Keeping a journal

Its purpose
The purpose of a reflective journal is to allow you to learn from the things that happen at work - from your actions, from the actions of other staff, from the actions of clients; from the things you say, or hear and from the context in which they all happen. Reflection, as its name implies, means looking back at something. It is possible that we get so busy at work that we simply do the same things over and over again without identifying if they are effective or not.

Steps to setting up a journal

1. First you need a record of what happened.
2. Then you need to see it within the context in which it happened.
3. Then you need to ask your self some questions.
   These questions are:
   - did what I did/said work?
   - would I do/say that again?
   - could I do/say it better?
4. Then you need to answer them honestly, really honestly.
5. Then you need to ask for help if you can't fathom what was happening.

You will need to spend time, perhaps a little at the end of each shift, describing some of the things that have happened that you would like to learn from. This means begin with the action section of the form which follows, and when time permits consider the situation in which it happened and the outcomes of the actions.

The actions may be yours or someone else's you think you can learn from.

What will you Materials

All you need is an exercise book and a pen, and some place where you can think without interruption.

Some Training Organisations will give you a special logbook to keep your journal entries in, just to ensure that it actually happens. Remember these are thinking places, so may not be too neat, but have arrows and little pictures drawn in them to help with the recall and the thinking processes.
A journal page might look like this:

**Situation** - what was happening around me at the time (you might need to shut your eyes to recapture all of this). Don't be surprised if you notice things which you did not notice before - that is the purpose of this exercise!!

**Actions** - who did and said what? Not opinions or feelings, just the facts!

**Outcome** - What was the result of those actions, or what was said. It may help to include something of how this made you feel because that may help you to understand your actions better?

**Reflection:**
Did it work?

Would I do it again?

Could I do it better?

**Further learning:** Other things I need to find out more about:

Signed: Date: Discussed with:
Lets do one as it may look if you filled it in:

**Situation** - what was happening around me at the time (you might need to shut your eyes to recapture all of this). Don't be surprised if you notice things which you did not notice before - that is the purpose of this exercise!!

I was running late for the time I had told Mrs Evans I would be back to do her shower. I knew she had to be at the doctor’s rooms at 10am for her regular check up and she was really fussy about wanting to look her best for the doctor.

**Actions** - who did and said what? Not opinions or feelings, just the facts!

Sharon asked me to help her get Mrs Stokes out of bed. I said I couldn’t and she got mad at me and said that she had helped me with the ones I had to get up earlier. I said that wasn’t fair and went away to see to Mrs Evans.

**Outcome** - What was the result of those actions, or what was said. It may help to include something of how this made you feel because that may help you to understand your actions better?

I felt really bad that she was mad at me. There were plenty of other people she could have asked. I think I was not very chatty with Mrs Evans while I helped her shower and dress, and probably added to the nervousness she feels whenever she has to go to the doctor.

**Reflection:**

Did it work? It got me into Mrs Evans’ room to do what I had to do, but I was not very attentive and it spoiled my relationship with Sharon.

Would I do it again? Probably, unless I plan better next time.

Could I do it better? Yes. I think it would be good to compare time frames with the person doing this end with me and make sure that we are able to help one another wherever possible - I don't like misunderstandings - I will have to talk to Sharon.

**Further learning:** Other things I need to find out more about:

Ask the others how they coordinate with one another, maybe put a sheet on the desk to identify when people want to be ready by, it might help us work together better.

Signed: J. Jones  Date: 22.08.98  Discussed with: Sharon and Sister Allerdice