

Book review

Creating the reflective habit: A practical guide for coaches, mentors and leaders (by Michelle Lucas, 2023, Abingdon: Taylor & Francis)

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I have long held a view and belief that *'active reflection brings about reflective action'* whether as a coach, mentor, coaching supervisor, or leader. Michelle Lucas shares this perspective in her latest work, *Creating the Reflective Habit A Practical Guide for Coaches, Mentors and Leaders*, which draws on a range of approaches to reflective practice from 27 contributors.

The Cambridge Dictionary defines reflection as 'a serious thought or consideration' and Lucas presents 60 opportunities for the reader to apply this to their role and the work that they do. She has taken her honed professional approach and collated separate reflective techniques and approaches into a cohesive whole to transform thinking and experiences of reflective practice. She blends a pragmatic reality of 'do what works for you' with a call to curious experimentation of 'where is your automatic starting point?' and how those in coaching, mentoring or leadership roles might better serve self, clients, and team members by trying something new for a fuller learning experience.

In the Preface, Lucas shares her authentic starting point with the realisation that reflection has a variety of processing styles in service of creating a reflective habit. The library of resources continues to grow for each of five processing styles: Cognitive, Visual, Auditory, Kinaesthetic, and Poetic. As a reflective learner, I have gained much from using a broader range of visual and auditory approaches, and the systematic ringfencing of time to pause.

The opening chapter, *Understanding the Territory* by Hannah Butler, is a blend of support and challenge for a reader looking to create, maintain or enhance a reflective habit. This chapter is an empathetic call to reflective practice as it highlights the benefits identified through the rigour of a range of research to facilitate deliberate choice of processing style.

There is a timely reminder of the possible outcomes of reflective practice. It creates an opportunity to reflect further on an individual and ongoing basis about the changing nature of the learning outcomes from one's active reflection and to ascertain the level of increased awareness on the impact of that reflective action.

The pause boxes, as with the pathways to reflection in the chapters relating to each of the five processing styles, model reflective practice core tenets relating to mindfulness and pacing and potentially dissuades a lighter touch skim or speed reading unless this is more suited to the style of the reader e.g., neurotypical vs neurodivergent readers with their different strengths and stretches. It is reminiscent of active listening: we can listen in time, across time, and through time, to maximise and deepen our attention and presence. Lucas refers to this as meta-reflection and offers an invitation to extend our reflective approach for further systemic learning.

Lucas lays out her route into creating her own bespoke reflective way. The murmuration metaphor effectively reinforces the variety of possibilities into and through the changing nature of novice to proficiency. The language of the Dreyfus model of skill acquisition (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1980) illustrates the journey from novice to fuller understanding. Lucas' consideration questions are even more powerful in their simple depth and deep simplicity to enable the reflective process steps to emerge through each strand of reflective skill acquisition.

The bulk of the book concentrates on each of the five processing styles with a chapter for each one and the 12 prompts contained within. The flow from a general and prompt introduction to moving through the process and completing the pathway for reflection using any suggested templates is logical and well-structured. For me, the most impressive, and newest reflective approach, came in the Auditory Prompts chapter where Lucas introduces the soundscapes and 'soundbaths' and 'binaural beats' terminology. Here Lucas takes us beyond the simple quick fix of play lists to latest thinking from current research and those considered leaders in this field.

The highlights of this book, like Lucas' previous book *101 Coaching Supervision Techniques Approaches Enquiries and Experiments* (Lucas, 2020) include the underlying experimentation foundation – "Use it, ignore it, adapt it ... it is up to you." There is no sense of there is only one way. Lucas backs up the thoughtful set up and systematic lay out of how to start to use the processing materials with authentic storytelling, and an invitation to become more intentional about the interventions we make to reflect on our work, and reflect on our reflections, and evaluate the impact. The inclusion of anecdotes sharing real experiences from Regular Reflective Practice Space sessions ground Lucas' meticulous positioning and exploring stance.

Lucas offers something for everyone and significantly adds to reflective resources.

References

Lucas, M. (Ed.). (2020). *101 coaching supervision techniques, approaches, enquiries and experiments*. London: Routledge.