

Reflection: When, why and how

October 2014 Newsletter



Do you ever feel like you don't have enough time to just sit back and "think?" You're not alone!

Our multi-tasking lives keep us busy — often too busy. When do you get a break? When can you reflect and consider where you are in your life, where you've been and where you're going?

When do you do your best thinking?

The answer is different for everyone.

- Some people have bedtime routines that include winding down with a good book, some calming music or just a little peace and quiet so they can replay their day in their minds.
- Others say they think well while they're working out, walking or doing other types of exercise.
- Still others report they do their best thinking while gardening, shopping, bathing and doing other activities that don't involve much concentration.

How to set aside more time to reflect

It may seem a bit unnatural to set aside thinking time. But it can work. Especially if you have a method. For example:

1. Start a diary or journal. Write in it at bedtime, in the morning — whenever you feel motivated. Try to make it the same time each day if possible.

Many people hesitate to keep a journal because they believe their writings need to be long, profound and grammatically correct. Not so!

It's your journal and it's just for you to read. You can write down phrases, words or anything else that helps document your feelings or thoughts.

Some people keep a "One Sentence Journal," where they enter just one sentence to sum up the events and takeaways of each

day. Even one sentence can help you express and record your thoughts.

2. Ask yourself questions that require self-reflection. Stop in the middle or at the end of each day and ask yourself a few thoughtful questions. For example:

- a. What have I done well today?
- b. What have I done that I'd like to improve on?
- c. What would I like to change in my work or personal life?

Some days you'll find it easier to come up with answers and some days harder. Add or substitute different questions that help you focus on any area of your life you'd like to explore more deeply.

If you get into the habit of asking yourself reflective questions, you'll start to observe your feelings and thoughts during the day before you even get to your reflection time. Why? Because the habit of reflecting helps you become more self-aware all the time.

3. See what happens when you're not trying to think. Many people say they do their best thinking when they're not thinking about anything in particular. Have you ever had a super idea pop into your head when you were busy with something else? Taking your mind "off" something can really free you up to make creative connections that can lead to important thoughts. That's why many famous thinkers and philosophers have been known for spending time in nature or simply away from the hustle bustle of the everyday.

The poet Carl Sandburg wrote, "It is necessary... to go away... to sit on a rock... and ask: Who am I, where have I been, and where am I going?"¹ Make time to find your rock.

¹www.goodreads.com