

EXPLORING REFLECTION PRACTICES

Creating Meaning Throughout Your
Pre-Health Journey





KNOWING YOURSELF IS
THE BEGINNING OF ALL
WISDOM

Aristotle

By the end of this presentation, you should be able to:

- Identify similarities and differences between tracking/reporting experiences and reflecting on experiences
- Be aware of a variety of reflection practices
- Understand the benefits of reflection for professional and personal development
- Understand how to use reflection for professional and personal development

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What is reflection?

Reflection in a nutshell

- Ask yourself an open-ended question (can't be answered with "yes" or "no")
- Give yourself time to think
- Answer the question thoroughly, bravely, and without personal judgment

How Does Reflection Differ from Reporting?

Reporting

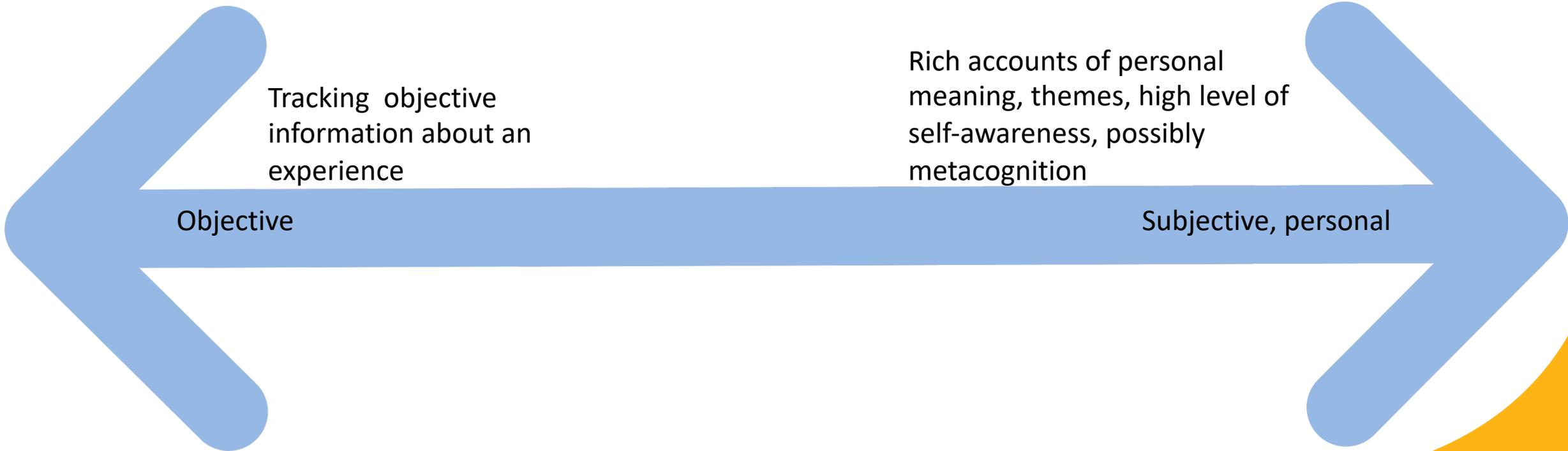
Reflection

Tracking objective
information about an
experience

Rich accounts of personal
meaning, themes, high level of
self-awareness, possibly
metacognition

