

Developing Human Services Practitioners: Scaffolding Student Learning in Professional Placements

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND

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- SciShow. (2015). Why have blind spots? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zjTCbL2wbRk>
- Jones, J. (2016). Who are you? Unleash your core values. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=clinvnTgDgY>
- Third Force News. (2015). Why I love my job. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=icu4dNiDqbQ>

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Acknowledgment of Country

The resource developers wish to acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation. We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to the land, culture and community. We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which we live and work, and where the book was written. We acknowledge the cultural diversity of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and pay respect to Elders past, present and future. We celebrate the continuous living cultures of First Nations Australians and acknowledge the important contributions Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have and continue to make in Australian society.

Accessibility disclaimer

We believe that education should be available to everyone, which means supporting the creation of free, open, and accessible educational resources. We are actively committed to increasing the accessibility and usability of the textbooks and resources we produce.

Accessibility features of the web version of this resource

The web version of this resource has been designed with accessibility in mind and incorporates the following features:

- It has been optimised for people who use screen-reader technology
 - all content can be navigated using a keyboard
 - links, headings, and tables are formatted to work with screen readers
 - images have alt tags
- Information is not conveyed by colour alone

Other file formats available

In addition to the web version, this book is available in a number of file formats, including PDF, EPUB (for eReaders), and various editable files. Look for the “Download this book” drop-down menu on the landing page to select the file type you want.

Accessibility improvements

While we strive to ensure that this resource is as accessible and usable as possible, we might not always get it right. We are always looking for ways to make our resources more accessible. If you have problems accessing this resource, please contact us to let us know so we can fix the issue.

Developing human services practitioners: scaffolding student learning in professional placements

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We have no known conflict of interest to disclose.

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Introduction

Professional placements give you as a student, an opportunity to experience through supervised practice, what you have been learning in your course work. Tasks that you may undertake as part of your placement will vary depending on the field of practice, but would include conducting client intake interviews, writing case notes, designing and facilitating community programs and putting together policy submissions. In addition, placements also give you an opportunity to meet, interact with and/or support people who have experienced issues that you have studied. For example, your placement experience may involve supporting people who have experienced or who have been impacted by substance abuse, mental health issues and domestic or family violence. Professional placements are therefore not only a critical part of the Human Services curriculum but also a highly valued experience that significantly contributes to the development of your professional identity and enables you to engage with different practice frameworks and contexts.

Furthermore, it is also important for you to acknowledge the role of agencies and universities in facilitating placement experiences. Students are considered to be guests at an agency while on placement and the decision to host students is a serious one for an agency. Agency stakeholders and in particular supervisors invest significant time and effort in supporting student learning. Similarly, university employees put a lot of work into identifying, securing and maintaining appropriate learning experiences and agency relationships. This behind-the-scenes work is not always apparent, but it is important for you as a student to reflect on the processes that facilitate your individual placement.

This e-resource is aimed at guiding your overall learning and supporting you during your placement. It is important to note that this book is not a textbook. Rather, it is an information resource that will scaffold your learning as you move from the initial stages of your placement to the final few days. Topics covered include those that are immediately relevant to your placement (such as identifying learning activities) as well as hands-on, self-paced activities that will help you reflect on your learnings and develop skills necessary for your career in the human services. It is however also important to note that entire books have been written about the topics that are covered in the resource. Therefore, you will find relevant references and readings are provided throughout. If you are interested in a particular topic you are encouraged to refer to the references and readings during your placement and your future study.

In terms of the e-resource structure, the resource is made up of three modules. The aim is to cover content relevant to the beginning, middle and end of your placement journey. As we work through the modules, we will cover content in the area of learning styles, supervision, values and more.

Further, each module includes topics that you need to Understand, Examine and tasks to Complete. Click on the image below to explore the topics that will be covered in each module.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
<https://usq.pressbooks.pub/humanservicespractitioners/?p=4#h5p-18>

Note: Scholarly literature and practitioners of different disciplines, often use a variety of terms to describe field learning, industry, or placement experiences. This resource recognises and respects the differences but uses the term **placement and/or professional placement/s** for consistency and simplicity.

Resource Best Practices

Here are a couple of helpful hints to using this resource:

- Begin the resource at the *Introduction*.
- Navigate through the resource by clicking on the 'next' topic in the bottom right corner of the screen.
- Complete each topic, then take a break.

There are videos, readings and activities to complete throughout the resource. Each video, activity or reading are marked with the following icons:



A note for USQ students

About the assessment items: The assessment tasks are specific to the Human Services Program at University of Southern Queensland. However, the templates take into account the key elements and can be used to inform other placement experiences. Finally, the activities and tasks may differ depending on whether you are in your first or final placement. Your Course Examiner will be able to advise you further.

As a USQ Student, you are expected to work through this resource during each of your placements and upload the assessment activities to the course Study Desk. You are also encouraged to discuss the topics and associated learning activities with your agency and university supervisors during supervision sessions. Additional resources that are relevant to your placement include the following and you are encouraged to access them to ensure that you are well-prepared.

Before you begin placement, you should also have completed the following tasks:

- **Completed** and **submitted** the Student Declaration on page 2 of the Professional Placement Handbook.
- Accessed and become familiar with InPlace
- Uploaded mandatory documents (Blue Card and Police Check) to InPlace

PART I

MODULE I - FIRST THINGS FIRST

Introduction to Professional Placement

Click on the symbols in the image below to explore what agency supervisors say about students on placement.



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<https://usq.pressbooks.pub/humanservicespractitioners/?p=69#h5p-10>

Image by StartupStockPhotos from Pixabay

Beginning a placement is often accompanied by feelings that span from enthusiasm, nervousness, determination to uncertainty (Gelman & Lloyd, 2008; Hill, Sullivan, Knox, & Schlosser, 2007). Furthermore, students starting placement may find themselves in a variety of scenarios. For example, if this is your first placement, you may be focussed on gaining insight into a particular area of Human Services to determine if it is suitable career choice for you. Alternatively, if this is your final placement, you are likely already aware of practice issues and may be trying out a different Human Services area, or perhaps you may be using the placement to focus on developing in-depth expertise in particular topics.

Many factors can influence your placement experience and type. If your previous placement was a positive one, you would be keen to replicate it. If, however, it was less than satisfactory and you had a steep learning curve, the Course Examiner may set out particular learning tasks for you to engage in. You may also for a myriad of reasons, be repeating your placement. Finally, it is also possible that your first-choice of placement was not allocated to you due to availability and scheduling issues. You may therefore find yourself undertaking placement in an area that you had not previously considered. Some of you may have received recognition of prior learning, and this would be your first and final placement. As such you may be bringing your past experience to a different area of Human Services and are keen to further your skills.

In short, no two placements are alike.

Regardless of what your circumstances are, it is important to note that each placement experience is unique, and the focus should be on learning. It is an opportunity for you to learn about yourself, how you learn and even how you access, produce and use information as a practitioner. ***It is therefore up to you to make the most of the learning opportunity!***

Move to the next page to get started with the first module.

Module 1: First impressions and the supervision context

Click on each of the terms below to learn more about what we will cover in Module 1:



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
<https://usq.pressbooks.pub/humanservicespractitioners/?p=26#h5p-8>

A note for USQ students

Due dates for submitting the Learning Agreement and Learning Plan are noted on your Course Study Desk.

Part 1 of 3: Understand the importance of first impressions



At this stage of your enrolment (depending on when you have accessed this resource), it is possible that you have a pre-placement interview scheduled soon, or have already met one or more agency representatives as part of initial conversations. Some of you may have already started your placement and will be introduced to other colleagues and clients over the next few days. These interactions will contribute to the impression that you make on others and will therefore influence your working relationships.

This is also the time to remember that forming beneficial working relationships as a human services practitioner is not restricted to clients and extends to co-workers and stakeholders as well (Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 2017). Therefore, it is important that you think carefully about the kind of first impression you want to make. This is because first impressions can have lasting effects. In fact, research suggests that a negative first impression is hard to recover from and may persist throughout your placement despite satisfactory performance (Schaller, 2008). Elements such as being professionally dressed and being on time are critical to create a positive first impression (Gamble & Gamble, 2013).

The research conducted for the development of this resource indicated that for Human Services, interpersonal skills are at the heart of building rapport and relationships. Interpersonal skills (or terms such as interactive skills, people skills, face-to-face skills or social skills) refer to one's ability to understand and deal with the social interaction dynamics (Hayes, 2003). Examples include negotiation, effective communication (both verbal and non-verbal), leadership, and training and development skills. People that demonstrate high levels of competence in interpersonal skills tend to work well with other people (including in formal/informal settings as well as team/group settings). You will need to engage these skills from the very first contact at your host organisation to create positive first impressions and develop effective working relationships (Chenoweth & McAuliffe, 2015).

The next part of this resource focusses on *two video-based reflection activities* that will enable you to learn about interpersonal skills required for placement and how these skills enhance your employability now and in the future.



