

# REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

## A Guide for Organizations

How to use **online continuing education** modules from Project RISE to facilitate reflective practice for **early childhood professionals**



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WHAT IS

# REFLECTIVE PRACTICE?



Reflective practice is a process for examining our **thoughts, feelings, and reactions** to real-life situations.<sup>1</sup>

It requires us to slow down and think about our experiences, learn from them, and **develop an action plan** for what we will do next.<sup>2</sup>

Both individuals and groups can engage in reflective practice.

**“Reflective practice is the ability to reflect on one's actions so as to engage in a process of continuous learning.”**

-Donald Schön<sup>2</sup>

# WHAT ARE REFLECTIVE PRACTICE GROUPS AND HOW CAN THEY HELP INTERPROFESSIONAL TEAMS?

A reflective practice group is a time and space to come together for **intentional reflection on a shared topic**.

Reflective practice groups can help providers establish reflective habits and mindsets toward individual experiences and over time to evolve their professional practice.



## PRINCIPLES OF REFLECTIVE PRACTICE GROUPS

1

Conversation is guided by established protocols and led by an assigned facilitator.

2

There are no “right” or “wrong” answers or ideas.

3

There is value in everyone’s participation. All present have an opportunity to contribute.

# HOW TO HOST A REFLECTIVE PRACTICE GROUP AT YOUR ORGANIZATION



## CHOOSE A DISCUSSION TOPIC

The topic may be a **problem the team collectively faces** or a topic of shared interest.<sup>3</sup>

Project RISE online continuing education modules are created by subject matter experts and give participants a strong foundation for discussion of a variety of topics relevant to early childhood care and education.<sup>4</sup>

The team will select one or multiple modules to complete prior to the group reflective session. This allows members of an interdisciplinary team with varying levels of experience to **share a common vocabulary and theoretical framework** for discussion.



## MODULE TOPICS INCLUDE:

- Behavior management
- Multilingual development
- Building resilience
- Anti-bias practices
- Vicarious trauma & self care
- Supporting children with hearing loss
- And more!

SEE MODULES  
HERE OR SCAN  
THE QR CODE



## 2

## SELECT A PROTOCOL

The **Center for Leadership and Educational Equity (CLEE)** has collected a vast library of resources for group facilitation.<sup>5</sup>

Some protocols that work well with RISE continuing education content are:

- Ping Pong protocol (p. 6)
- Peeling the Onion (p. 7)
- Consultancy
- The Five Whys for Inquiry
- Reflective Conversation

SEE ALL CLEE  
PROTOCOLS  
HERE OR SCAN  
THE QR CODE



## 3

## DESIGNATE A FACILITATOR

Some protocols rely on a facilitator to guide the conversation, ensure adherence to community agreements, and promote equitable group dynamics.<sup>6</sup> This person may have unique experience or expertise related to the discussion topic, but this is not necessary for effective facilitation.

## 4

## SET COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

Community agreements should be decided upon by the whole group, with everyone's input welcomed. Some examples of community agreements are:<sup>7</sup>

- Show up (or choose to be present)
- Pay attention (to heart and meaning)
- Tell the truth (without blame or judgment)
- Be open to outcome (not attached to outcome)

# PING PONG PROTOCOL<sup>3</sup>

The purpose of this protocol is to assist a group in having substantive discussion about an issue that all of its members collectively face.

Participants should enter into this protocol in the spirit of **self-reflection and improvement**.



1. **Pose the problem** (5 minutes)
2. **Writing** (10 minutes) - Each participant writes about the problem from their perspective.
3. **Share reflections** (15 minutes) - Each participant shares from their writing and responses are listed.
4. **Probing questions** (20 minutes) - Participants have the opportunity to ask and answer probing questions.
5. **Writing to synthesize what we've heard** (10 minutes)
6. **Next steps conversation** (20 minutes) - Ideas for next steps toward addressing the problem are shared and charted. The group determines what steps it will take.
7. **Debrief** (5 minutes)

FULL PING PONG  
PROTOCOL HERE



**Probing Questions**  
help the presenter think more deeply about the issue. They challenge assumptions, evoke more questions, and touch a deeper meaning.<sup>8</sup>

# PEELING THE ONION PROTOCOL<sup>9</sup>

This protocol is designed to help us peel away the layers of a dilemma in order to address the deeper issues that lie underneath the surface. It is a structured way to develop an **appreciation for the complexity of a dilemma** in order to avoid the inclination to start out by “solving” the problem before it has been fully defined.

The facilitator should keep to the steps and gently remind participants when they are giving advice too early.

1. **Present the dilemma** (5 minutes)
2. **Clarifying questions** (3 minutes) - Informational questions from participants.
3. **“Peeling” rounds** (20 minutes) - Each participant responds to the same prompt. Presenter remains silent and takes notes.
4. **Presenter review & reflection** (7 minutes)
5. **Next steps conversation** (5-10 minutes) - Presenter and participants discuss possibilities and options that have surfaced.
6. **Debrief** (5 minutes)

## “Peeling” Prompts

**The prompts are asked in order and each participant responds to each.**

1. “What I heard [the presenters] say is ...”
2. “One assumption that seems to be part of the dilemma is...,” or, “One thing I assume to be true about this problem is ...”
3. “A question this raises for me is...”
4. “Further questions this raises for me are...” (If needed)
5. “What if...?” Or, “Have we thought about...?” Or, “I wonder...?”

**FULL PEELING  
THE ONION  
PROTOCOL  
HERE OR SCAN  
THE QR CODE**



# BENEFITS OF REFLECTIVE PRACTICE



Reflective practice can benefit professionals and organizations by:<sup>2</sup>

- Encouraging **creative and collaborative** problem-solving.
- Prompting participants to **challenge assumptions** and adopt multiple perspectives.
- Establishing a defined process for individuals and teams to **approach problems constructively and equitably.**

**“Reflective practice encourages being fully present in each interaction and building self and other awareness. The benefits are numerous, but it takes a team effort.”**

-Mike Sherman. PsyD<sup>1</sup>

# ABOUT PROJECT RISE

Nazareth's **Rochester Interprofessional Scholars of Early Intervention (RISE)** is dedicated to supporting and empowering those who work with young children and their families – so you can advance your skills and knowledge and make a meaningful impact in the lives of families.

Online continuing education modules are available at no charge for child-serving professionals in the Finger Lakes/Western New York region (or who have hosted a Nazareth University student teacher/clinician in the past 2 years) and at a low cost for others!

This learning is designed for all early childhood professionals working with young children between ages 0-8 and their families, related service providers (speech-language and audiology, occupational and physical therapy, psychological services, recreation, etc.) as well as students, families, and community members seeking more knowledge.

For more information, visit [naz.edu/online-learning/non-credit-programs/continuing-education-child-serving-professionals/](https://naz.edu/online-learning/non-credit-programs/continuing-education-child-serving-professionals/).

## REFERENCES

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