

“Let’s BoK About It!”

Examining a reflective journaling assignment



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pedagogical goals:

What is it I hope [YOU] will come away with?
What goals do I value most? Bass (1999)



This session presents educational research about the use and application of a reflective journaling assignment in an introductory undergraduate course; and offers conceptual and practical relevance about its implementation and impact in facilitating transformative understanding.

- Identify the relevance and rationale of reflective journaling as an effective pedagogical tool for deep and engaged learning.
- Examine one's pedagogical goals and practices to consider how to use or adapt reflective journaling strategies or assignments within their own course.
- Appraise and consider the role, approach, and significance of how the educator creates conditions within the learning environment to foster and nurture the reflective and transformative learning processes that this pedagogy may offer.

Context: Pedagogical Philosophy & Inquiry



- **Scholarly Teaching**

Decisions about pedagogical practices are “grounded in critical reflection... with the goal of maximizing learning through effective teaching” (Potter & Kustra, 2011, p. 3).

- **Professional Education**

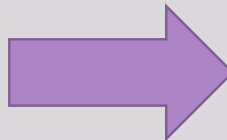
- Self-determined & applied learning

- **Relational & Humanistic**

- Empowering students to think for themselves

- ❖ **Phenomenology**

- ❖ **Hermeneutics
& Practical Philosophy**



- **Transformative Learning**

“A process of experiential learning, critical self-reflection, and rationale discourse that can be stimulated by people, events, or changes in contexts that challenge the learner’s basic assumptions of the world” (Brown, 2006, p. 706).

- **Reflective Learning & Practice**

- Dewey; Kolb; Schön
- Reflective Journaling (Stevens & Cooper, 2009)

“the work of hermeneutics is not to develop a procedure of understanding but to clarify the conditions in which understanding takes place” (Schwandt, 2000, p. 196).

Reflective Journal Writing & Pedagogy



- **Informed by a reflective practice approach and transformative learning theory.**
 - Mezirow (1991) noted that learners “must engage in critical reflection on their experiences, which in turn leads to a perspective transformation”. Making meaning of experiences, from one’s own interpretation, rather than in response to the purpose, beliefs, judgements, and feelings of others provides opportunities to develop autonomous thinking.
- Significance has been well documented in the literature (Stevens & Cooper, 2009).
- Stevens & Cooper (2009) assert two major principles of reflective journaling: (1) writing is thinking; and (2) [writing] practice builds fluency in writing and the motivation to write.
 - Reflective writing and journal-keeping provides “concrete evidence of one’s evolving thought processes, documenting valuable, often fleeting glimpses of understanding” (p. x).
 - “Students who master the skills of reflective journaling gain an ability to connect their internal processes with their external realities. The connecting of inner and outer world experiences is a process that demands self-awareness and self-knowledge (Stevens & Cooper, 2009 p. 70).

Pedagogical Rationale:

Considerations & Application for MY assignment



- Use of the assignment in relation to course: Intro to Social Work
- Course aims → applied and internalized knowledge
 - Intro...but foundational, within **professional education**
 - Deep and engaged learning where reflective, collaborative, experiential & dialogic components are emphasized
 - Critical Thinking: guiding students towards challenging their assumptions and empowering them to think for themselves
 - Focus on self-awareness & insight in relation to personal & professional growth; process of professional identity development; and the application of a critically reflective practice approach
- Considerations for innovative/creative pedagogies:
 - mini-conference poster presentations → infographic assignment → reflective journaling

My teaching engenders to challenge each student's whole self —
“as a feeling, thinking, speaking, sensing, experiencing” person

and requires that students are
ready, willing, and able to be open to this possibility.

BoK Assignment: “book of ken”



- All students were “gifted” with a blank spiral bound sketchbook on the second day of class. (cost \$3-4 each)
- Purposely identified, **not as a journal** → “book of ken” or BoK
 - Intentional re-naming (re-framing) to diminish hesitation or preconceived notions of “journaling”
 - definition of “ken”: one’s range of perception, knowledge, or insight | *Sound of Music*
- BoK is a **vessel or container**: a place to process and sift...ideas, feelings, thoughts...
 - Intent to develop skills of critical thinking and reflective (self) awareness; to help students make critical connections between and among the course material and themselves → Personal-Professional intersections
- Suggested overall [BoK/course] objective: *move beyond their ken...*
 - And aspired to defy conventions of typical assignments through its freedom by offering a more informal, unrestrained, unencumbered and creative approach to their learning-growing processes.

BoK Assignment: Logistics, Structure & Expectations



Initial set-up & format

- Table of Contents
- 5cm bottom margin
- Date each entry: week/time
- Page numbering
 - p 1: blank (end of class prompt)
 - p 2: *course learning objectives*
 - p 3: *student learning aspirations*

Expectations

- Identified in Syllabus
- Bring to every class
- Modeled/used in class
- Self-determined “use”
- Privacy & Sharing

❖ Holistic Evaluation

- Consistency
- Critical depth
- Creativity

Methods: SoTL Project | Illinois IRB#20451



- Approximately 80 undergraduate students enrolled in 2 sections of an introductory social work course participated in normative educational activities embedded in the course (n= 72 provided informed consent):
 - BoK entries
 - In-class and on-line discussions
 - Final Scholarly Paper: course & learning experiences
- Additional data included:
 - Learning survey (n=72)
 - 2 focus group sessions (11 participants)
- **Parallel mixed method approach:** hermeneutic phenomenological content analysis
 - inductive & deductive identification of themes and patterns

Exploratory Questions → themes(?)



- How do students experience the BoK assignment?
- How have students “used” the BoK as a tool for practice or learning? What has BoK given or provided?
- How does the student’s use of the Bok contribute to their learning or growth?
- How (in what ways?) does BoK foster/impact/facilitate awareness/processes of their personal-professional selves, identity development, and socialization?
- What is contribution of Bok → relevance, meaning & impact of learning experience
- What components of the learning experience [course/instructor/assignment] make the Bok effective/useful tool?
- How does the use of the BoK: enhance engagement? build community? facilitate critical thinking or deep learning? foster reflective practices?
- What are the characteristics of the learning environment, messaging, pedagogies that foster and facilitate transformative learning?