Activity 1.1.1 – Engagement Session with Q&A

First, watch the following video where the Employability Lead of the School of Health and Wellbeing (Ms Lee Kolbe-Masher) and the Program Director of Human Services (Dr Aastha Malhotra) at the University of Southern Queensland talk about the role of interpersonal skills and how students can reflect/develop their own skills.

Consider the following questions as you watch the video:

- Why are interpersonal skills critical for the helping professions? Give at least one example mentioned in the video. Can you think of others?
- Why and how are professional placements a good opportunity to gain insight into your own skills? Give one example of how you may be able to gain more insight into your own skills.
- Lastly, how can you as a student take ownership of your learning?

Note: You will have the opportunity to answer the above questions within this activity and download them for later use. USQ Students are encouraged to download their responses and include them in the Placement Portfolio.

Interpersonal Skills Video – please click to watch.



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<https://usq.pressbooks.pub/humanservicespractitioners/?p=71#h5p-20>



Activity 1.1.2 – Video with Q&A

By now you would have realised that communication is one of the most important aspects of interpersonal skills. The ways in which people communicate however can vary A LOT! This difference is what contributes to communication being deemed effective or ineffective. Take a few minutes to watch the following TED talk by Amy Scott.

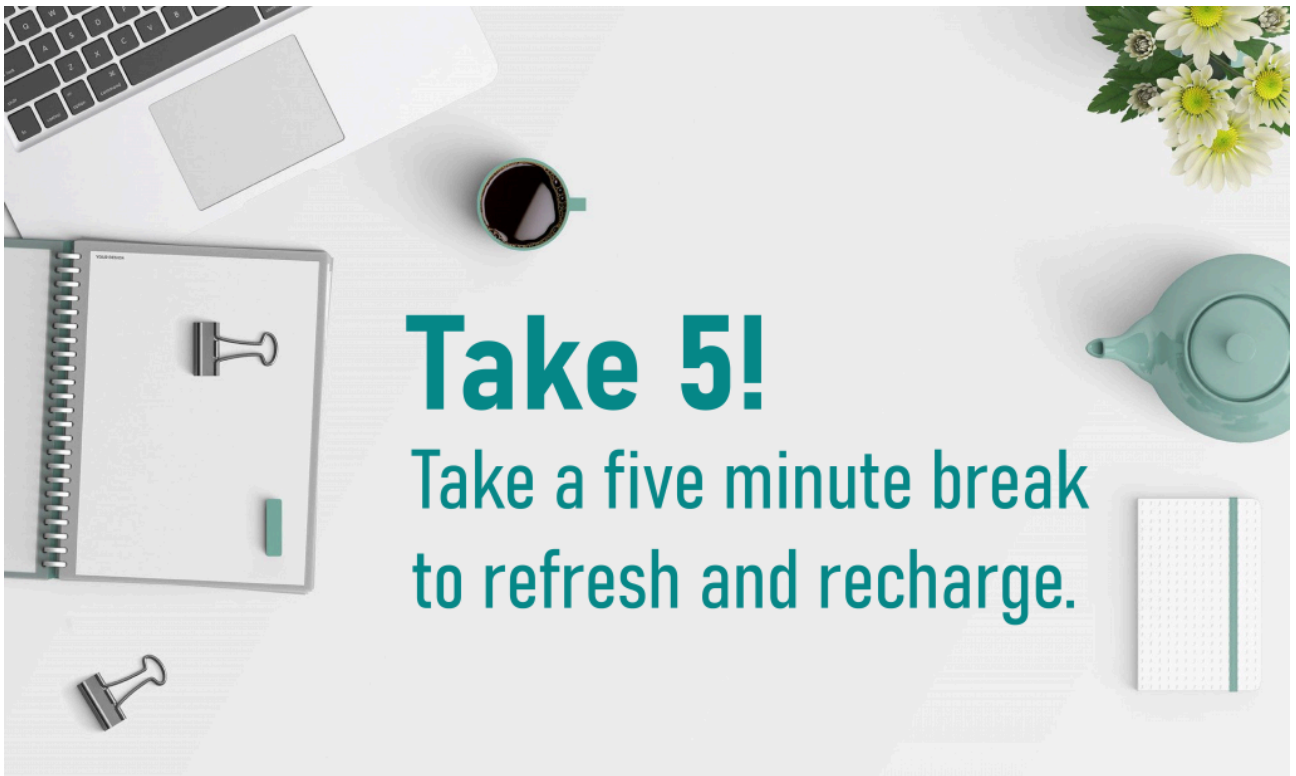
Consider the following questions as you watch the video:

- What is the single biggest illusion about communication mentioned in the video? Do you agree or disagree? Have you ever been caught in this illusion?
- What according to the speaker Amy Scott are the four main ways that people process information? What does this imply for people communicating?
- What does the speaker mean by “getting onto someone’s wavelength”? Why is it relevant for your placement (and future employability)?

Note: You will have the opportunity to answer the above questions within this activity and download them for later use. USQ Students are encouraged to download their responses and include them in the Placement Portfolio.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
<https://usq.pressbooks.pub/humanservicespractitioners/?p=71#h5p-11>



Part 2 of 3: Examine the role of supervision in your practice



We now move onto the topic of supervision. Supervision is an integral part of Human Services practice and is applicable to both students on placement experiences and to experienced practitioners. Constructed as a professional development activity, supervision involves critical reflection that allows current and future practitioners to adapt and to process contextual challenges and tensions that may occur within the workplace (Adamson, 2012; Watts 2018). It is not however about complying with rules and policies (though it can have a managerial and risk-mitigation aspect). Instead, it is aimed at increasing your learning, helping you apply professional skills, knowledge and principles and function effectively in a practical work environment (Bogo, 2015). Supervisors may therefore challenge assumptions, ask critical questions and encourage students (and practitioners) to reflect on their actions and review decisions in order to learn from them. Questions asked during supervision sessions may therefore not always have a right answer, but rather a choice of “best” answer (Beddoe & Davys, 2010, p. 19).

Supervision in a student placement context has a number of parallels with the kind of supervision you will engage in as an employee, but will often have a stronger ‘educational component’. The content and the reading (Activity 1.4) at the end of this learning topic will help you gain insight into the different functions of supervision as well as how to engage with the feedback that is given.

Before we do that however, it is important to be prepared for supervision. This can maximise your time with your supervisor. The research conducted to develop this resource highlighted five student-led actions that supervisors associate with effective supervision experiences. **Click on the image hotspots below** to explore these and think about how you can build these into your placement experience.



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<https://usq.pressbooks.pub/humanservicespractitioners/?p=92#h5p-21>

Image by Gerd Altmann from Pixabay



Activity 1.2.1– Engagement Session with Q&A

Now that you have had an opportunity to think about your actions within the supervision context, the next part of this resource enables you to learn about what to expect in, and how to prepare for supervision sessions. This is through an engagement session that has been put together by Human Services Professional Placement Course Examiners at University of Southern Queensland (Ms Krystal Schaffer and Mr David Steggall). Hear from them about topics such as What is Supervision?, How do you prepare for Supervision?, and How does Supervision differ between students and employees?

Consider these questions while you watch the video:

What is Supervision?

- What are the two approaches that your supervisor may focus on during the supervision sessions? Is there one you prefer? Why?
- Why does Ms Schaffer say that you as the Human Services worker, are the tool for service delivery?
- What does it mean when Mr Steggall talks about External Supervision?

How do you prepare for Supervision? What are the aims of Supervision?

- What does Mr Steggall say about vulnerability during the placement? How does he recommend that you document your experience?
- What kind of record keeping do Mr Steggall and Ms Schaffer encourage students to complete? Why?

What is Supervision on Placement?

- What is the key difference between Supervision while on a placement as compared to being employed in a job?

Note: You will have the opportunity to answer the above questions within this activity and download them for later use. USQ Students are encouraged to download their responses and include them in the Placement Portfolio.





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<https://usq.pressbooks.pub/humanservicespractitioners/?p=92#h5p-17>

Feedback

The last topic in this section focusses on the topic of feedback. The topic of feedback is mentioned in the above video and is one of the most important aspects of your supervision sessions as it can enhance how you learn (Bicen & Laverie, 2009; Markowski, Bower, Essex, & Yearley, 2021). This is because while supervision can have a number of functions, one of the most important ones is that of transformation. This transformation extends beyond the way that you may work with clients to your own personal transformation.

Feedback is one of the tools that facilitates such transformation. Feedback from both your supervisor and peers can help identify gaps in your knowledge base and provides a reference for this to be remedied (Bicen & Laverie, 2009). How you receive this feedback and what you do with it determines how you grow and develop as a professional (Carless & Boud, 2018). Evaluation and feedback from your supervisors and peers is however often complex and subjective (Cleak & Wilson, 2019). This may lead to some feelings of confusion about what is being evaluated and how your competence is being measured. Cleak and Wilson (2019), suggest that your competence is measured in the way you use your knowledge, skills and values to respond to and address various scenarios on placement. Additionally, how you reflect on your practice and plan future responses to situations is also a measure of your competence (Bogo et al., 2013).

