

## WHAT? SO WHAT? NOW WHAT?

*A routine for reflecting on experience and planning for action*

- *What? Describe what you did or what happened.*
- *So What? Make meaning of what happened, your actions, or observations.*
- *Now What? Plan forward and identify actions and implications.*

### **Purpose: What kind of thinking & learning does this routine encourage?**

This routine focuses on reflecting on and analyzing an experience to learn from it, plan forward, and take action.

### **Application: When and where can it be used?**

This routine can be used in any instance where one wants to learn from an experience in order to make plans for future action. For instance, it could be used to reflect on a challenging or difficult incident that one was a part of that needs analysis so that performance next time is different. If the situation is problematic or one of conflict, the “What?” step helps to clarify what actually happened among the various participants in the incident. Alternative, this routine could be used to reflect on an observation one wants to draw from to advance one’s own actions or as a tool for reflecting mid-way through an extended project.

### **Launch: What are some tips for starting and using this routine?**

Although the routine can be done completely orally, it is often useful to do some writing in combination with discussion. For instance, ask students to review the situation and record the “what.” This might include what happened, what they observed, what actions they took, their role in the incident, the responses of others, what was good or bad about the experience. Having done some reflective writing or time to gather one’s thoughts, these ideas can then be shared in a group or with a partner. If this is a problematic incident among individuals it is important that one come to agreement on what actually happened or at least acknowledge the different views of what happened.

The “So What?” phase naturally builds on the “what” that was identified. Often this is a discussion, though it could be one in writing, in which the group or pair collectively attempts to interpret and make meaning of the situation. Additional prompts might include: So what does this tell me? What is my understanding of the situation? What can I learn here? Why did this happen? What are the implications? What does this say about attitude, my feelings, or me? What might have been done differently?

The “Now What?” step asks learners to take their learning forward into implications. What actions are suggested by the conversation? If it is a problematic situation, this may involve identify actions to be avoided or changed so that the situation doesn’t reoccur. If the situation is one seeks to draw inspiration from, such as an observation, then personal implications and actions are identified to carry one’s learning into action. If the situation is about reflecting on one’s actions to date, then next steps are identified.

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