



## EXPERIENTIAL REFLECTION

### OVERVIEW

This workshop serves as a time for a group to engage in conversation and reflection about a shared experience through a series of self-reflection prompts. The workshop begins with an overview of Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle, then uses that as a tool for guiding the reflection on the shared experience.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

Participants will:

- Describe in detail the engaged learning experience which they have completed
- Explain the personal significance of the experience
- Connect the experience to other interests they have
- Relate their learning to what they will do in the future

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- Laptop/computer
- Projector screen
- "Experiential Reflection" PowerPoint

### NOTES:

The facilitation instructions in this guide are organized by slide number. The order of the questions is intentionally designed to guide students through a meaningful reflection built around Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle. Some of the language used is intentionally vague; you can replace the term "engaged learning experience" with a specific reference to the shared experience of the group for whom you are facilitating this workshop.

When facilitating, feel free to ask follow up questions and let the conversation happen naturally, but keep in mind the direction of the questions and try to keep students focused on the questions at hand. While this workshop is designed to take approximately 2 hours, you may choose to dedicate more time to this process.

### INSTRUCTIONS:

#### Overview (10 min.)

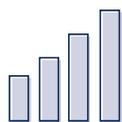
- (Slide 2) Review the agenda for the workshop. Share that everyone is expected to participate and reflect openly and honestly about their shared experience. Instruct participants that the goals for the workshop are to spend time reflecting on a shared experience, consider what you learned, and what lessons you can apply to your future.
- (Slide 3) Share that in order to get started with this workshop everyone needs to think of one of their proudest moments. Give them a brief moment to do so, and ask 1-2 people to share.

#### TIME



120 minutes

#### SIZE



Ideal for groups  
of 3-15

#### RISK



Medium, due to  
deep discussion

#### CAUTIONS



Personal sharing  
required

**INSTRUCTIONS, Continued:**

- *Note: Slide 3 serves as an introduction and allows the participants to begin the workshop with a positive memory.*
- (Slide 4) Share that learning is a process that turns our experiences into knowledge. Learning is cyclical and changing constantly. Engaging in reflection on important experiences is required to really understand what happened and what you can conclude as a result of your experience. Learning and reflection involves all of our senses and deep connections that are revealed by engaging intellectually, emotionally, socially, and/or physically with the world around us.
- (Slide 5) Explain that reflection is important because thinking about what you have experienced helps reveal who you are as a person and how you function in different roles and with different groups. This self-awareness is an important step toward becoming a better leader now and in your future. Taking the time to reflect will also help prepare you to articulate this experience in a future interview. Lastly, reflection will set you up to be more successful in future challenges. By thinking about the past, you can internalize the lessons you have learned in order to be even better in the future.
- (Slide 6) Share that reflection takes time and energy. While reflection can occur in many forms, this workshop will use discussion as a way to reflect.

**Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle (10 min.)**

- (Slide 7) *Note: As a facilitator, you will want to familiarize yourself with this model prior to facilitating the workshop.*
- Share the following: One way we can understand learning is by looking at Kolb's Model of Experiential Learning. In 1984, Kolb published his learning styles model and created this model for people to understand cognitive processes. He defines learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience." In just a minute we will practice using the model, which is typically explored in four stages.
  - First is the Concrete Experience. This is where you encounter a new situation or experience.
  - Next is Reflective Observation. This is where you review what has happened and reflect on the experience you just had.
  - Third is the Abstract Conceptualization stage. Here you draw conclusions and figure out what you have learned as a result.
  - And lastly, the fourth stage is Active Experimentation. This is the last stage where you plan and try out what you have learned in a new experience.
- We use this model frequently while engaging in activities, though often we just don't realize we are moving through this process. An easy way to remember how we work through learning from an event that happened is by answering the following questions: "What? So What? Now What?"