During placement, your ability to reflect, respectfully handle conflicting perspectives, continue to participate, express, support and contribute to new ideas is a measure of competence that a supervisor may be looking for (Cleak & Wilson, 2019). However, during a supervision session you may find that you get defensive and upset with a supervisor, particularly if there is a disagreement; or worry about your ability to 'pass' the professional placement; or worse, doubt in your ability to be a Human Services practitioner. Depending on the format and approach of the supervisor you may also end up deconstructing and reconstructing your entire approach to practice (Rankine & Thompson, 2015). Take this time with your supervisor to unpack and reflect on these feelings. While not all feedback needs to be taken 100% onboard, it is important to be able to listen to it in a professional manner, discuss and clarify any details with the supervisor and then work through areas of improvement in a constructive manner. Supervision that involves principles of openness, authenticity, fairness and consistency are of benefit and improve the professional practice of students on placement (Cleak & Wilson, 2019).

Your Course Examiner is always there to help you navigate such conversations so remember to reach out if you have any questions!

We conclude the *Examine* part of this module with a video and reading activity that helps you understand why feedback is important and some of the more effective ways to respond to feedback.



Activity 1.2.2 – Video and Reading Activity with Q&A

In order to be able to engage with feedback, one has to be able to receive it meaningfully. One thing that can hinder the 'receiving' process is individual blind spots. Before we talk about Blind Spots let us do an experiment.

Watch the following video 'Why Do We Have Blindspots?'



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://usq.pressbooks.pub/humanservicespractitioners/?p=92#h5p-24>

Just like a physical blind spot we can also have mental or emotional blind spots. These blind spots can be positive or negative. For example, someone may be blind to their strengths as well as areas of improvement. Within the workplace such blind spots have been linked to stereotyping, lower levels of adaptability and even a lack of awareness about how one's behaviour impacts others (Edmondson and Dimmock, 2020; Banaji and Greenwald, 2013). The above insights are important because you may be going into your placement without being aware of your blind spot. This lack of awareness can then be linked to your inability to engage with feedback, particularly if it is constructive or challenges your existing views.

Consider the following questions before we continue:

- How does the concept of blind spots resonate with you?
- Have you ever had an experience where you assumed something that was later found to be inaccurate or perhaps you (unintentionally) missed something? In what ways might your blind spot have been at work?
- How might your blind spot impact your learning at your professional placement?

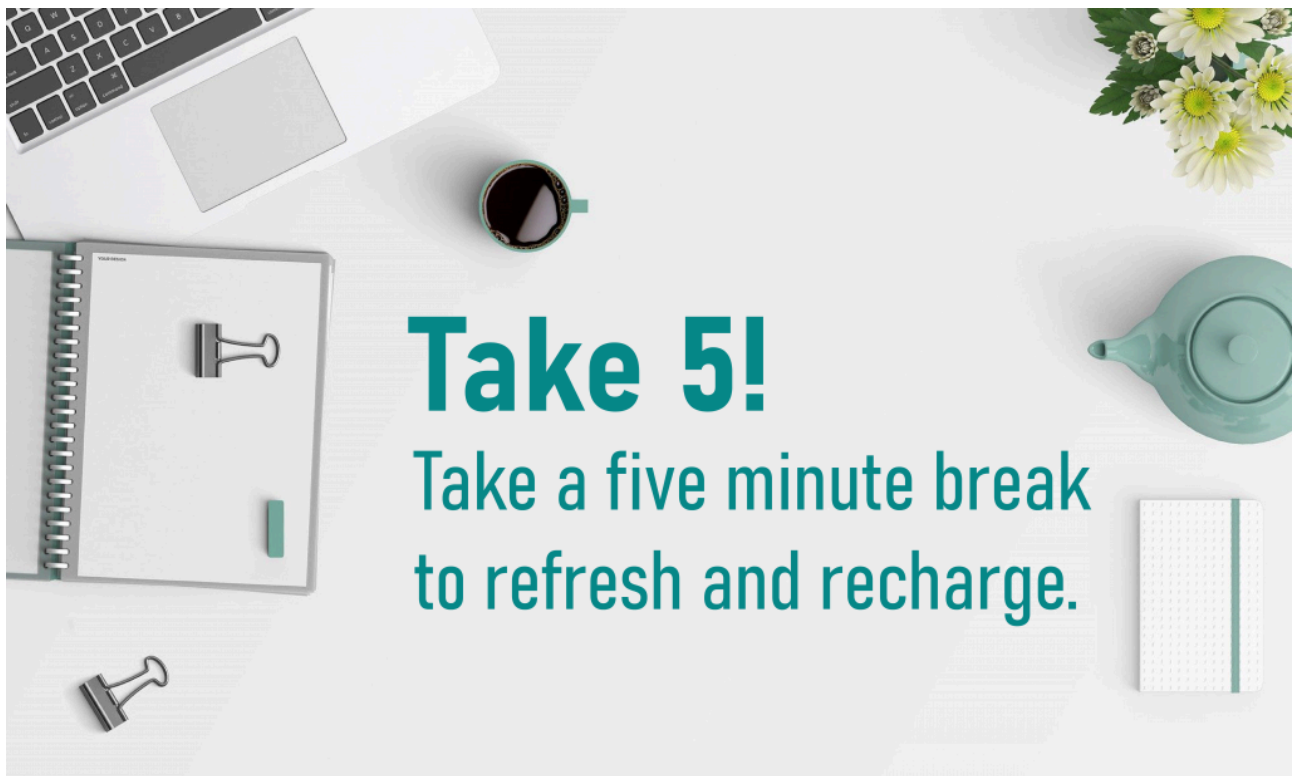
The article 'The right way to respond to negative feedback', published in the Harvard Business Review, gives you tools to reduce the impact of your blind posts and instead "hear critical feedback ...intentionally mine it for insight" (Eurich, 2018, p. 1). Consider the following questions as you read the article:

- What does the author say about reacting to feedback? Why?
- How can negative feedback, according to the author, be used to reset a relationship?
- Do you agree? What might be some of the barriers to the process of resetting an experience?

Note: You will have the opportunity to answer the above questions within this activity and download them for later use. USQ Students are encouraged to download their responses and include them in the Placement Portfolio.



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<https://usq.pressbooks.pub/humanservicespractitioners/?p=92#h5p-13>



Part 3 of 3: Complete the Learning Agreement and Learning Plan in consultation with your supervisor (continued)



The last part of this module focusses on some of the assessable documentation that may be required as part of your professional placement. While institutions do not have a universal model for learning on placement and adopt different formats, most academic courses require a learning agreement right at the beginning. The purpose of the agreement is to account for student learning goals, academic requirements and agency contexts. It is therefore a type of contract between you and your host agency. The *Learning Agreement* is then built upon in more detail through additional documentation in your *Learning Plan*.

Activity 1.3.1 – Preparing the Learning Agreement


In terms of what to include in a Learning Agreement, initial goals can be identified by you and through your studies. However, completing your Learning Agreement will require consultation with your agency supervisor. During this consultation, your agency supervisor may also suggest additional goals. The learning agreement should also reflect content that is aligned with your stage of study. For example, the first placement Learning Agreement is more developmental in nature with clear directive tasks. The final placement Learning Agreement can be more complex and allow some autonomy in terms of outcomes and process.

It is also important to realise that there is no single correct answer in a Learning Agreement and no two Learning Agreements will be the same.



Learning Agreements are always specific to the learning needs of an individual student and their agency's context. Think carefully and strategically about what you would like to include in your Learning Agreement. Work through the following activity (consisting of three questions) to help you prepare for your Learning Agreement meeting:



 An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
<https://usq.pressbooks.pub/humanservicespractitioners/?p=190#h5p-16>

Additional resource

A sample learning agreement template is provided under Appendix A.

Activity 1.3.2 Developing your Learning Plan

ACTIVITY



Your second task is your Learning Plan. This is where you start adding details to what you agreed to with your supervisor and aligning it with the attributes that you require as a practitioner. For Human Services study, these attributes are identified by the accrediting body The Australian Community Workers Association. The Learning Plan brings together the attributes and links them to specific tasks and activities. As with the Learning Agreement, there are no right or wrong answers. It is however important for you to identify what you will ‘actually do’ while on your placement in consultation with your supervisor. These tasks and activities will then be the basis for your supervision sessions and enable you to receive feedback. Some examples to help you get started are below but add to these in consultation with your supervisor in the first few days of your placement.

Additional resource

A sample learning plan template is provided under Appendix A.

A note for USQ students

Due dates for submitting the Learning Agreement and Learning Plan are noted on your Course Study Desk.

Coffee Break

Take a short break, perhaps
get a cup of tea or coffee and
we will get started again!



