

Self-awareness
through dis-closure,
feedback and
reflection.



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Throughout this assignment I shall discuss how I have developed my self-awareness through dis-closure, feedback and reflection. " Being self-aware enables us to identify our strengths and also those areas that can be developed" (R Ashmore & D Banks 2000 p47), self-awareness is continually being developed through the reflection of our life experiences.

Reflection of my life experiences has given me the opportunity to become more aware of my strengths and weaknesses through being honest and the use of disclosure firstly to myself and then to others. The Gibbs Reflective Cycle 1998 is a useful model for reflecting on a life experience to gain further self-awareness through evaluation and analysis to finally having an action plan identifying what would be done differently in the future. The more knowledge we have about ourselves, the easier it becomes to relate to others" (R Ashmore & D Banks 2000 p47), the self-concept (Murphy 1947, Argyle 1969, Burns 1980) enables us to learn more of our self through self-image, self-esteem and the self-ideal, by reflecting on each of these three parts in regard of myself I have determined that I see myself as being confident with a high self-esteem which I find makes me a friendly and approachable person however I have also realised that I have to listen more to receive feedback. When we try to see and feel the world from another person's perspective, we are trying to be empathic. If we are successful, we will not just be able to understand the persons thoughts but also feel something of what they feel" (G Firth, R Berry, C Irvine 2010 p148) within my past career path of working with people with learning disabilities with an inability to communicate it has enabled me to develop my empathy and

consideration for others, which is not to be confused with sympathy but is more of a connection towards somebody else's feelings.

By developing my connection to other people's feelings who are unable to communicate verbally it has enabled me to develop non verbal cues as described in Egan's model 1998, such as adopting an open posture with a relaxed and unhurried appearance and the importance of eye contact, however within my new career role now working with people of which most can communicate verbally I need to stay aware that the use of non-verbal cues and the tone of the voice used is still of utmost importance. Self-disclosure, a process by which we let ourselves be known to others" (R Ashmore & D Banks 2000 p48) the Johari window can be applied to increase self-awareness and focuses on the theory that being more self-aware is of great assistance in developing as an individual, within the framework of the Johari window the subject of self-disclosure is of great importance.

The Johari window is composed of four parts, the open self, blind self, hidden self and the unknown self, through the use of disclosure, by sharing information from your hidden self to others the open self increases in size and in return for disclosing information feedback is received from others, giving insight into your blind self therefore increasing your self-awareness. Appropriate disclosure avoids the two extremes and means that it is fitting, suitable, the right amount at the right time" (Egan 1990 p45), it is important to ensure the correct amount of disclosure is made so that the relationship is not put at risk. Through disclosing too little information it does not allow for the reduction of uncertainty and also doesn't allow for the build up of trust in a relationship, yet on the other hand if too much is disclosed too soon it may

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cause a feeling of pressure to recipitate. Self-disclosure between the nurse and patient occurs as part of the developing therapeutic relationship, where both must determine jointly what, when, where and how if at all they will disclose themselves” (R Ashmore & D Banks 2000 p 49) I have come to realise that no two relationships are the same and progress at different time scales depending on the individual and can also be determined by several variables such as age, status, gender or personality. Ultimately the use of disclosure in a therapeutic relationship is to gain trust and encourage reciprocity. Students may consciously chose to give little personal information to patients whom they perceive as ‘ risky’ and likely to abuse the self-disclosure” (R Ashmore & D Banks 2000 p55) within my current workplace it is policy not to disclose personal information to the people we provide care for which can hinder the progression of a therapeutic relationship, however as I am unable to disclose my hidden self in reflection this has made me more aware of that the use of non verbal communication and the tone of my voice towards the people I provide support for helps to build trust, although on the other hand on reflection of feedback I have received it is apparent that if I have not communicated effectively due to personal issues it can affect the way others feel and reduce the trust within the relationship. “ Conveniently others are constantly giving you the very feedback you need to increase self-awareness” (J A Devito 2004 p33) to receive and further develop from the feedback received we have to be active and effective listeners.

Listening is a skill that can be thought of as effortless and undemanding however many people fail to listen to each other actively and are often either

non or partial listening, whilst doing this we may pick up on partial bits of feedback but are not receiving the entirety. On reflection the skill of listening is something I need to further develop as I can often find myself not actively listening to a person I am communicating with which is hindering the development of my self-awareness. In conclusion the growth of self-awareness is continually progressing over time and is never complete “ becoming self-aware is an on going process that is never complete.

Therefore, self-evaluation needs to be undertaken at regular intervals” (R Ashmore & D Banks 2000 p 50), evaluation of ourselves through reflection and the feedback we receive from others is a task which should be completed frequently to enable us to recognise both our positive and negative areas and ultimately becoming more self-aware giving us the means to manage the demands of both work and personal lives. References Egan G 1990, You and Me-The skills of communicating and relating to others. Brooks/Cole, California Essential of Human Communication (Joseph A Deviot) Fifth Edition 2004 Patterns of self-disclosure among mental health nursing students, R Ashmore & D Banks 2000, Nurse education today (2001) 21, 48, 57 Harcourt Understanding Intensive Interaction (G Firth, R Berry, C Irvine) 2010 Jessica Kingsley