### INSTRUCTIONS, Continued:

- Share an example, such as the following: For example, a student completing a semester-long internship running a social media campaign for a company would have their Concrete Experience during the internship.
  - If that student discovered that they had new knowledge of how social media serves as a business tool, that is the Reflective Observation, or “what” stage.
  - The Abstract Conceptualization or “so what” stage involves analyzing the experience and generalizing what happened. The student might realize they are good at engaging people on social media and want to learn more about other organizations’ online presence.
  - In the Active Experimentation or “now what” stage this student might conclude that they can add this skill to their resume and do similar work in a future job, and update their LinkedIn and Facebook profiles accordingly.
  - *Note: If you can adapt this example to be closely related to the shared experiences of your group, feel free to do so. However, you do not want to do the reflecting for the participants—remain vague enough that they will fill in their own details.*

### Practicing Reflection (15 min.)

- Instruct participants to return to their original thought about their proudest moment. Share that they will be practicing using Kolb’s Experiential Learning Cycle as a reflection tool.
- *Note: This section is about the proudest moment, not the shared experience. This should be a quick conversation that helps students understand the learning cycle so they can apply it in detail to their shared experience.*
- (Slide 8) Remind participants that the first step, the Concrete Experience, was when they actually experienced their proudest moment. However, to practice reflection it’s important to recall that experience. Ask 1-2 people to share.
- *Note: Depending on the group size, this activity could be completed in pairs or small groups in order to get all participants talking.*
- (Slide 9) Share that now you are moving on to the Reflective Observation stage, where you review and reflect on the experience. Ask 1-2 people to share their answers to one of the questions.
- (Slide 10) Explain that the third step, Abstract Conceptualization, requires making generalizations and drawing conclusions from the experience. Ask 1-2 people to share their answers to one of the questions.
- (Slide 11) Remind participants that the final step is Active Experimentation, which is applying their learning in a new context. Ask 1-2 people to share their answers to one of the questions.

**INSTRUCTIONS, Continued:****Concrete Experience (15 min.)**

- Tell participants that they are now going to shift into a reflection of the shared experience. The shared experience is the focus of the discussion from this point forward.
- (Slides 12-13) Ask participants to work together to summarize their shared experience. Use Slide 13 to help them flesh out the details. If participants are not coming up with details, ask them some of the following questions:
  - What happened?
  - When? What day(s)?
  - Where?
  - Why was it important?
  - What would a news article say?
- (Slide 14) Ask 2-3 people to share their answers. Ask the group if they agree on the end result, or if they may have different impressions.
- (Slide 15) Give participants a moment to think or write to themselves. Ask 1-2 people to share how they would describe the experience on their resume.
- *Note: This is an important place to be sure that everyone is participating. If there is anyone who has not yet spoken up in the workshop, start the next set of questions by asking "Will someone who hasn't shared yet please answer this question?" If you know the group well enough you may ask a specific person to answer by name if they will not feel overwhelmed.*

**Reflective Observation "What?" (20 min.)**

- Share with the group that it's time to review and reflect on the experience.
- (Slides 16-19) Take a moment to review the question on each slide, one by one. Ask 2-3 people to respond to each question. *Note: There may be some questions in this section that the group will need to spend more time on. Be mindful of any group conflicts or major successes that they will want to focus on, and feel free to have fewer people respond to some questions in order to dedicate time to important moments in the shared experiences.*
- (Slide 20) Review the question on the slide. If group size permits, ask everyone in the group to share their answer to this question in 5 words or fewer so that everyone's greatest contributions can be appreciated in this moment.



### INSTRUCTIONS, Continued:

#### Abstract Conceptualization “So what?” (20 min.)

- Explain to the group that you are moving on to Abstract Conceptualization, a time to analyze and draw conclusions from the experience. Remind the group that everyone should have the chance to participate.
- (Slides 21-24) Take a moment to review the question on each slide. Ask 2-3 people to respond to each question before moving on to the next slide.
- *Note: On Slide 23, encourage the group to stay focused on positive qualities they noticed about others and avoid negative criticism.*

#### Active Experimentation “Now what?” (20 min.)

- Share that you are moving to the final stage, Active Experimentation. Now is the time to think about how you will apply what you have learned in the future.
- (Slides 25-28) Take a moment to review the question on each slide. Ask 2-3 people to respond to each question before moving on to the next slide.
- *Note: If you would like to make Slide 28 an activity, bring one blank card for each participant. Give them the opportunity to write an actual thank you note to someone who was helpful to them. This will require some additional time.*

#### Questions and Wrap-Up (10 min.)

- (Slide 29) Share that this concludes the reflection workshop on the shared experience. Use this time to share any final thoughts that you have as a facilitator and to answer any remaining questions. Participants may also have final thoughts that they wish to share.