PART II

MODULE 2

Module 2: Vulnerability at work, Learning Styles and your Professional Identity

Click on each of the terms below to learn more about what we will cover in Module 2:



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
<https://usq.pressbooks.pub/humanservicespractitioners/?p=304#h5p-25>

A note for USQ students

Due dates for submitting the Interim Report and booking your Placement Review meeting are noted on your Course Study Desk.

Part 1 of 3: Understand the importance of vulnerability in professional practice



Building on the topic of supervision and receiving feedback covered in the previous module, let us now move onto the topic of learning. As a student, learning is key to your development. It is possibly also the reason why you decided to study in the first place! Learning can however also be very challenging. New concepts, new content, new information and even new people – it is therefore no doubt that the words ‘a steep learning curve’ are often associated with learning!

The research conducted to develop this resource indicated that one key aspect of learning was vulnerability (Mr Steggall also mentioned vulnerability in the previous learning topic when talking about supervision). ***That is, supervisors found that students who were willing to remain open-minded, were willing to ask questions and listen to the answers, who were willing to be challenged (even if they had been working in the field for a long time) and were willing to be honest about what concepts/tasks they were struggling with had a more positive placement experience.*** This is not surprising.

Dr. Brené Brown, a leading academic who is not only very well known for her research on vulnerability but is also the author of *Daring Greatly* (#1 New York Times Bestseller). In this work, she notes that vulnerability opens us up to pain and tragedy, but also to love, joy, and connection. It is therefore closely linked to learning. In fact, Dr Brown says that learning itself is inherently vulnerable as it pushes us to leave our comfort zones, and learn in a more personal, intentional way. She argues that a good way to learn is to embrace failures as opportunities for learning and growth. It is however important to note that being vulnerable is not the same as ‘spilling your guts’ or ‘working your issues out’. A placement agency or even a workplace is most often not the place for that. Instead, it is an opportunity to share your emotions and experiences, to communicate your ideas, your views and to build meaningful connections. As Brown says, “vulnerability minus boundaries is not vulnerability”.

Within the helping professions, vulnerability has been linked to higher levels of active listening, empathy and non-judgment. For example, research by Blakemore and Aglilias (2019) sought to understand student engagement with concepts of vulnerability, their own self-awareness and professional development. They found that many students identified strongly with themes that focussed on having an “armour” (or the behaviours and tactics people use to protect themselves). In particular, students recognised that they protected themselves from particular experiences (p. 27). Factors that contributed to “armouring” ranged from personal fears to external factors, with the former being more prevalent. Examples included fear of judgement, lack of confidence, fear of not being good enough, and fear of not fitting in.

“I recognise how I have protected myself for many years by putting on my “armour” and moving through life. ...trying to be strong, and not allowing any signs of weakness or vulnerability. Fear has been a defining factor in my struggles for self-acceptance. I fear failure, I fear insecurity, and I fear rejection” (Blakemore & Agllias, 2018 p. 27).

An example of an external factor included being hurt in previous relationships or environments.

“I have been ridiculed for my height, weight, and not wearing makeup....Opinions of others have made self-awareness for me most challenging” (Blakemore & Agllias, 2018, p. 28).

Whatever the reason, it is important to note that most people experience vulnerability and have barriers to sharing their vulnerabilities.

“This week’s topic of vulnerability and self-awareness was a really challenging one for me, as I identify my unwillingness to be vulnerable as one of my biggest flaws.... It took a lot of effort for me to dig a little deeper and identify the reasons why I don’t like being vulnerable.” (Blakemore & Agllias, 2018, p. 26).

Given that from a professional practice perspective, avoiding vulnerability and therefore reducing self-awareness can mitigate the ability to connect and learn (Blakemore & Agllias, 2018), being aware and addressing it can be a valuable exercise.



Activity 2.1.1 – Video with Q&A

The next part of this resource focusses on a video-based reflection learning activity where Dr Brown talks about the power of vulnerability.

***Discomfort/Trigger warning:** The following video contains content about feelings of shame, vulnerability, and sense of self-worth. Some parts of the content may be upsetting or disturbing. Please feel free to stop the video or to take a break. You can also reach out to your Course Examiner for a discussion.

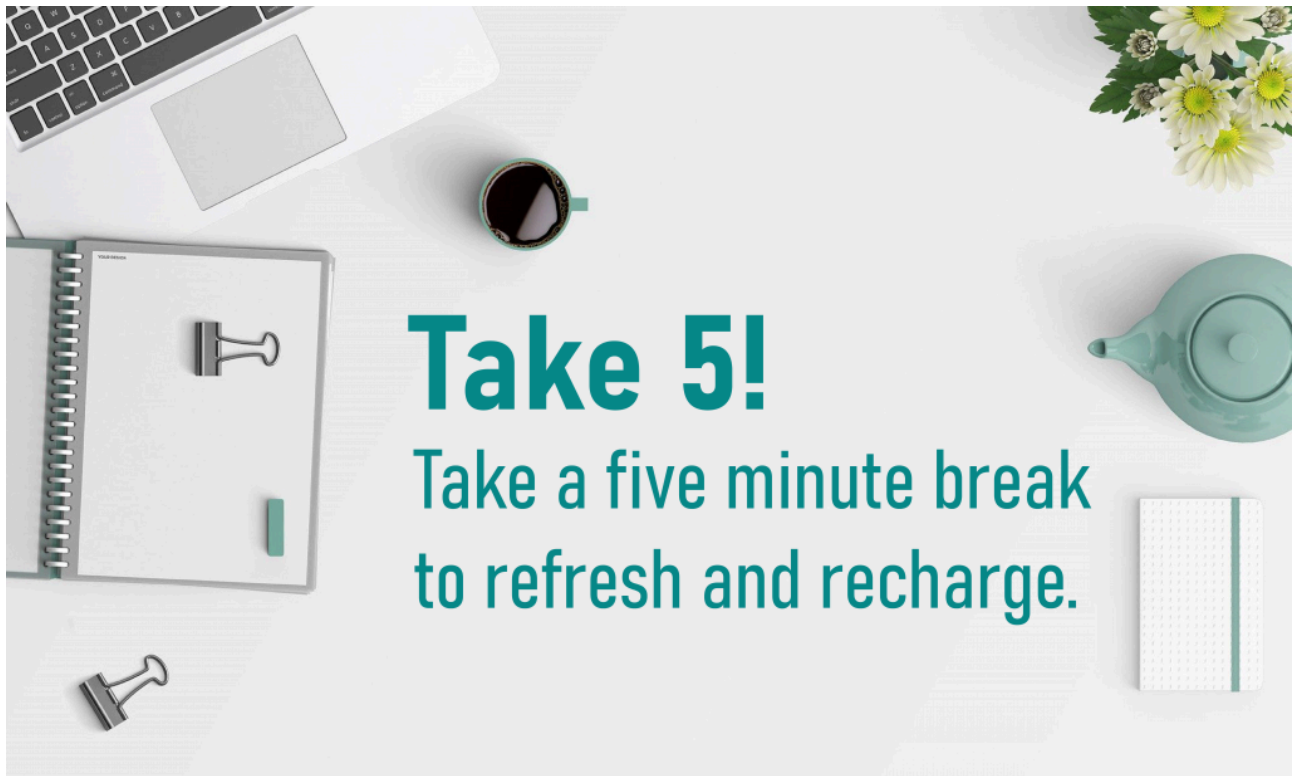
Consider the following questions while you watch the video:

- As per the speaker, what do people who have a sense of self-worth have in common?
- What surprising thing did the speaker find out about vulnerability? How was this different with the 'shame' lens of vulnerability?
- Now take a few minutes to re-define vulnerability. What might make you feel vulnerable in your placement experience? How will you raise this with your supervisor?

Note: You will have the opportunity to answer the above questions within the activity and download them for later use. USQ Students are encouraged to download their responses and include them in the Placement Portfolio.



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<https://usq.pressbooks.pub/humanservicespractitioners/?p=210#h5p-15>



Part 2 of 3: Examine your own learning style/s and reflect on what it means for your professional identity



Building on the previous topic, we now move onto the topic of learning styles. Given that the professional placement is primarily focussed on learning, gaining insight into how you learn and process knowledge is an important part of your development. Using principles grounded in education, sociology and psychology, learning processes are commonly known as learning styles. Investigations about learning have uncovered how individuals prefer to learn and how the brain adapts to learn new information (Bogo, 2015; Graf, Viola, Leo, & Kinshuk, 2007). Decades of research has produced many different arguments, interpretations and models to explain various learning styles. However, what can be agreed on is we all have different ways that we prefer to learn (Graf et al., 2007). There is no one right, wrong, best or worst style of learning. Each has positives and negatives. Understanding these brings an awareness of individual strengths and weaknesses. Knowing more about one's strengths and weaknesses can be useful in making decisions about the future. For example, in planning and choosing an education pathway, work experience and even a future career (Sener & Çokçaliskan, 2018).