Unpacking the Data:

Musings...Interpretations...Emerging Ideas...and Realizations



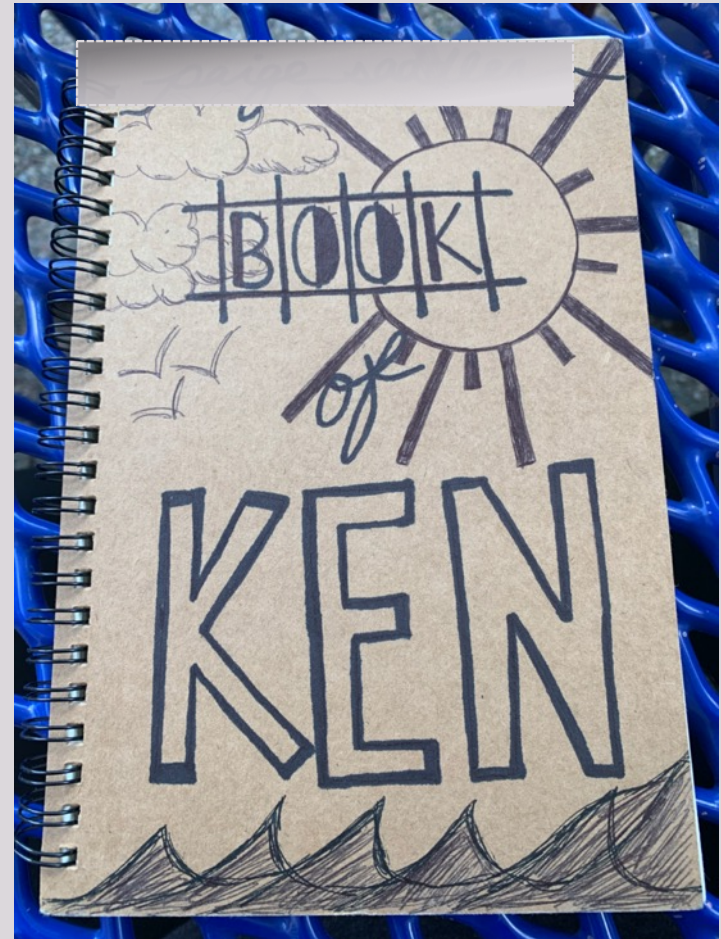
- This research supports and extends current knowledge on the use of reflective journaling as an effective/impactful pedagogical tool:
 - fosters deep learning and critical thinking
 - supports the application of practices that include cognitive & affective components
 - fosters both personal growth & professional development (Hubbs & Brand, 2010; 2005)
 - ✦ → personal-professional socialization
 - facilitates pedagogical experiences that are transformative
- Individual & Collective Growth:
 - its use in building a community of engaged and motivated learners where students learn from and grow with, and as a result of, each other, was an unintended and significant outcome.
- Finally → not just the WHAT...but the HOW | *as a necessary condition!*
 - WHAT: BoK Assignment
 - HOW: Creating conditions...intentional & purposeful

Naming, Framing & Ownership

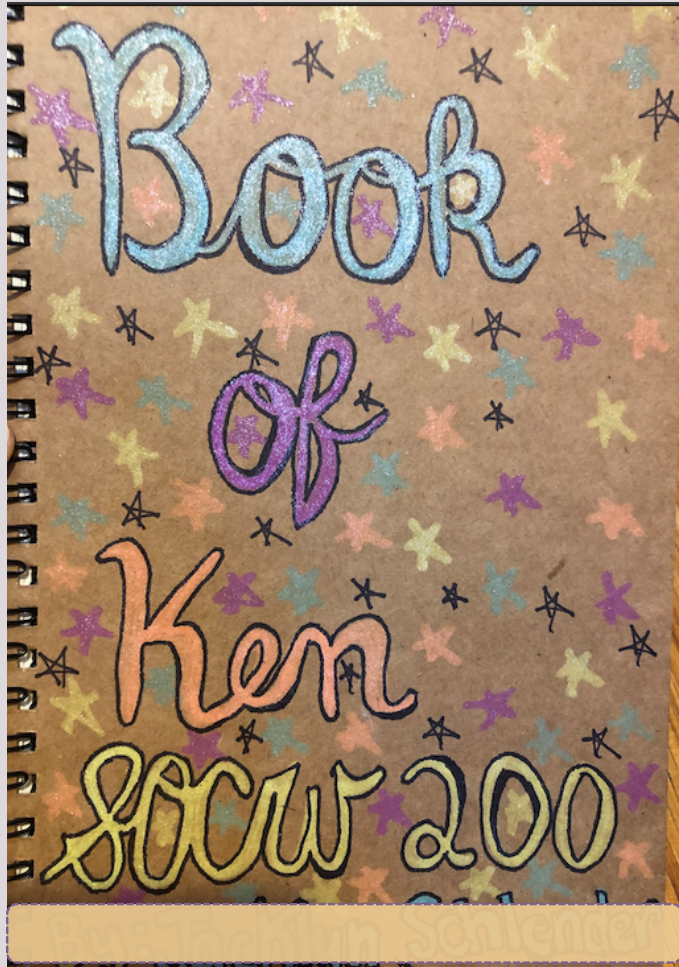


Re-naming/FRAMING

- Ken: *like the Barbie doll?*
- The name was impactful
 - *It didn't feel corny because it was a BoK*
- Minimized curiosity to outsiders
 - *"our own language"*
- Implied shared learning & connectivity
 - *"Let's BoK about it"*



Naming, Framing & Ownership



Ownership & Self-determination

Conceptualizing the experience:

- *the Bok...MY Bok*
- *The beauty of the BoKis that it allowed each of us to use it as we pleased*
- *Speaking your truth*
- *There was no right way to “use” it...you have to come into your own*

