

REFLECTION TOOL #8

VERBATIM REPORT

A verbatim is an exact recall of a conversation. It can be an excellent tool in analyzing motivations and behaviors, and can help in learning to be more sensitive and responsive to the needs of people.

The following elements should be included in the verbatim:

- 1. Introduction:** (a) time, (b) place, (c) brief description of the person (maintain confidentiality), (d) your relationship to the person (how you got to talk with the person; how long you have known him or her, and in what capacity), (e) the context of the conversation (what you thought of and felt about them and their situation before this conversation), (f) other details or circumstances that are relevant.
- 2. Verbatim record of conversation:** An exact as possible (e.g. make notes as soon as possible after meeting) record of the conversation including pauses, non-verbal communications, facial expressions, etc., insofar as they help to catch the "tone" of the experience. If the conversation is longer than can be conveniently reported, give highlights, being sure to indicate where breaks occur, and summarize missing parts. The effort in this part is to be purely descriptive - omitting explanation of why you did what you did. This effort calls for candor that will be, at times, difficult to achieve.

Number the responses. Disguise names.

S1: How are you today, Mrs. Doe? (student)

D1: Fine, how are you? (Mrs. Doe)

S2: We missed you in church Sunday.

D2: I missed being there (blushing)...etc.

Don't try to "doctor" your report to make it look better. Rather, in the analysis section indicate changes you would make.

- 3. Analysis and evaluation:**
 - a. What took place (where do you and the person now stand in your relationship)?
 - b. Intention at beginning (discrepancy between intention and performance, shift in expectations, etc.)
 - c. An evaluation of your responses, trying to identify your dominant feelings during the conversations. This is not an invitation to probe the depths of your unconscious, but a simple effort to catch the feelings on or near the surface (i.e., is this a person who makes you feel angry, happy, frustrated? etc.) What did you see as the person's needs and did your responses get at these needs? Are there any points that strike you as particularly significant now; any responses you would certainly want to omit or do differently (indicate by number - D2)?

- d. What does this interview reveal about the person and about yourself? What kind of person are you in this interview?
- e. What effect did this interview have on the person? How did they feel when it was over, and why?

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4. Goals, learning, and future involvement:

- a. What goals and plans will you have for your next meeting?
- b. What did you learn by studying this relationship and reporting on it (other person, yourself, own attitude to the other person or persons, etc.)?

5. Theological analysis and evaluation:

- a. What theological doctrine, problem, question, principle, issue, etc. is demonstrated or suggested in this case?
- b. What are the theological dynamics of the actual situation (grace, redemption, forgiveness, salvation, hope, etc.)?
- c. How has this report helped you integrate your experience and theological understanding?

As a tool for the discovery of one's pastoral style, strengths and weaknesses, the verbatim focuses on one specific, concrete example of pastoral experience. It indicates what the student did, in fact, not what he or she would like to have done. It is a powerful weapon against wishful thinking.

The verbatim allows the student and the supervisor to reflect together on a sample of the student's actual work.

- a. Clarification of the experience: (Just what did happen?)
- b. Identification of significant events: (Critical moments, etc.)
- c. Presentation of alternatives: (What other ways of responding were available? Was the student limited to one way of responding?)
- d. Integration of reflection process: (How does this personal experience relate to theological, psycho-social, spiritual perspectives related to ministry?)

The verbatim permits the student to discover the meanings of theological terms and categories in the lives of persons (living human documents) with whom he or she is working. The verbatim helps to anchor reflections in concrete experience.

*Suggested length 3-4 pages
Please attach to completed Reflection Tool Cover Sheet*