Key theories and approaches

While understanding one's preferred learning style is an important factor in reaching one's full potential, in terms of this module and resource, it has implications for what kind of learning activities you would like to prioritise during your professional placement. It can also help you understand how you accept and process feedback and how you would handle conflict in practice. To accommodate a learning style, it first needs to be identified. However, it is important to understand there are many models and these often dictate the language around learning styles. As you can imagine this can complicate identifying a learning style (Labib, Canós, & Penadés, 2017).



Activity 2.2.1– Points to ponder about learning styles

Take a few minutes to look at a few commonly used learning models before moving onto the next topic where you examine your own learning style.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
<https://usq.pressbooks.pub/humanservicespractitioners/?p=544#h5p-7>

For the purposes of this module, we will use the VARK model as a self-assessment tool. This is because the resources for this model are the most accessible to students learning online. Remember that identifying your own learning style is not about putting yourself in a box. Instead, it is to help you understand what works best for you in a particular situation, why being comfortable with more than one style can help improve adaptability and what that means for your professional placement experience!

The VARK model

The VARK learning styles model suggests that people predominantly identify with one of four learning styles: 1) Visual, 2) Aural, 3) Read/Write, and 4) Kinesthetic. However, it is important to note that as people progress in their education and career, their learning style may change to become more balanced across the various styles (Jones, Reichard, & Mokhtari, 2010; Mangold, Kunze, Quinonez, Taylor, & Tenison, 2018). The visual style prefers varying formats that include graphs, charts, diagrams, maps, engaging layouts and plans. However, this style does not include videos and pictures. Learning is not visual simply because knowledge is being delivered using a screen. The Aural learner prefers listening, discussing, talking, questioning and recalling. A Read/Write learner has a preference for printed words. These can be in the forms of lists, notes and handouts. The Kinesthetic learner uses their senses, practical exercises, examples, case studies and trial and error approaches. They link experiences with information to help them learn (VARK Learning Limited., 2021).

Activity 2.2.2 – Self-Assessment and reflective exercise

The next part of this resource enables you to identify your own learning style. Take a few minutes to complete the quiz. You will need this for the next part of the module.

At this stage you should have identified your preferred learning style. Consider the following questions before you continue:

- Do you have one learning style or more? What are some of the situations where your learning style may vary? Why?
- Can learning styles change? What factors may contribute to this?
- Think of a time where you may have used a learning style to examine or explore a topic. How might that experience help your placement?





Activity 2.2.3 – Points to Ponder about learning strategies

Now take the next few minutes to familiarise yourself with the various learning strategies relevant to each learning style.



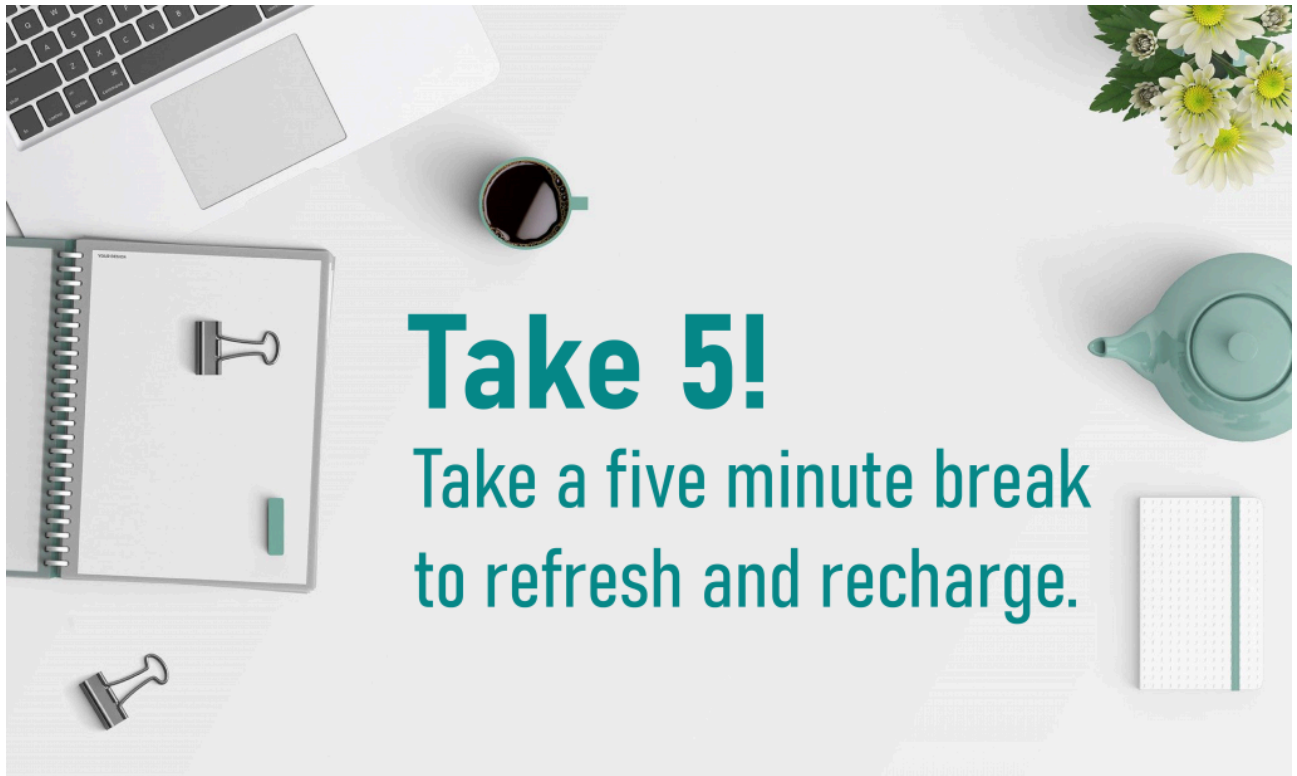
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<https://usq.pressbooks.pub/humanservicespractitioners/?p=544#h5p-19>

A Caveat: Regardless of how well a person understands their learning style and the activities necessary to achieve their potential, a complete and personalised match between learning style and learning activities may not always be possible (Blaschke, 2018). Additionally, it may be difficult for someone to identify or know about the various resources available for learning (Deschênes, 2020). When these difficulties occur, it is helpful to know that learning can also be an integrative experience. Trialling various learning environments and using a range of learning styles can increase capacity and equip you with the skills necessary for the workforce. Doing this well requires collaboration, effective communication, creativity and critical thinking (Blaschke, 2018).

With this in mind, if you are on your first placement you may be only beginning to understand your personal learning style and may benefit from high levels of collaboration and communication with your supervisor to establish learning activities that focus on your strengths and build confidence.

You are encouraged to use the insights from the above activities to inform the conversations around appropriate learning activities at your placement. Research shows that students whose learning environment is suited to their learning style may experience greater academic success and graduate, and be better able to meet the demands of their chosen discipline (Hawk & Shah, 2007; Jones et al., 2010). Do however keep in mind that participating in learning activities that compliment your learning style while on placement must also consider the professional context and the resources available in a host organisation.

We now come to the end of the **Examine** part of this module. The next section focusses on bringing what we have covered together in the form of the first two pieces of documentation (or assessments if you are a USQ student).



Part 3 of 3: Complete the Interim Report and prepare for your Placement Review



COMPLETE

The last part of this module focusses on some of the assessable documentation that may be required as part of your professional placement. While institutions do not have a universal model for learning on placement and adopt different formats, most academic courses require an interim report towards the halfway mark, as well as a meeting with all stakeholders.

A sample of questions that may guide a review meeting are provided under Appendix A.

A note for USQ students

Due dates for submitting the Interim report are available on your course Study Desk.

Coffee Break

Take a short break, perhaps get a cup of tea or coffee and we will get started again!



PART III
MODULE 3

Module 3: Values and Practice Frameworks

Click on each of the terms below to learn more about what we will cover in Module 3:



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<https://usq.pressbooks.pub/humanservicespractitioners/?p=322#h5p-26>

A note for USQ students

Due dates for submitting the Final Report are available on the course Study Desk.

Part 1 of 3: Understand the importance of values and how they shape Practice Frameworks in individual and organisational contexts



Defining the term 'values' can be complex but it is widely agreed that they are representative of what are one's deep-seated beliefs about what is right or wrong and what is important or unimportant. Some even consider them to be principles or qualities that demonstrate what people care about and that our values shape our behaviour. Once some 'values' are identified, people also begin to use them as a point of reference to understand, direct and justify decision-making as well as of course, judge the decision-making of others. While there are a number of value categories, the ones relevant to your professional placement and overall practice include Personal (or Individual) Values and Organisational Values. We will now look at each category in more depth.

Personal Values

The first category focusses on personal values, which are deemed to be the guiding principles in our lives. They determine priorities and influence our emotions and behaviours (Arieli et al., 2019; Reeve, 2009). Values develop and change rapidly during childhood and become more consistent and stable in adulthood (Reeve, 2009). They also shape our vocational interests and influence the work we choose to engage in (Schwartz, 1992). In many situations, they also provide us with a source of motivation. When we feel a misalignment between our current situation and a valued situation, we are often motivated to take action and create alignment between our values and the situation (Arieli et al., 2019; Reeve, 2009). The influence of our values is felt across all contexts- including professional placement (Arieli et al., 2019).