Perceptions of Use

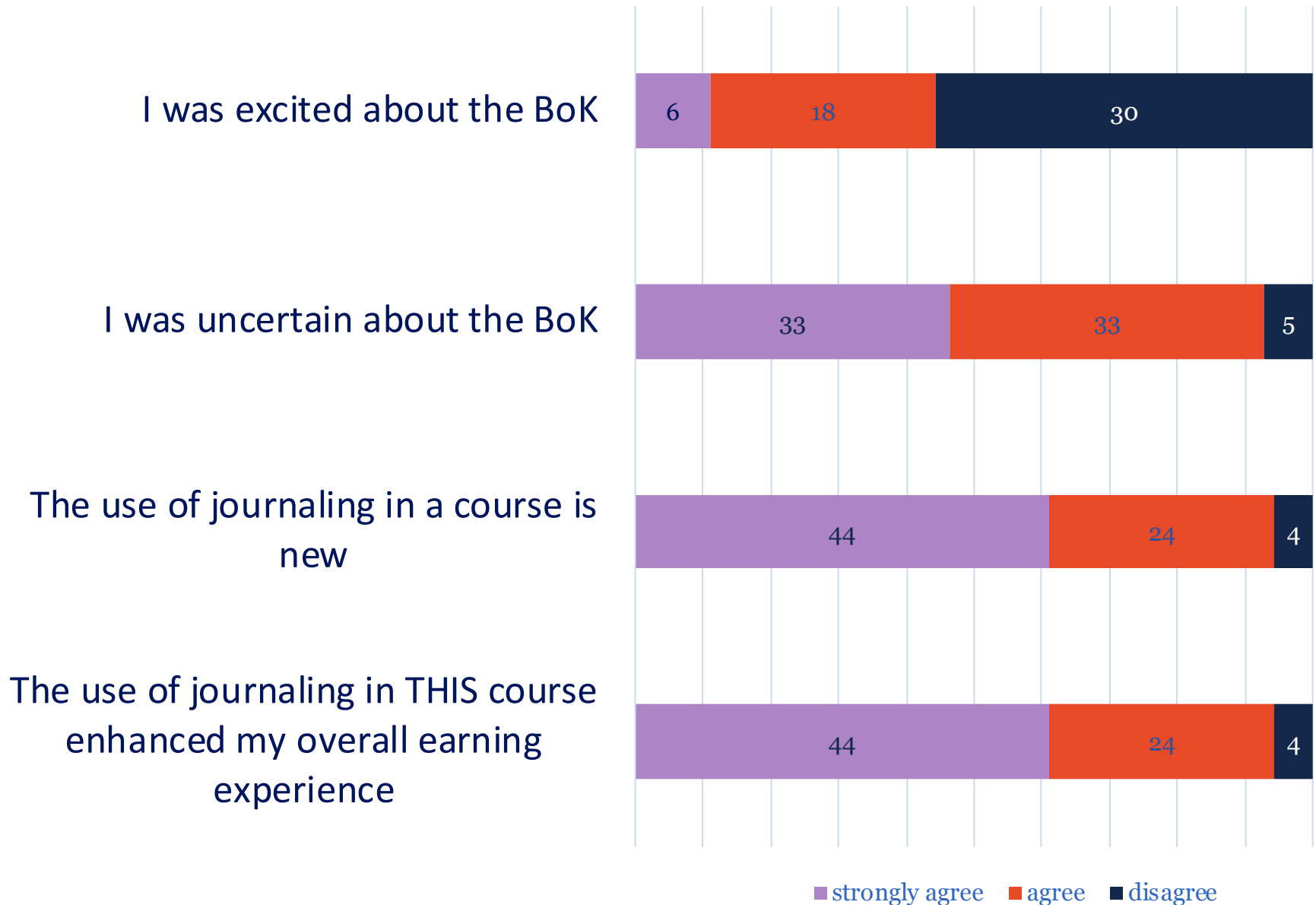


(Retrospective) **BEFORE**

- *I was a little hesitant to buy into it*
- *Beginning to write was difficult*
- *When I first go my Bok it felt like chore*
- *It felt like another checkmark on a cramped to do this*
- *Seemed like a subjective assignment*
- *I had the wrong attitude in the beginning*
- *I was “against” it*

(Reflective) **AFTER**

- *It was weird how present it became to me*
- *I was super excited to start...in the middle I was stressed and lost motivation, but then it became a helpful ripple effect that allowed me to maintain a habit that contributed to my balance*
- *The BoK isn't necessary, but it forces us to self-reflect*
- *This type of thinking takes conscious effort...and is a skill I am continuing to develop*



I've done this before...but THIS is different



dr tel seemed pretty enthusiastic about the BoK from the start and really emphasized that as long as we took time to reflect we would not be penalized. In my other class I had to follow a certain word count and answer questions each day that prompted me to “reflect” on my day, but they became *tedious*, repetitive and annoying quickly. I like how *my responses* in my Bok *have visibly changed over time* as I came to realize all of this.

When dr tel introduced the BoK, I thought to myself “what the heck?” What is a Book of Ken? I was definitely confused and I was worried it would be another *tedious*, unimpactful journaling exercise. I was not sure how I would successfully make use of the Bok, or what I was even supposed to write down in it. In the beginning I struggled to make time for it and come up with meaningful ideas. *It took time* to figure out how I wanted to get the most out of my little brown notebook but *eventually I figured it out*.

