



## **Portfolio to Go: 1000+ Reflective Writing Prompts and Provocations for Clinical Learners**

Peterkin, Allan D.  
University of Toronto Press, 2016

Book Review

Tags: critical reflection | critically reflective teaching | storytelling

**Reviewed by:** R. Jane Williams, *Moravian Theological Seminary*

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From Dewey (*How We Think* [Boston: D.C. Heath, 1933]) to Schön (*Reflective Practitioner* [New York: Basic 1983]), and most recently Palmer and Zajonc (*The Heart of Higher Education* [New York: Jossey Bass 2010]) and Barbezat and Bush (*Contemplative Practices in Higher Education* [New York: Jossey Bass, 2013]), reflective practice has a long pedagogical history, especially in clinical training. Reflective practice calls for revisiting one's past or present experiences in order to analyze, reconsider, and mine the learning in them for use in the future. Reflective practice is increasingly being employed in higher education along with the use of contemplative practices as a means by which to increase student use of critical thinking skills and embodiment of "competence, compassion, collaboration, and a tolerance for ambiguity in the face of uncertainty" (Peterkin, 3).

*Portfolio to Go* offers a multitude of questions that encourage deep reflection on clinical and personal experiences by students in healthcare training programs. Although some prompts refer specifically to clinical and medical settings (for example, "Describe the hospital corridors at 3 a.m." [80]), most deal with far broader settings ("Write a story about the last time you were yelled at" [42]) and could be used by students in a wide range of disciplines and in classroom or small group settings. Peterkin encourages their use primarily in reflective writing such as journals, critical incident reflections, or stand-alone assignments. He identifies writing as a tool that increases awareness of feelings and thoughts about one's work, but also as a vehicle that deepens critical thinking, enriches ethical insights in complex situations, and encourages development of one's professional identity. Inclusion of reflective writing in student portfolios provides professors or future employers a glimpse of personal and professional learning and identity formation over time. Although Peterkin intends the book for

students, it would be useful as an educator's guide to the inclusion of reflective assignments in clinical courses.

In the opinion of this reviewer, the most valuable parts of this book are the chapters that coach and teach students how reflection and storytelling can maximize professional growth. The chapters include how to critically reflect in one's writing, how to move from reflection to actionable practice, how to form and participate in a reflective writing group, and how to deal with internal criticism. In one chapter, Peterkin differentiates criticism (negative) from critique (positive) by noting that the former finds fault, notes what is missing, and attacks the writer, while the latter identifies strengths, looks for possibilities, and is honest but kind. In the chapter on moving from reflection to action, the author notes simple but profound elements of clinical visits that students often struggle to implement such as asking open-ended questions ("what would you like me to know about you?" or "what is one thing you haven't asked me, yet?"), listening for patient concerns and fears, noticing metaphors in conversation and using them to expand understanding, and being aware of body language (standing, sitting, touching) and how it impacts relationship.

Educators often find assessing reflective writing and discussions difficult because of the personal and vulnerable nature of reflection. Peterkin offers a very useful rubric (118-120) that provides ways by which to measure levels of participation and reflection.

*Portfolios to Go* is a helpful volume for any educator interested in exploring the value of reflective practice and in including reflective assignments in a classroom or clinical training program.

[https://wabashcenter.wabash.edu/resources/book\\_reviews/portfolio-to-go-1000-reflective-writing-prompts-and-provocations-for-clinical-learners/](https://wabashcenter.wabash.edu/resources/book_reviews/portfolio-to-go-1000-reflective-writing-prompts-and-provocations-for-clinical-learners/)