

## Book review

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### **Lucas, M. (2023) Creating the Reflective Habit: A Practical Guide for Coaches, Mentors and Leaders, Routledge.**

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This book is about making reflective practice *habitual* rather than sporadic or even rare, as well as being *creative* in that reflection. The play on words brings a smile to my face because I love being creative and I want more of that feeling of joy in my reflective practice. Lucas' premise is that if we can find pleasure and innovation in reflective practice, we are more likely to stick with it, with the outcome that we are more likely to grow as a coach, mentor, leader, human being.

The book brings together 60 reflective practice experiments that cover multiple learning preferences: cognitive, visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, and poetry. We are encouraged to roam around these experiments, choosing those that appeal to us – and those that use a style that is not our usual “go-to”, to see what we can learn in that space, stretching us into new ways of perceiving our work. Lucas names them experiments, inviting us into a playful frame of mind, without right or wrong, a place of discovery and even awe.

Lucas sets the scene with insights and links to the research behind reflective practice, and with non-directive instruction about how to curate our own practice. She reminds us why reflective practice is so crucial to our work, discussing the formative, normative and restorative outcomes of reflective practice. She identifies the different types of reflection: reflection for action (Thompson and Thompson), reflection in action (Schon), reflection on action (Schon) and reflection with action (Ghaye). The author also uses the model *Spiralling the Field* (Lucas & Turner, 2023), which gives an insight into the iterative and cumulative nature of reflection. Over time, we revisit our reflections through a different lens, first seeing the self, then alternative perspectives, then the system, then more complex adaptive systems and finally seeing beyond. This model reflects the maturity of the reflector, bringing them back to the beginner's mindset to experience things in new ways. Reflective practice fits with all other reflective activities and Lucas positions them as interdependent and generative. The spiral enables us to strengthen our reflective muscle.

Lucas also addresses how to set up our reflective practice, including preparing the space, identifying protected time, determining what to reflect on, and deciding which prompts

to work with. Making conscious choices about time, place, and method is a crucial part of creating a reflective habit.

Lucas has road-tested all the exercises included in the book, and she shares how she experienced these in her own practice, including the challenges and the prompts she used to create a consistent rhythm. She also explains how these experiments can be used with supervision and leadership groups.

Each chapter starts with an explanation of the learning preference and a mindfulness practice to get us into a reflective state of mind, calling forth that learning preference. Then she describes each experiment in detail along with any materials we might need, links to external resources, and ideas of how to use them. She encourages us to adapt what she has laid out, for our own purposes. There is a wide range of workouts for the brain, the heart, the gut, and other senses with a chapter on cognitive prompts (often written), visual prompts (pictures and videos), auditory prompts (music and sounds in nature), kinaesthetic prompts (movement and touching), and poetry that stimulates new ways of seeing a situation.

*Creating the Reflective Habit* offers a wealth of knowledge and a range of activities that will be useful to coaches, supervisors, leaders, educators, health and social care practitioners, and anyone who want to develop their capacity for reflection, deepen their understanding and be creative with it.

## References

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