As a student, having insight into your own values and how you might articulate them is important as they shape your practice and how you work with clients and colleagues. One way that values shape your practice is that in contributing to your personal practice frameworks. While not widely discussed in Human Services yet, practice frameworks are well-established in related fields such as Social Work and Counselling. Their value is increasingly being recognised within Human Services and you may find that your agency supervisor talks to you about developing your practice framework or may even share their own.

In simple words, practice frameworks refer to the combination of formal knowledge and skills and informal knowledge and skills developed by helping professionals in practice (McGregor, 2019). Starting a practice framework requires one to really think carefully about one's values and beliefs (Chenoweth & McAuliffe, 2015). These become principles that guide everything that one does. These values are then fused with formal theoretical and substantive knowledge as well as tacit or difficult to articulate knowledge that is built up through experience (Chenoweth & McAuliffe, 2015). Practice frameworks are not static or generalised and usually evolve over time through practice experiences. The framework may also be set of principles that one may adapt depending on the context (Kaplan & Andersen, 2013). For example, you may believe strongly in the value of empowerment and use a

strengths-based framework when working with clients. You would however apply your skills and knowledge very differently when working with an at-risk elderly individual than say a disengaged refugee youth (Connolly, 2007).

Activity 3.1.1 – Points to Ponder about values within a placement context

Conversations undertaken with agency supervisors to guide the creation of this resource, revealed that supervisors deem a number of characteristics as core to student learning. These characteristics are linked to widely recognised values and some agency supervisors even suggested that these values can be the difference between a successful and an unsuccessful placement.

Click on the images below to learn more about what the top five characteristics (and values) identified by the agency supervisors and how they are visible.



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<https://usq.pressbooks.pub/humanservicespractitioners/?p=324#h5p-27>

Organisational Values

Values are essential and significant to everyone; however, they are also vital to organisational functioning (Bourne & Jenkins, 2013). The second category therefore focusses on organisational values. These values may be relevant to your placement agency or even your place of employment as you progress in your career. Usually expressed as a mission and/or vision statement (for example, 'we believe in equality'), values guide how organisations work in practice. For example, organisational values guide strategic plans and professional practice and may influence all levels of management and the workforce. As with personal values that influence personal practice frameworks, an important area where organisational values play a very BIG role are Organisational Practice Frameworks. While some organisations may have an explicit Practice Framework (we will see one at the end of this section) others may simply have a set of statements around organisational culture and functioning. In either case, values shape organisational practice.

Before we move onto looking at an example of a practice framework in the organisational context, let us spend a few minutes focussing on the organisation itself. As you would have gathered by now, a Human Services student or practitioner (and for that matter any student or practitioner) operates within an organisational context. This context differs depending on the size and structure of the organisation. For example, a large bureaucratic setting will offer a very different placement experience from a small voluntary agency. Given that Human Services students may find themselves in contexts that range from government agencies at the federal, state or local level to non-government organisations, community organisations or church-based organisations to name a few. It is important for you to take time and develop a basic picture of your particular context. Many agencies will get you started on this as part of the orientation, but you are also encouraged to explore the organisation's functioning and of course the organisation's implicit or explicit practice framework. These insights will help you gain nuanced and in-depth knowledge about the realities of service delivery and help you adjust your expectations of your placement experience and professional journey.

Some ideas and questions to guide your exploratory activities are given in the image below (you should however always discuss these with your agency supervisor to determine appropriateness and feasibility in your agency's context). **Click on the hotspots in the image below.**



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<https://usq.pressbooks.pub/humanservicespractitioners/?p=324#h5p-28>

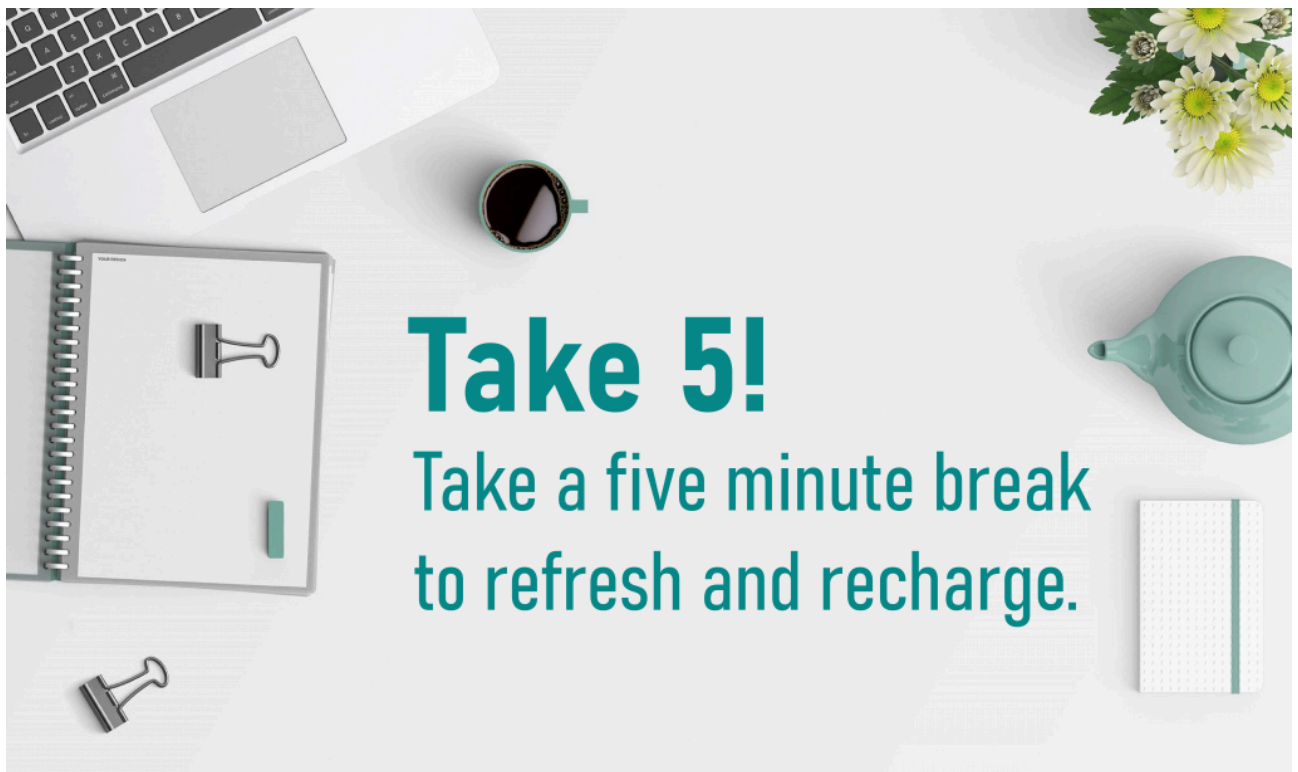


Now that you have started to think about the organisational aspect of being a Human Services practitioners, review the following example of an organisational practice framework.



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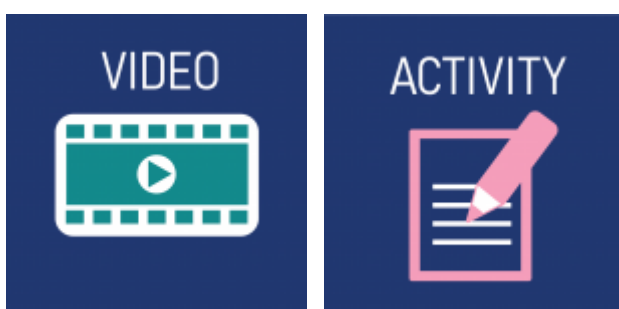
Part 2 of 3: Examine your own values and explore what happens when values conflict



Self-awareness is integral to the development of the professional self within helping professions such as human services (Chinnery & Beddoe, 2011; Richards, Campenni, & Muse-Burke, 2010). It has been noted as an influencing factor for relationship building or engagement (Reupert, 2009); managing anxiety (Bogo, 2017); boundary setting (Urdang, 2010); ethical decision-making (Bartkeviciene, 2014) and even dealing with stress and preventing burnout (Urdang, 2010), a topic that we will cover at the end of this section.

While there is no universal definition of self-awareness, knowledge of your own values and how they manifest in your professional identity is one part of self-awareness. You may have spoken about your values with your agency supervisor in your placement interviews. Reflect on the answers you gave. Did you feel confident that you knew and understood your values? If not, this question may come up in supervision while you are on placement. Will you be confident answering these questions? Additionally, how often do you reflect on your values?

The following exercises will help you gain insight into why knowing your values is important for your personal development and professional identity as well as identify your values.