Objective

Subjective, personal



Reporting Example

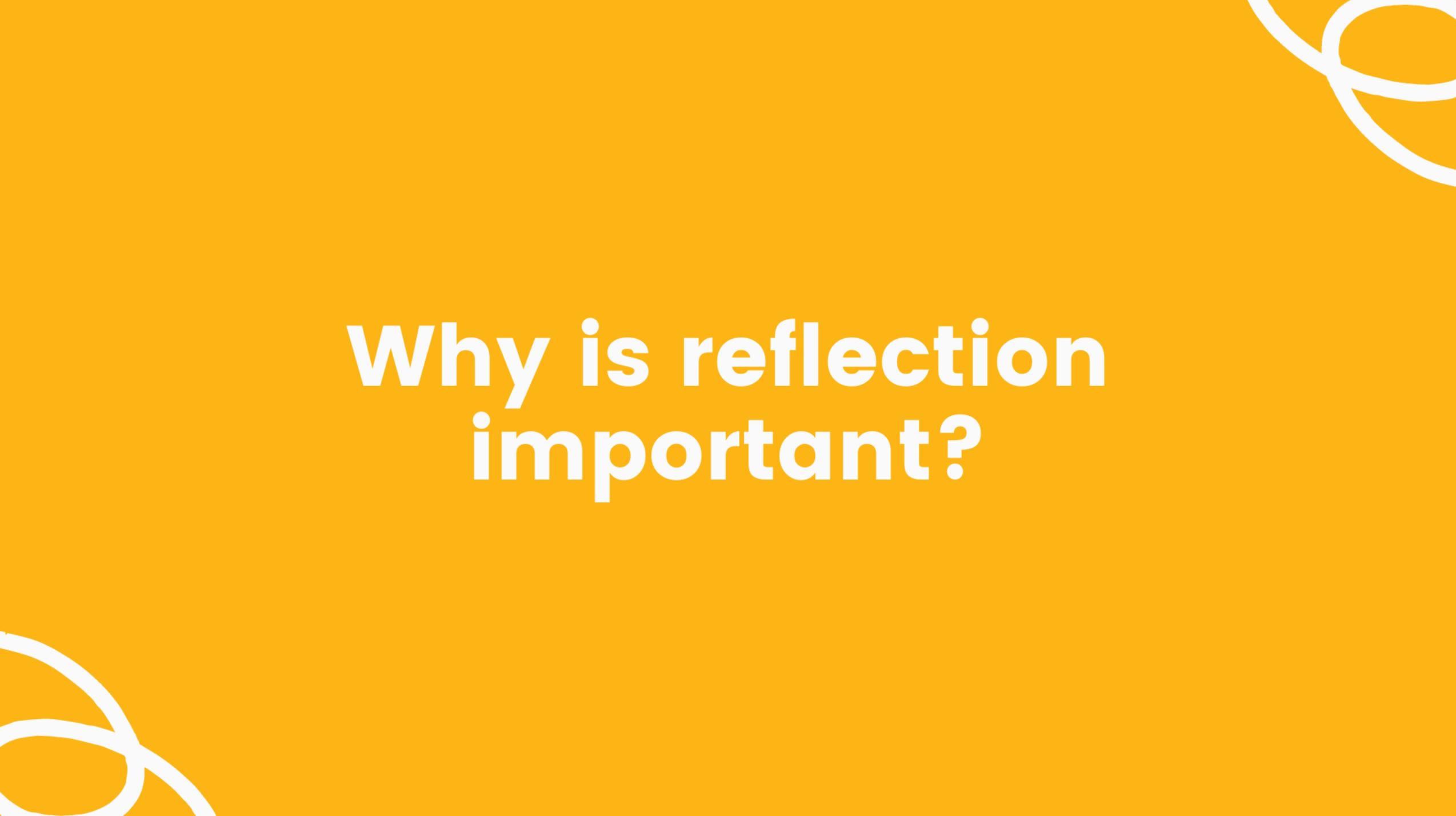
“In my volunteer service at the hospital, I am part of the ‘No One Dies Alone’ program. This program ensures that dying patients who do not have any close family or friends who can visit them have someone at their bedside. I completed a training that prepared me for this role. Many of the patients are unresponsive or unconscious, although some are aware of my presence. In my service I have utilized my training to understand the process of death and to hold vigil for those dying. I have served in this role for approximately 4 hours per month since October 2019.”

Reflection Example

“I remember my first time holding vigil for a dying patient during my service in the ‘No One Dies Alone’ program. I had learned about the stages of dying in my training, but seeing the patient in her final hours was surreal. During those hours I remember noticing every breath—both mine and hers. The patient seemed unresponsive, but I felt a connection to her all the same. Even though I don’t have any medical training yet, I can still help, just with my presence. Usually, I want to take action and fix problems. I’m starting to realize that I don’t always need to ‘do’ something to be helpful.

