WHAT IS THE COST OF NOT REFLECTING?

As we introspect, we gain insights about our own abilities, and grow appreciative of our achievements, attributing them to good fortune – but this blinds us to our shortcomings.

Real personal growth and maturity requires time. When we set aside time to reflect, we give ourselves the space to learn more about ourselves so that we can grow and develop.

In the absence of self-reflection, I have witnessed students struggle to sit alone with their emotions, unable to think about them without feeling overwhelmed. They lack the capacity to introspect and analyze their behavior, which is one of the key tools for personal growth.

Reflection can also be applied to the good things in life. Sometimes we downplay our accomplishments and achievements, making progress feel like stagnant inactivity, but it's crucial for our youths, says NUS lecturer Jonathan Sim.

My own reflections (ironically) into this puzzling phenomenon reveal a startling finding: it’s not just a lack of time for reflection that’s problematic, but the inability to do so.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE LACK REFLECTION?

Without reflection, we may never learn from our mistakes, which can lead to repeated errors in the future. We may also fail to notice patterns in our behavior, making it difficult to understand why we react the way we do.

When we lack reflection, we are more likely to make impulsive decisions, as we may not take the time to consider the consequences of our actions.

The lack of reflection can also lead to a lack of empathy, as we may not be able to understand the perspectives of others, or recognize when our actions may be causing harm.

What are the consequences of this lack of reflection?

One concerning consequence of this lack of reflection is a tendency towards harsh self-criticism, with no opportunity for a balanced self-assessment. This breeds a culture of constant achievement, pressuring them to constantly chase measurable success.

Reflection can be used to turn failures into valuable learning opportunities. There are three questions to ask yourself:

- What went wrong?
- What can I do to improve my ability to handle the situation if it happens again?
- What would I say to support my best friend if he/she experienced what I did?

Being able to reflect on what went wrong and what we can do to improve ourselves is a skill that can benefit us throughout life. It allows us to learn from our mistakes and make better decisions in the future.

How can we encourage reflection in our children?

As adults, we can start by modeling the behavior ourselves. By sharing our personal reflections with them to provide strategies and questioning methods that enabled them to introspect, we can teach them how to reflect on their own behavior.

I started leading by example, sharing my personal reflections with them to provide them with structured questions to navigate their thoughts and feelings, explore new perspectives, and gain deeper insights into their experiences. I then realised that students may lack the conceptual resources necessary to guide them with reflections.

In my experience, students who were encouraged to reflect on their behavior showed a significant improvement in their ability to think critically and analyze situations. They were able to identify what they needed to better prepare should similar situations occur.

Reflection is not just for adults. Even if we are overwhelmed on busy days, setting aside just a few moments to reflect can make a big difference. We can use this as an opportunity to foster a culture of reflection in our homes, careers, and communities.

Reflection is a fundamental part of personal growth and development. It allows us to learn from our mistakes, improve our behavior, and become more mature individuals.

As we continue to explore the benefits of reflection, we can move closer to higher education and realize our full potential.