. Yet, I avoid writing them at all costs. I find this very frustrating. Only recently have I begun to discover the depth of this process. I can see where it comes from. I can see how I cultivated it growing up. Recently, I had a conversation with my mother about the incident where my father attacked me with a garden spade. This was the first time we had really spoken about it since it happened. She remembered a lot about the aftermath of the incident, but had not witnessed my dad throwing the spade at me. Whenever I mentioned the word spade she would attempt to verbally delete that part of the sentence. I took that to my therapist and explored my mum's avoidance that I had learned to enact in my own life. Now I am beginning to be aware of how the avoidant process works, I hope to be able to successfully challenge it.

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

I wish to consolidate my work with New Pathways. They offer a rich training development and I enjoy working with the other staff in Carmarthen. I am part of their LGBTQ+ research project. I have also been invited to participate in their men's support group, which support male-identifying victims of sexual abuse post-counselling.

I am wanting to develop my private practice through the Affordable Therapy Scheme (ATS).

I want to look at the development of group processes. I am aware that this year has been hard. I am looking at ways of having a group that is welcoming to all participants. I have learned a lot from this year's group process, that I would not have learned if 'everything were working well'. It's rather like when I nearly crashed a plane on landing and my instructor reacted quickly to save the situation. His measured response was that you only learn when things go wrong. Ironically, I think this is a request for less learning this year. Or, more optimistically, learning on different topics.

Maté, G., & Maté, D. (2022). *The myth of normal: trauma, illness, & healing in a toxic culture*. Avery, an imprint of Penguin Random House.