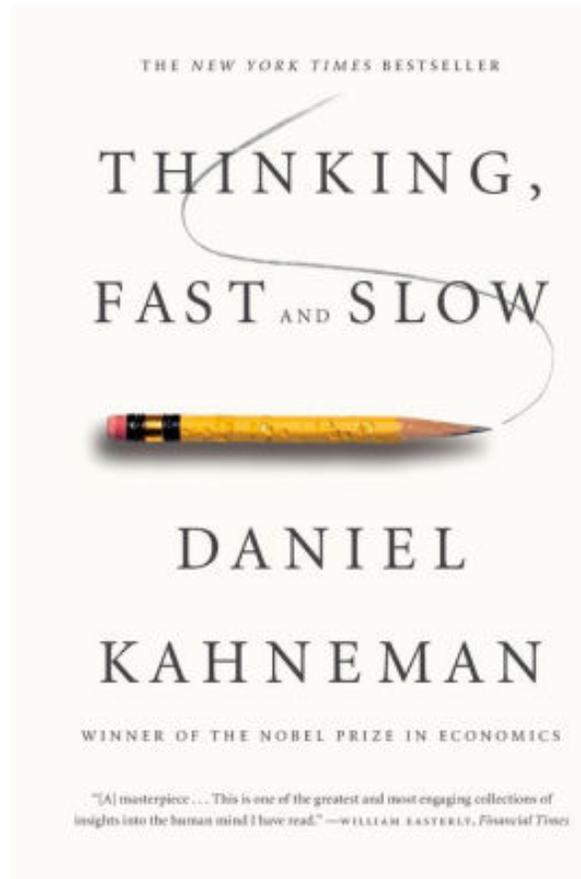
Comparing Reflections

- What did you notice as you read the two accounts of the same service experience?
- How are they similar and how are they different?
- Did either of the accounts have a stronger impact on you? If so, how?

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**Why is reflection
important?**

It allows us to shift from unconscious to conscious thought



- System 1 thinking (fast): intuition, snap judgments
- System 2 thinking (slow): reasoned thought, careful analysis

Reflection helps you slow down and take notice



Reflection helps you recognize where you are now
so that you can plan where to go next



Reflection can also be a great stress reliever



- Emotional processing
- Self-expression
- Naming feelings
- Putting thoughts onto paper
- Remember positive experiences

What you can learn about yourself through reflection

- Change in perspective or expectations (“I used to hold this viewpoint, which has since changed”)
- What your priorities are (How you spend your time and who gets your attention)
- How your knowledge base has grown and how it contributes to professional competence and confidence

What you can learn about yourself from reflection (cont.)

- Identify strengths and weaknesses, opportunities for growth
- Reveal personal thought processes (I used to think that there were clear right/wrong answers. Now I consider multiple perspectives and weigh evidence before drawing a conclusion)

How do clinicians use reflection?

Three types of knowledge essential for making decisions in a clinical setting:

Propositional knowledge: concepts, facts, scientific methods, etc.

Professional craft: professional experience

Personal: personal frame of reference and self-knowledge; ability to reflect on personal experiences

How does reflection support development as a future health professional?

- Explore, clarify, and confirm career goals– Develop a strong “Why” for pursuing your field
- Develop awareness of mental schemas and identify cognitive and social biases
- Develop empathy through self-awareness and awareness of others’ feelings and experiences
- Learn how to go beyond surface explanations of phenomena in order to uncover connections; develop more sophisticated methods of problem-solving and build critical thinking

Summary

Reflection is an on-going practice of taking time to intentionally consider one's beliefs, values, behaviors, thoughts, and goals to gain a deeper insight into the self and create personal meaning from experiences.

Getting started

Tips for Reflection

- Build time into your schedule for regular reflection and commit to it
- Find a method for reflection that works for you- as long as you document your reflection in some way so that you can return to it periodically
- Focus on the meaning of an experience rather than the details
- Commit to uncovering what makes you uncomfortable and avoid self-judgment
- Welcome ambiguity and complexity
- Believe in your, and others', capacity for change

When is a good time to reflect?

- Long-term experience (first semester at college, 3-month service-learning placement, summer health professions program, etc.): reflect at least at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end, perhaps once per week
- Short-term experience (shadowing for a week, going to a conference, etc.): Reflect each day
- In the moment: mindfulness practices can help you become aware of common thought patterns or feelings

What to reflect upon

Review the AAMC Core Competencies and reflect on how you demonstrate them, and which competencies can be areas of growth

- Service Orientation
- Social Skills
- Cultural Competence
- Teamwork
- Oral Communication
- Ethical Responsibility to Self and Others
- Reliability and Dependability
- Resilience and Adaptability
- Capacity for Improvement

Starting Points and Writing Prompts

- What was my most impactful experience with a health professional, and how did that effect my decision to pursue a health field?
- How did I get through the most difficult experience of my life, and what did I learn from that experience?
- Describe a time when your integrity was tested. What thoughts went through your mind, and how did you respond?
- Imagine your treatment plan differs from your colleague's. How would you address that situation?

Imagine your future self

Imagine your life in 15 years. Which personal qualities that you possess right now, not qualities that you aspire to possess, do you use in your work? What is your first thought when you wake up to your life 15 years in the future? What does your life feel like? Energizing? Challenging? Rewarding? Peaceful?

Potential reflection questions for this year and beyond

- How has your perception of your field changed since your first day at UMBC?
- What personal strengths helped me this year?
- What have my mistakes and failures taught me?
- When have I showed compassion for others? Or myself?
- Why do I want to go into this field?
- What are the problems in my field (discrimination, commercialization, etc.), and how do I envision myself addressing these issues?