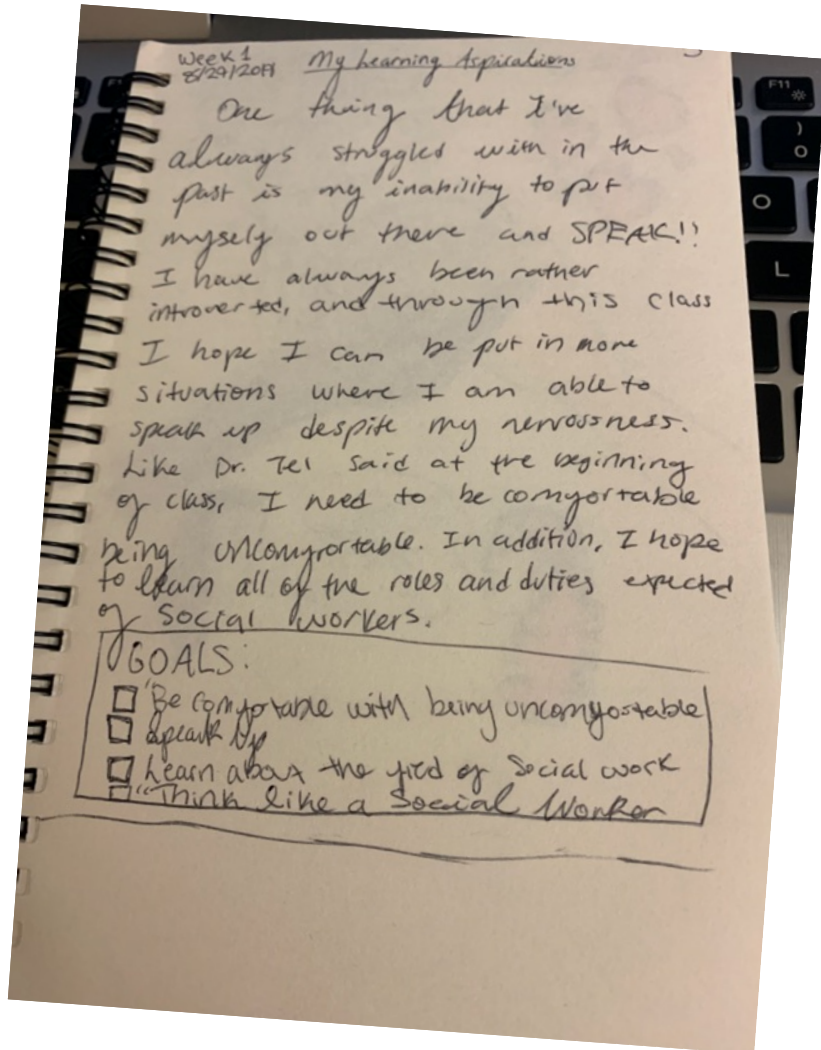
Entries: *emerging themes*



- **Asking Questions; and Gaining & Applying Knowledge:**
 - Unpacking and application of constructs, readings, learning activities
 - Processing of thought & conversations: *“This type of thinking takes conscious effort”*
- **Replication/Use of Quotes:** from readings, from lecture, course mantras
- **Artistry, Creativity & Creative Processes:** drawings, doodles, color, collage, watercolor, sketch, representations, symbols, concept maps, venn diagram
- **Organization & Clarity:** Lists, bullets, ideas, snippets: *mathematical tool*
- **SELF:** Narrative, storytelling, expressions/logograms in native language: *magical*
- **Self-Care & Self-Help:**
 - mental wellness, healing, positive affirmations, confidence & acceptance
 - venting, processing, emotional vulnerability, *shitdumping*
 - *“speaking your truth”*

BoK entry:

Course Learning Goals → Student Learning Aspirations



One thing that I've always struggled with in the past is my inability to put myself out there and SPEAK!!

I have always been rather introverted...

GOALS:

- Be comfortable with being uncomfortable
- Speak up

Weeks 2 & 4 BoK entries: Beliefs & Values

Week 2
9/2/19

I Believe

I BELIEVE:

- Life is what you make it
- In second chances
- That everybody should be treated equally
- That laughter generates happiness
- That love is stronger than hate
- Helping others will bring meaning
- Optimism is a powerful tool in life
- That difficult times generate strength
- Being mindful will lead to a happier life
- People should surround themselves with people that make them happy
- Family doesn't HAVE to be blood related
- That nature is just as powerful as nature, if not more powerful
- That human existence is confusing
- That we should believe survivors
- We (as a society) HAVE to do better to fight the injustices of the world
- Kindness is more important now than ever
- children are our future & we have to do better to protect them
- The meaning of life is subjective, but my best guess would be love & happiness
- We shouldn't take life too seriously (aka: it's okay to have fun sometimes)
- Life is beautiful

9/19/19
Week 4

What are my Values?

- Treat others how they want to be treated
- Respect your peers, even if they are not showing respect to you
- Search for the good in people and situations
- Work hard and hold yourself responsible

- Make mistakes so you can learn from them

Where did my values come from?

- I used to think treat others how I want to be treated. I changed it to how they want to be treated because not everyone wants to be treated the same way I did.
- I have found that it is easier to work with and understand people when respect is present.
- Searching for the good is important so that I don't get dragged down by stressful situations.
- Put your all into everything you do so there are no regrets. Taking responsibility always helps me to understand what I do wrong. Ensures I don't blind myself when I search for good.

How I will self-care?