Activity 3.2.1 Exploring core values and a reflective exercise

Watch the following video where Jennifer Jones talks about how identifying our core values can be the key to a more fulfilling life and then undertake an exercise to help you explore your core values through the following link:



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<https://usq.pressbooks.pub/humanservicespractitioners/?p=278#h5p-30>



Activity 3.2.2 – Self-assessment of values

You are now encouraged to undertake a self-assessment of your values using either of the resources provided below. These resources are free of cost and provide you with useful insight into to our qualities and motivations.

Additional resources

Click on the following links for the readings:

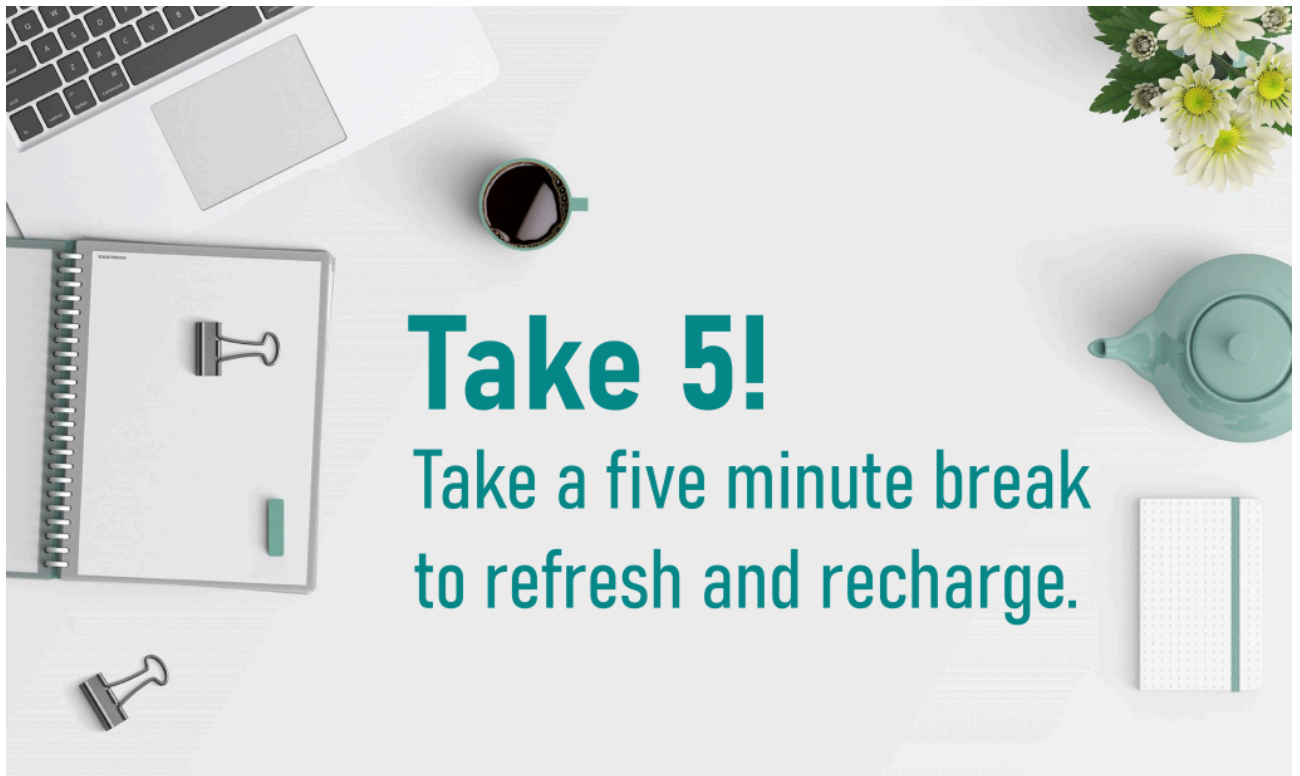
- **Get to Know Your Strengths**
- **Personal Values**



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
<https://usq.pressbooks.pub/humanservicespractitioners/?p=278#h5p-6>

You are also encouraged to review the **Australian Community Workers Association's Ethics and Good Practice Guide** as part of exploring the value and professional standards that underpin the Human Services profession.

Source: Australian Community Workers Association (2017) Australian Community Workers Ethics and Good Practice Guide. Retrieved from <https://www.acwa.org.au/workers/ethicsandstandards/ACWA-Ethics-and-good-practice-guide.pdf>



Part 2 of 3: Examine Values in Practice (contd.)



Please engage with the video activity below.



Activity 3.2.3 – Video Activity with Q&A

Take a few minutes to watch the following two clips where two people from the community sector talk about why they love their jobs.



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<https://usq.pressbooks.pub/humanservicespractitioners/?p=574#h5p-31>



Activity 3.2.4 – Reading with Q&A

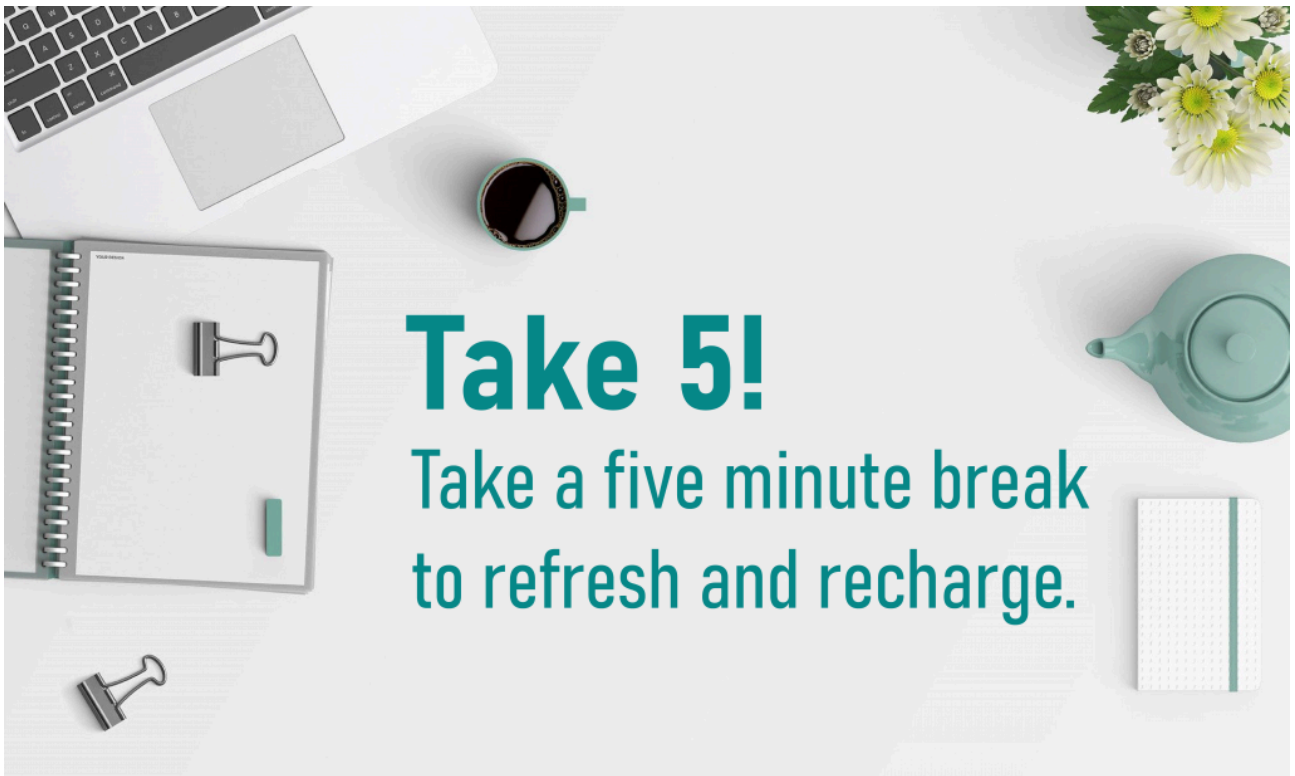
Now that you have become familiar with what are values and what they can look like in practice, let us look at the relationship between organisational and personal values, a dynamic that impacts our behaviours in the workplace (Arieli et al., 2019; Eva, Prajogo, & Cooper, 2017; Peterson & Barreto, 2014).

Get started by reading the following to understand more about the impact of personal values in a professional context.

Additional resource

Reading:

Arieli, S., Sagiv, L., & Roccas, S. (2019). Values at Work: The Impact of Personal Values in Organisations. *Applied Psychology*, 69(2), 230-275. doi:10.1111/apps.12181



Part 2 of 3: Examine Values in Conflict (contd.)



Now that you have a general understanding of values and why they are relevant for your practice, let us look at what happens when values conflict. Despite the importance of shared values and the creation of professional standards, a mismatch of values can still occur. That is, values may conflict. These conflicts can arise owing to a misalignment between personal and organisational values or when one feels that an agency's published values and how those values are demonstrated in reality don't seem to match. Sometimes personal values can be at odds with those of other colleagues (owing to personal views, cultural backgrounds and even religious views).