Reflection methods

Free-form journaling

- Can be paper or electronic
- Can be done daily, weekly, monthly, or another timeframe
- Write about whatever comes to mind or is important at that moment



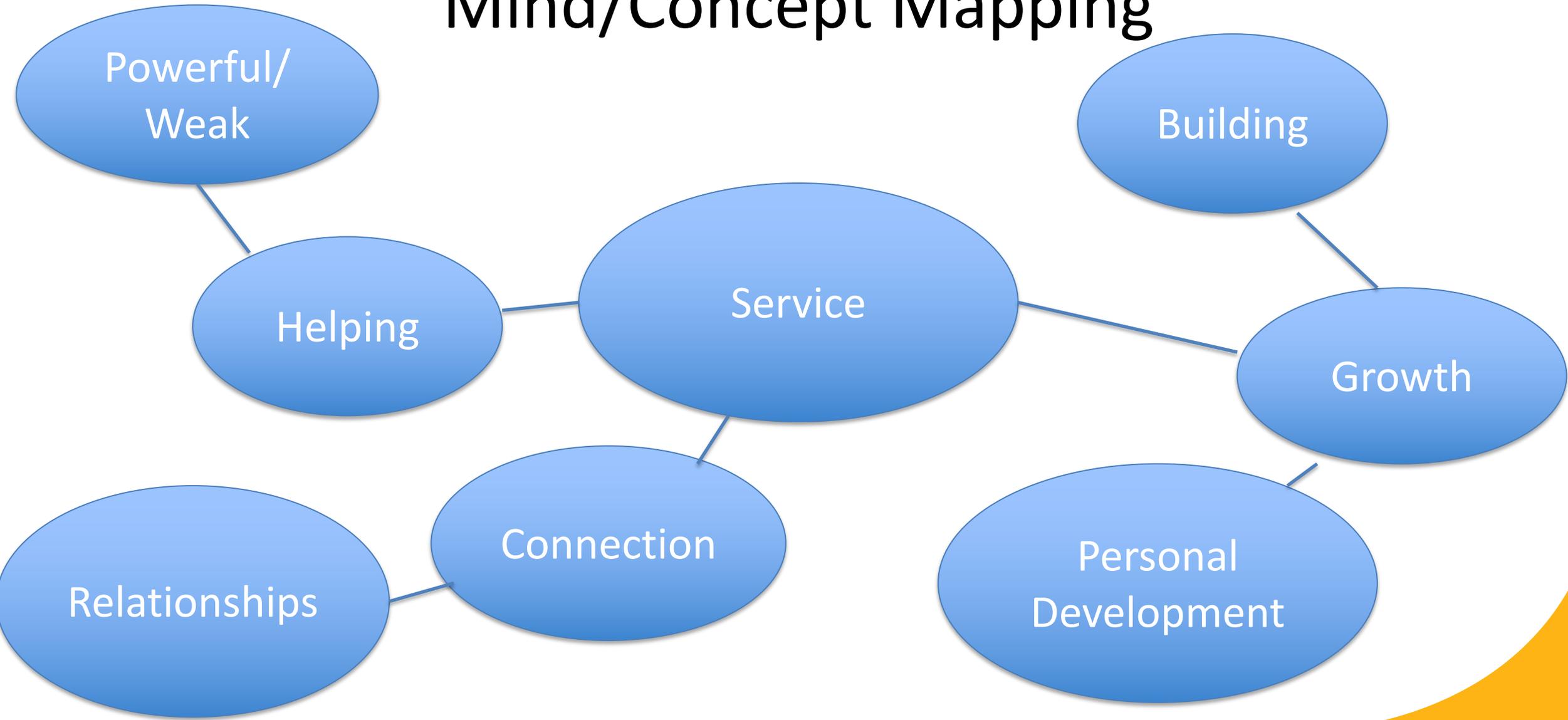
Prompt-based journaling

- Choose a writing prompt for each entry
- Prompts can be thought of in advance or in the moment
- Think of own prompts or write from outside prompts
- More structure/less freedom than free-form journaling

What? So What? Now What?

- Describe phenomena (ex: tasks that you completed, a situation with a classmate, an interaction between a health professional and their patient)
- Identify meaning to self, class, society, etc.
- List action that you would take based on this reflection

Mind/Concept Mapping



Visual art reflection



- Use drawing, painting, collaging, or other visual media to reflect feelings, aspirations, or experiences
- Easier to capture the essence of what you want to express
- May need accompanying commentary for details

Closing and next steps

- Which reflection methods are the most appealing to you?
- Do you have any ideas for reflection methods that weren't covered today?
- When would be the best time for you to engage in regular reflection?
- What is your next step after viewing this presentation?
- What questions did this presentation bring up?



**Thank you, and good
luck with midterms!**

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