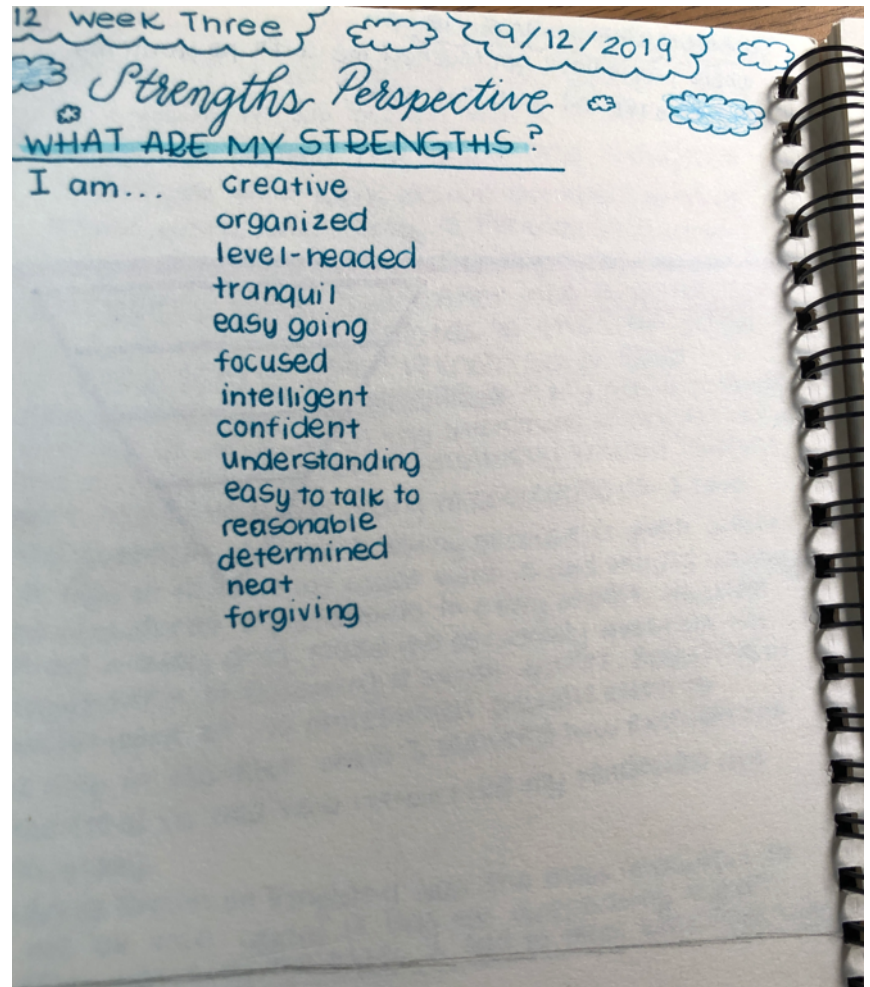
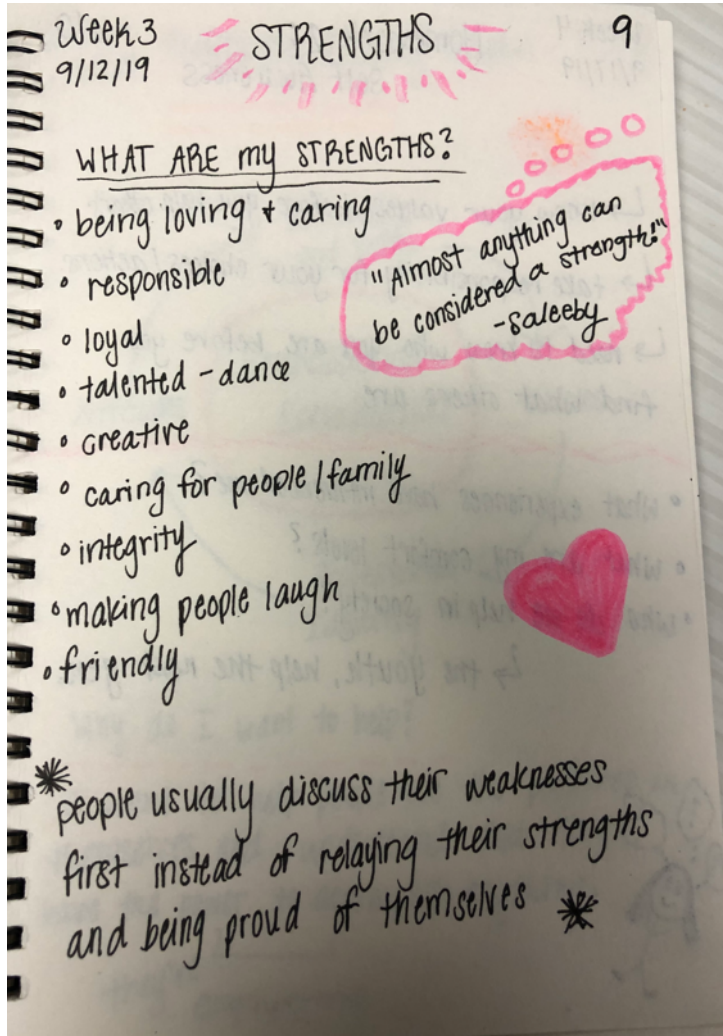
- spend quality time w/ my S/O
- Take time for myself to de-stress
- get a full night's rest

10/01/19

As I was writing my HW2, I came back to this page and added onto my values. I found that writing so much about self-awareness made me recognize even more of my values.

Week 3 BoK entries:

Application of a Theoretical Construct → Strengths-Perspective



Week 3 & 6 BoK entries: Application & (re) Reflection

Emergent thinking:

mindset matters!

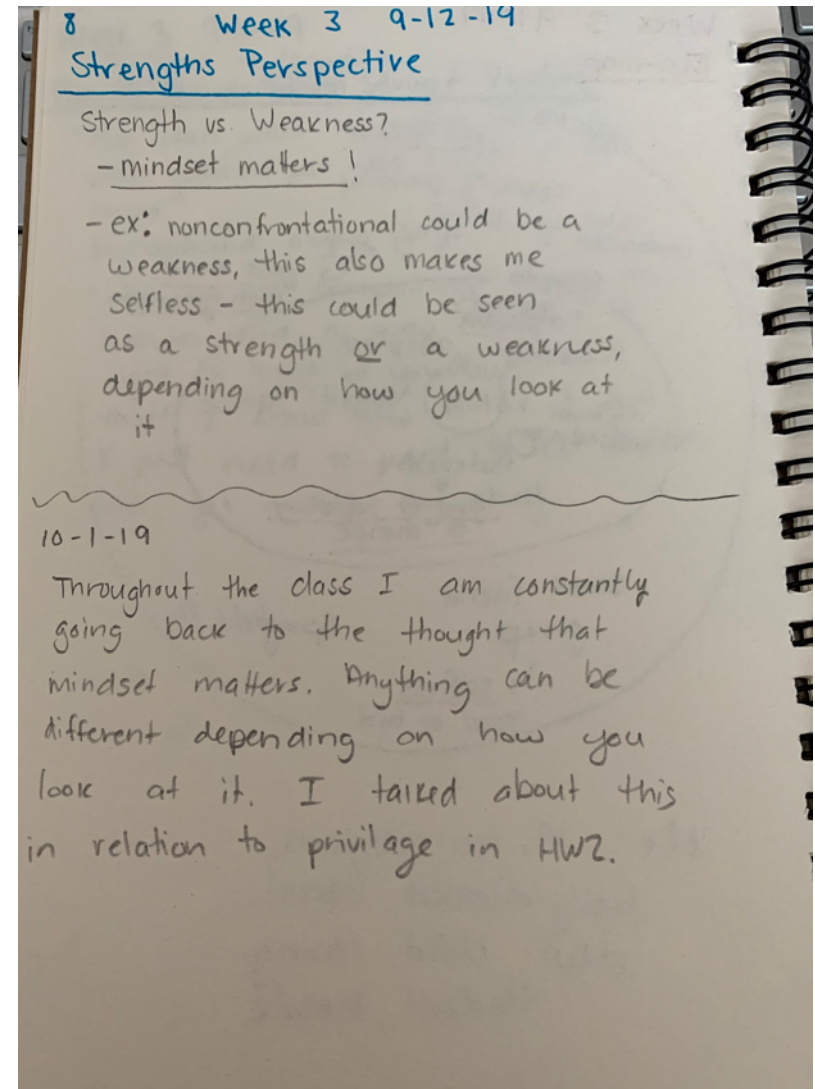
Re-reflection:

