

## Reflection: getting started

### **Focused free writing** (This can help you to start thinking freely)

It can be a useful warm-up for reflection.

- Start from the incident, experience, process that you want to reflect on
- Write for 5-15 minutes **without stopping**, just following your train of thought as if you are talking to yourself on paper / computer
- Don't worry about grammar, spelling, punctuation or anything else
- If you wander off the topic, don't worry, just bring yourself gently back
- When the time is up, skim through for any interesting/useful words, phrases, ideas or thoughts

The idea of free writing, from which focused free writing is adapted, was popularised by Peter Elbow: Elbow, P. (1973) *Writing Without Teachers*. New York: Oxford University Press

### **Visual representations** (These techniques can help you explore your feelings)

#### **1) Journey map**

This is useful for looking back at a longer period of time, for example a semester, course, placement or project, including volunteering work.

- Think of the time that has passed as a journey and draw it as a map
  - You might visualise the territory you passed through and represent it with pictures/symbols (mountains, streams, towns, deserts..)
  - Mark points that seem important to you
  - Annotate your map with thoughts and comments as you look back
- If you want, add directions for how you would like to continue the journey and why

#### **2) If I were a tree..**

This is useful for exploring how you see yourself at the current moment (and, if you do the additional steps, thinking about how you came to be like that / how you might develop in the future)

- Picture yourself (by drawing or in your imagination) as a tree. Imagine as much detail as you can and explain to yourself as you go along what aspect of you each detail reveals
- Add surroundings if you want, to represent things that are affecting the way you are right now
- Keeping to the idea of yourself as a tree, write a very brief history about how you came to be as you are now
- Add more notes or a picture showing what you hope to be like in the future

These activities are based on ones in: Moon, J.(2006) *Learning Journals: A Handbook for Reflective Practice and Development*. (2<sup>nd</sup> edn.) London: Routledge. Many other activities can be found in this book.