This is also true for the helping professions where not only practitioners but also students find themselves in circumstances that characterise value incongruity (Comartin & Gonzalez-Prendez, 2011; Osteen, 2011; Valutis & Rubin, 2016). While an in-depth examination of value conflicts is beyond the scope of this resource, and likely to be covered as part of your other studies, it is important to note that it is not uncommon to face such conflicts. This however, does not take away the discomfort that comes with being in such a circumstance. Research shows that incompatibility between values impacts well-being, commitment to an organisation, productivity and motivation at work (Arieli et al., 2019; Finegan, 2000). Reflecting on these incongruencies and employing strategies to manage the consequences is an essential part of being a practitioner.

When a conflict in personal and organisational values occur on placement, it is important to reflect upon them and discuss these with a supervisor. For example, you may feel that your personal values and those of your host agency are at odds. This may cause conflict and stress and impact your performance. Personal reflection and supervision can be helpful to determine whether the feelings of conflict are justified and can help build resilience in new environments (Grant & Kinman, 2012). Reflection and supervision can help you explore ways to be adaptable in new environments while also developing a greater understanding to enable further investigation of the impact of personal values on your practice (Collins, 2008; Grant & Kinman, 2012; Morrison, 2006). This may lead you to challenge some of your current beliefs and values and develop new perspectives about your professional practice (Sagiv, Sverdlik, & Schwarz, 2011; Tompsett et al., 2016). For example, you may find you challenge a previous assumption about the tasks that should be undertaken by a human services professional. In these situations, it is appropriate to discuss these concerns with a placement or university supervisor.

Linked to the above, the last topic that we will cover is that of self-care. Research shows that conflict in the workplace is one of the main contributors to high levels of stress. Within Human Services these factors can also include vicarious traumatization and elevated risks of stress owing to care responsibilities and excessive focus on clients and communities at the cost of personal wellbeing (Tan & Castillo, 2014). All of these factors can result in burnout and compassion fatigue (Figley, 1995). Being less than our best for those we serve, we not only are at risk of not doing our jobs well, but can even put clients and communities at risk.

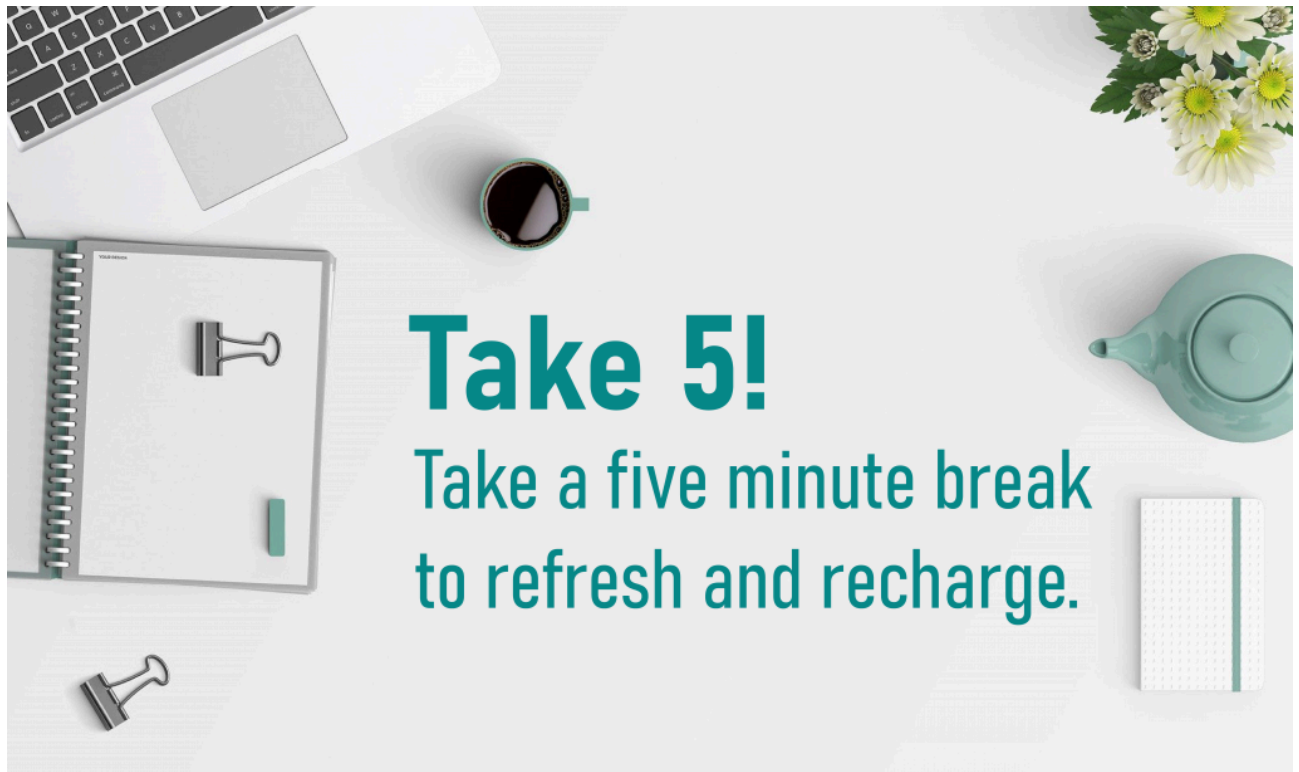
Regardless of the contributing factors, it is important for you as a student and a current or future practitioner to be aware of practice self-care as it is an effective antidote to burnout. It is interesting to note that while self-care in this context is focussed on professional responsibilities, self-care strategies for the professional self and personal self are closely related (Tan & Castillo, 2014). The question then is how to care for the self, and it is certainly easier said than done!

While there are limited comprehensive models for self-care that address the complex needs of the social services or helping professions, there are a number of tools and strategies that you may find useful to add to your toolbox.

You are encouraged to discuss self-care strategies with your supervisor. Two well-recognised resources (one from the industry and one academic) are listed below:

- **Black Dog Institute**
- **Skovholt, T. M., & Trotter-Mathison, M. (2014). *The resilient practitioner: Burnout prevention and self-care strategies for counselors, therapists, teachers, and health professionals*. Routledge.**

You will note that the starting point of many of them is to identify practices that can be integrated into our daily routines in simple but meaningful ways. Such an approach can facilitate a sense of balance and holistic living. We wish you all the very best for the final stages of your placement as well as the next steps of your professional development.



Part 3 of 3: Completing the placement and final reports



The last part of this module and indeed this resource revisits some of the assessable documentation that may be required as part of your professional placement. As noted earlier, while institutions do not have a universal model for learning on placement and adopt different formats, there are some similarities across courses. Most academic courses will therefore require a final report or portfolio that brings together all of the work undertaken during the placement. This will also likely contribute towards your final grade.

A sample final report template is provided under Appendix A.

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Appendix A - Templates

Templates

Please feel free to use the following templates:

- Learning-Plan-Template
- Learning Agreement Template
- Placement Review Template
- Final report

Appendix B - Preparing for your Learning Agreement

I would like to develop my understanding of:
.....
.....
.....

I would like to become familiar with:
.....
.....
.....

I would like to learn more about the following approach/model of working:
.....
.....
.....

Appendix C - List of Values

Accountability	Hard work	Prudence
Acceptance	Health	Punctuality
Agency	Helping	Quality
Assertiveness	Honesty	Recognition
Attention to detail	Honour	Relationships
Balance	Humility	Reliability
Belonging	Humour	Resilience
Boldness	Independence	Resourcefulness
Calmness	Individuality	Restraint
Caring	Ingenuity	Risk-Taking
Collaboration	Inner Harmony	Safety
Commitment	Innovation	Security
Community	Inquisitiveness	Self-Awareness
Compassion	Insightfulness	Self-control
Competitiveness	Integrity	selflessness
Consistency	Intelligence	self-reliance
Control	Intuition	sensitivity
Cooperation	Joy	Service
Creativity	Justice	simplicity
Curiosity	Kindness	Spirituality
Decisiveness	Knowledge	spontaneity
Dependability	Leadership	Stability
Determination	Learning	strategic
Diligence	Legacy	strength
Discipline	Love	structure
Discretion	Loyalty	Success
Diversity	Making a difference	support
Effectiveness	Mastery	teamwork

Efficiency	Motivation	temperance
Empathy	Obedience	Thankfulness
Encouragement	Open-mindedness	thoughtfulness
Enjoyment	Openness	tolerance
Enthusiasm	Optimism	Tradition
Equality	Order	trustworthiness
Excellence	Originality	truth-seeking
Expertise	Passion	Understanding
Faith	Peace	Uniqueness
Family-oriented	Perfection	Unity
Fidelity	Performance	Usefulness
Fitness	Personal Development	Vision
Flexibility	Popularity	Vitality
Friendship	Positivity	Wealth
Fun	Power	Well-being
Generosity	Practicality	Winning
Growth	Preparedness	Wisdom
Happiness	Professionalism	