Solidification &

Internalization of ideas and
developing point of view

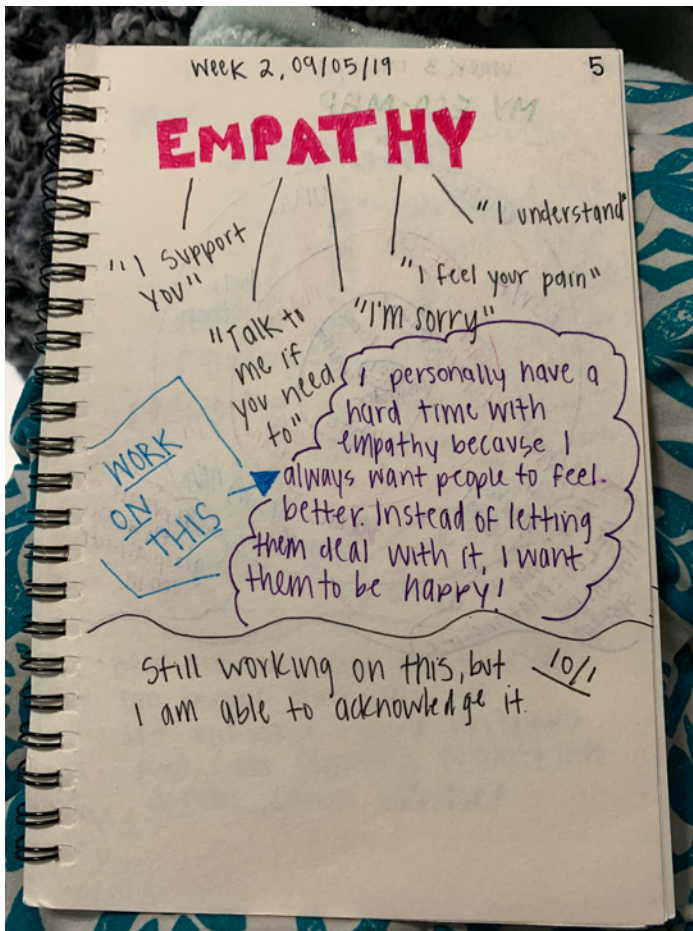


*Throughout this class I am constantly going back to the thought that **mindset matters**. Everything can be different depending on how you look at it.*



Week 2 entry: Skills for practice

Knowledge solidification, Application & (re) Reflection



EMPATHY: [creative & colorful]

→ taking time/effort to unpack and process it

How to convey/define it:

- *I support you*
- *I feel your pain*
- *I understand*
- *Talk to me if you need to*

Emerging (Self) Realization/Insight:

- *I always want people to feel better instead of letting them deal with it*

Reflective Self-Awareness:

- *Still working on this, but I am able to acknowledge it*

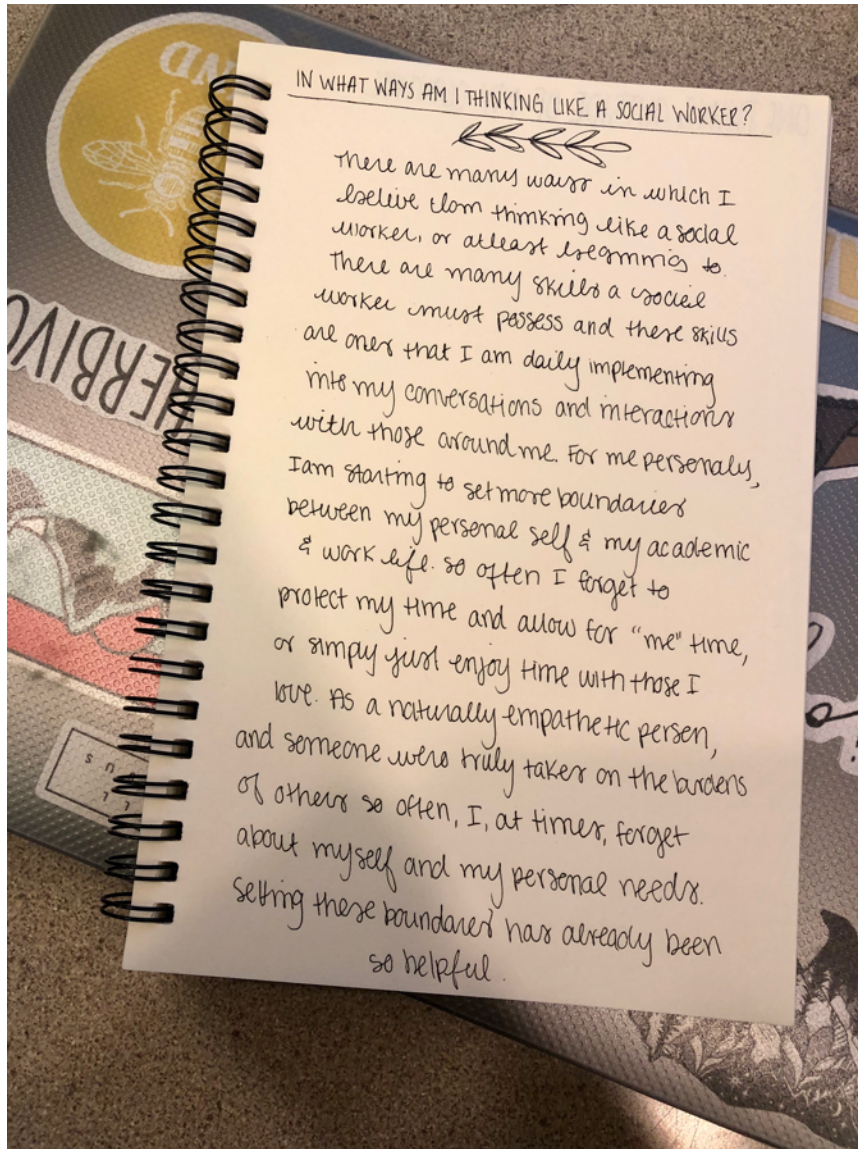
BoK entry:

