

## **Alison Greggans, Nursing**

### **Barriers to reflection**

The major barriers for students in terms of their reflection I have found, is really where to start, what is it that I should be reflecting on. And that's anything that has an emotion attached to it, so something they have been frightened off, something they have been troubled by, something they feel angry about, because the stories that we have in our heads about what we think has happened, the reason why we have them in our heads is because there is an emotion attached to them and that indicates there is something significant in the story for us to begin to unpick and to unravel. And because there's that emotional attachment students often don't want to go there and sometimes teachers don't necessarily want a lot of emotion on hot topics in a classroom because it can appear to be getting out of control. So that's one of the barriers.

Another barrier is that students don't quite understand the difference between description and analysis. They spend a lot of time talking about their story and telling other people and each other what has happened in terms of salient events without stopping to think about why it happened or why they are thinking of it like that.

Another problem is standing back and being objective and willing to take that challenge because within our stories we've already made assumptions about what is real, what did happen, who was at fault, who wasn't, where they stood in relation to the problem or the solution. So being challenged about their understanding can also be a barrier.

The other thing, particularly for nurses is a problem, is stop rushing to solutions - do this and it will be fine, do this and things will be better, rather than thinking more deeply about what the issues were and have we actually sorted out what went wrong and why and what was our role and responsibility within that. So focussing on a process rather than the product can also be a barrier to reflection.