

What? So What? Now What? Critical Reflection Model

This is a well-used and successful model to assist you in designing reflection activities. Although you can derive learning from each question, focusing on all three will provide broader insights and keep participants from getting stuck on only the facts or just the feelings.

1. What? (Reporting what happened, objectively). Without judgment or interpretation, participants describe in details the facts and event(s) of the service experience.

Questions include:

What happened?

What did you observe?

What issue is being addressed (or what population is being served)?

What were the results of the project?

What events or “critical incidents” occurred?

What was of particular notice?

How did you feel about that?

Let's hear from someone who had a different reaction?

2. So What? (What did you learn? What difference did the event make?) Participants discuss their feelings, ideas, and analysis of the service experience.

Questions can also be focused on the meaning or importance of the activity to:

- The Participant:

Did you learn a new skill or clarify an interest?

Did you hear, smell, feel anything that surprised you?

What feelings or thoughts seem most strong today?

How is your experience different from what you expected?

What struck you about that? How was that significant?

What impacts the way you view the situation/experience? (What lens are you viewing from?)

What do the critical incidents mean to you?

How did you respond to them?

What did you like/dislike about the experience?

- The Recipient:

Did the “service” empower the recipient to become more self-sufficient?

What did you learn about the people/community that we served?

What might impact the recipient’s views or experience of the project?

- The Community:

What are some of the most pressing needs/issues in the community?

How does this project address those needs?

How, specifically, has the community benefited?

What is the least impact you can imagine for the project?

With unlimited creativity, what is the most impact on the community that you can imagine?

- The Group (group projects):

*In what ways did the group work well together?
What does that suggest to you about the group?
How might the group have accomplished its tasks more effectively?
In what ways did others help you today? (and vice versa)
How were decisions made?
Was everybody's ideas listened to?*

3. Now What? (How will they think or act in the future as a result of this experience?) Participants consider broader implications of the service experience and apply learning. Be aware to strike a balance between realistic, reachable goals and openness to spontaneity and change.

Questions include:

*What seems to be the root causes of the issue/problem addressed?
What kinds of activities are currently taking place in the community related to this project?
What contributes to the success of projects like this?
What hinders success?
What learning occurred for you in this experience?
How can you apply this learning?
What would you like to learn more about related to this project or issue?
What follow-up is needed to address any challenges or difficulties?
What information can you share with your peers or community volunteers?
If you were in charge of the project, what would you do to improve it?
If you could do the project again, what would you do differently?
What would "complete" the service?*

While the “What?, So What?, Now What?” model focuses on group processing and discussion, ideal reflection activities allow the participants to reflect publicly and privately, utilizing a variety of forms of expression.

--B. Jacoby, March, 2019