Professional Identity: Awareness, Realizations & Confidence

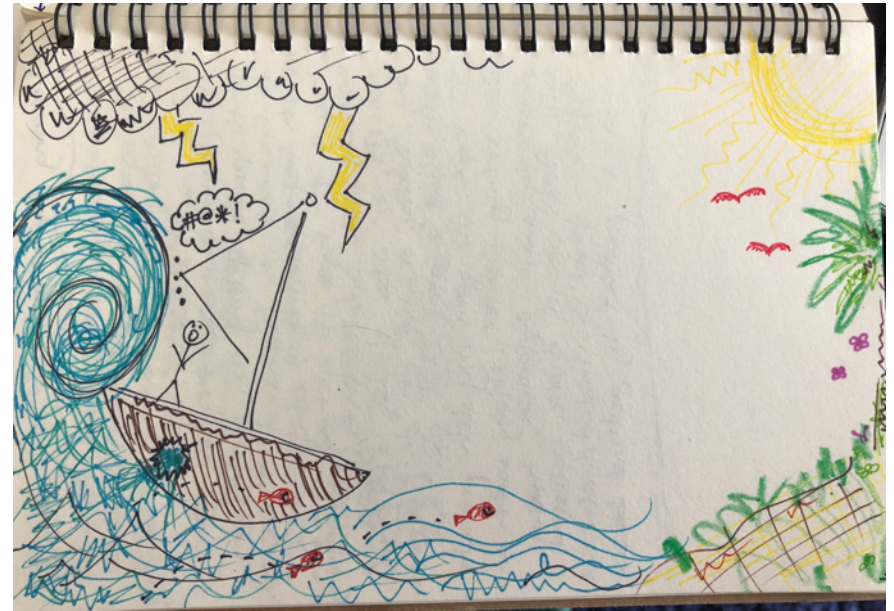
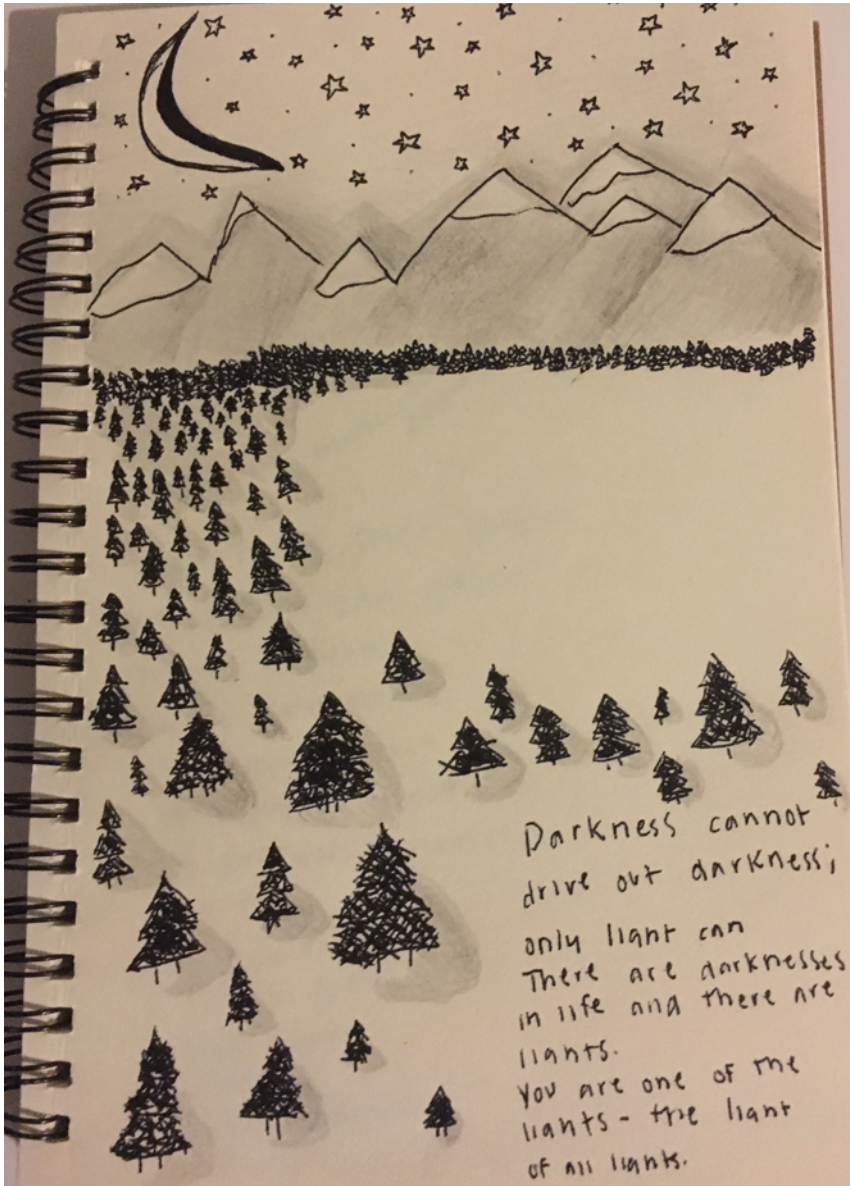
There are many ways in which I believe I am thinking like a social worker or at least beginning to. There are many skills a social worker must possess and these skills are ones I am daily implementing in my conversations and interactions...

