Model The 'Weather Model'

Deeloped by Maclean (2016), the Weather Model provides a simple but effective model for reflective practice by inviting you to reflect on an event or experience using the following stages:

- Sunshine – what went well?
- Rain – What didn't go well?
- Lightening – what came as a shock or surprise?
- Fog – what didn't you understand?

A longer version of the model is:

Sunshine: What went well?

Rain: What didn't go so well?

Fog: Was there a point where you got lost and didn't know what to do? What couldn't you see?

Thunder: Sometimes it can be difficult to think about what you would do or recommend because so many other people are all talking at once and drowning out your thoughts. Has that happened? (Was there any thunder in this situation?) What couldn't you hear? (Is anyone's voice missing?)

Lightning: What came as a surprise?

Wind: Did anything blow you off course? If so, what?

Storm: In some situations, there is such a lot of conflict that things become very 'stormy'. Were there stormy conditions? If so, what? How did you weather the storm?

McClure (2002) suggested that reflective practice is about a process of dynamic questioning and developed a range of "reflective questions" which can be used to assist in reflective practice – either in writing or in reflective discussions. The following questions are adapted from those suggested by McClure for use in supervision with a student:

- Tell me about what you did...
- What were you aiming for when you did that?
- What exactly did you do?

- Why did you choose that particular action?
- What theories/ models/ research informed your actions?
- What were you trying to achieve?
- What did you do next?
- What were the reasons for doing that?
- How successful was it?
- How do you know? What criteria are you using to judge success?
- What alternatives did you have?
- Could you have dealt with the situation any better?
- How would you do it differently next time?
- How do you feel about the whole experience?
- How did the service user/ carer/ other worker feel about it?
- How do you know they felt like that?
- What sense can you make of this considering your past experiences/ what we have discussed/ your university studies (and so on)?
- Has this changed the way in which you will do things in the future? How?

Theory, model, method or approach?

- It is interesting to ask a student what they think is meant by theory in social work and then to move on to explore with them how confident they feel about the difference between a theory, a model, a method and an approach. If they feel confident about it, ask them to explain this to you.
- Sometimes students (and indeed social workers) don't see the value of understanding the difference between these concepts. However, it is important that this is understood. It is only in understanding what something is that you can use it in practice.
- In social work we often use the word theory as a kind of umbrella term for theories, models, methods and approaches. However, if students can recognise the difference between these then this can help them to use the concepts in practice. There are a number of ways of considering the differences between them but I find the following definitions helpful.

- In social work, a theory helps us to describe, explain and predict but it does not help us to intervene and bring about change. A theory is essentially about our understanding.

- A model does not provide a social worker with the ability to describe, explain and predict, but it does provide a way to intervene and bring about change. In this way a model is really about our intervention.

- A method is a specific tool or technique used in practice. Generally speaking a method is drawn out of a model – so that it is a specific way that the intervention is put into practice.

- An approach is the overall way we approach our practice. If a theory is about our thinking and a model is about our doing, then an approach is our being.

- It can be helpful for students to be clear about this so that they can begin to develop ideas about their own approach to practice, identifying the theories they use to understand what is happening and the models they use to intervene. Drawing up theory trees with students can be helpful in clarifying this for students.