I am starting to set more boundaries....

As someone who truly takes on the burden of others, I forget about myself and my personal needs. Seeing these boundaries has already been so helpful.



BoK entries: artistry & creativity



Transformative properties & themes

TITLES of final response papers:

- Endgame
- The dynamic process of becoming
- Pushed to grow
- This is ME...now
- Denouement
- The transformation of a lifetime
- An analysis of growth
- All I have come to know
- I belong: a reflection of my semester's journey
- Looking back & moving forward

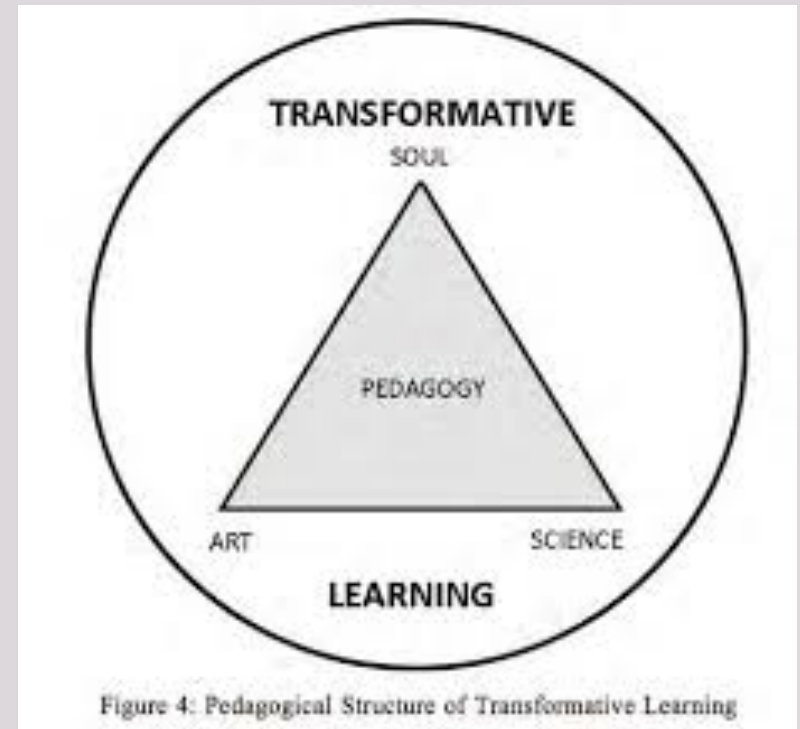


Figure 4: Pedagogical Structure of Transformative Learning

Relevance, Meaning & Impact



- Reflective journaling can be an effective way to develop and deepen critical thinking and build community engagement:
 - *this class taught me the power of community*
- Modeling & applying practices for professional & personal (i.e student/identity) development.
- Extending beyond content delivery or knowledge accumulation...the use of such pedagogy allows the student to focus on the process (and their process) of learning and the ways in which critical application and deep learning CAN occur.
- Relevance and meaning making → facilitate impact...and which allows individuals to come into their own understanding

What are the practices and pedagogical conditions that foster transformative learning?



- Humanistic, Relational and Reflective Practices & Processes:
 - Learning through examination of the process of the encounter or the experience, rather than focusing solely on the outcomes of that experience (Earls Larrison, 2009).
 - Active, collaborative, dialogical and peer-learning strategies humanize our classrooms and encourage more engaged learning and high-order thinking. Such methods improve student learning and certainly their experience of the meaningfulness of the course.
 - We are reflective educators, in part because we want our students to be reflective learners. The notion of purposeful intent is inherently tied to one's identity and integrity as an educator and "cannot be reduced to technique" (Palmer, 2007, p 10).
- As a result transformative learning processes:
 - Helps socialize students (emerging professionals) as self-determined learners
 - Provides solidification related to personal-professional identity and congruence
 - Begins the process of developing knowledge, skills, and awareness for future application: (i.e. success...proficiency → practice & career)

Conditions & Processes within T-L Encounter



Characteristics of the Teaching-Learning Encounter

- Collaborative
- Spontaneous
- Safe atmosphere
- Empowering
- Cathartic
- Transformative

Characteristics of Practitioner Actions

- Genuineness & Congruence
- Relational connectedness
- Views role as mentor
- Models skills and values of practice
- Creates a supportive climate
- Transparency and Process

Pedagogical Implications & Relevance



“Acting and thinking, practice and theory, are linked in a continuous process of critical reflection and transformation” (Schwandt, 2000, p. 191).

- Overlapping processes and themes emphasized within the T-L encounter:
 - creating conditions that foster deep learning and collaboration; nurturing professional and personal growth; and modeling relational congruency
- Application and process are as important as content knowledge itself.
- Learning should aim to engage head & heart as necessary conditions
- These practices lend support to developing one’s unique and self-determined journey -- *facilitating growth, awareness, professional identity, socialization, and actualization* -- through modeling, dialogue, and critically reflective processes which result in engaged and motivated learning and transformative understanding.

move beyond your KEN...



THiNK: pair & share



- One word to describe what you're thinking...
- One word to describe what you are feeling...
- How might you adopt, consider or facilitate the use of a reflective journaling assignment in your course?
- What concerns or challenges do you have - about use, reception, adoption, evaluation, effectiveness??
- What elements or conditions within the session allowed you consider what the impact of your own pedagogical practices, goals and/or philosophies may have on the adoption or effectiveness of such strategies?

HW: create an in-class BoK prompt that would be suitable for students in your course...

Reflection & Evaluation: *did we accomplish our goals?*



- Identify the relevance and rationale of reflective journaling as an effective pedagogical tool for deep and engaged learning.
- Examine one's pedagogical goals and practices and consider the ways in which participants might use or adapt reflective journaling strategies or assignments within their own course.
- Appraise and consider, not just the adoption/use of reflective journaling, but the role, approach, and significance of how the educator creates such conditions within the learning environment to foster and nurture the transformative learning processes



THANK YOU!!

References & Further Reading

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