

# *The Successful Internship*

PERSONAL, PROFESSIONAL, AND  
CIVIC DEVELOPMENT

THIRD EDITION

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Still other settings, such as business or retail, use the terms *customer* or *consumer* more commonly. We will use the terms *clients*, *population*, and sometimes *clientele* to refer to these individuals and groups.

## WHAT CAN YOU LEARN FROM AN INTERNSHIP?

As is suggested by the title of this book, we view a successful internship as one that facilitates three significant aspects of your development: personal, professional, and civic. You enter the internship at different points in your development in these three categories, and with care and attention, you can (and we hope you will) grow in all three areas as well.

### Personal Development

The internship is an opportunity for intellectual and emotional development that may be important for an internship but will also be important in your life, whatever path you choose. The ability to look critically at information, as well as to think creatively, and to look at issues from multiple viewpoints are essential abilities. So is the ability to communicate clearly both orally and in writing. Solving problems and working in teams are abilities that will serve you at home, at work, and in the community. Many of these abilities are traditional outcomes of a liberal education (Crutcher, 2007), but they are also critical components of any profession (Lemann, 2004).

If you give yourself a chance, you can learn a tremendous amount about yourself. The internship can be a powerful catalyst for personal growth, providing opportunities to have a sense of your potential through work under the supervision of experienced and qualified supervisors. There will be opportunities to accomplish tasks independently and test your creative capacities while doing so. You'll learn more in Chapter 12 about what makes an internship feel satisfying.

### Professional Development

Some students enter an internship primarily for career exploration. They may be studying a traditional liberal arts discipline such as sociology or psychology and want to see some ways in which those disciplines are put into practice. For other students, the internship is the culminating academic experience in a highly structured and sequenced set of experiences and can be a chance to pull together and apply much of what they have learned. And, of course, there are internships whose purpose falls somewhere in between these two positions. For everyone, though, the internship is a chance to take the next step, to acquire more of the knowledge skills, attitudes, and values of a profession, and to explore how well it fits with personal interests and strengths.

The internship also affords you the opportunity to understand the world of work in a more complete way than you do now. Even if you have had full-time jobs, presumably your internship is taking you into an area in which you have little professional

experience. It is also an opportunity to become socialized into the norms and values of a profession (Royse, Dhooper, & Rompf, 2007).

Many internship programs also emphasize academic learning: that is, the applied learning of a particular academic discipline. Internships are a wonderful opportunity for this sort of learning, and in some internships, it is the primary purpose. Even if your goal and primary purpose are to enter a profession, there is an academic component to your learning.

### Civic Development

Civic development refers to the development of personal and professional knowledge, skills, and values for participation in a healthy democracy (Colby, Erlich, Beaumont, & Stephens, 2003; Howard, 2001). An internship can be a vehicle for civic development in two ways: The internship can help you develop knowledge, skills, and values that will make you become a more responsible and contributing member of your community and society regardless of where you live and what you choose to do for your life's work; and the internship can help you become what William Sullivan calls a "Civic Professional" (2005). Because this is an aspect of the internship that in our experience is the least well understood by most interns, let us spend some time elaborating on these two aspects of civic development.

#### CIVIC LEARNING

Regardless of what profession you enter, or even whether you enter a profession at all, the internship is an opportunity for you to learn some of the knowledge, skills, and values that will help you participate fully and productively in your community. Several authors have written about the domains of civic learning (Battistoni, 2006; Colby et al., 2003; Howard, 2001), and we will discuss them in more detail when we discuss your learning contract, but here are a few examples. Civic *knowledge* might mean learning not just about the challenges faced by the people your profession serves but about some of the historical and current social forces that bring about those challenges. It might mean, for example, learning that people who are hungry, poor, or underemployed are not necessarily lazy or unintelligent but that their condition results at least in part from social conditions over which they have no control (Godfrey, 2000). Civic *skills* might mean learning how to advocate successfully for change in a workplace, a neighborhood, or a community to make conditions there more equitable. And civic *values* might include the belief that understanding social issues is an obligation for everyone, not just those in politics or journalism.

#### CIVIC PROFESSIONALISM

In order to understand the term *civic professional*, you need to understand the word *professional* a bit more deeply than perhaps you do now and then consider where the civic component fits in.

**Being a Professional** Many students perceive the internship as a chance to (finally) learn to actually *do* something in their academic major or in an area of interest or curiosity. Although you may have had courses that developed particular skills, the internship

that students bring to these experiences. This book is meant as a guide to the phenomenological experience of the internship to help you anticipate and make sense of the emotional aspect of your work. But because of the varieties we just mentioned, it is very important that you consult your campus supervisor(s) early and often if needed, even if there is no seminar class that accompanies your experience. Decisions about what theories to explore and what to emphasize warrant at the least a consultation with the person overseeing your placement in the field.

## THE CONCEPTS UNDERLYING THIS BOOK

### Experiential Education

An internship, like other kinds of field instruction, is a form of experiential education. Although this approach to learning may not be well understood in many places on your campus, it comes out of a long theoretical and practical tradition, as discussed in the Focus on Theory box below. Experiential education is based on

#### Focus on THEORY

##### How Do You Learn As An Intern?

Experiential learning has philosophical roots dating back to the guild and apprenticeship systems of medieval times through the Industrial Revolution. Toward the end of the 19th century, professional schools required direct and practical experiences as integral components of the academic programs: for example, medical schools and hospital internships, law schools and moot courts and clerkships, normal schools and practice teaching, forestry/agriculture, and field work (Chickering, 1977). Experiential education is described by the National Society for Experiential Education (2006) as *learning activities that involve the learner in the process of active engagement with and critical reflection about phenomena being studied*.

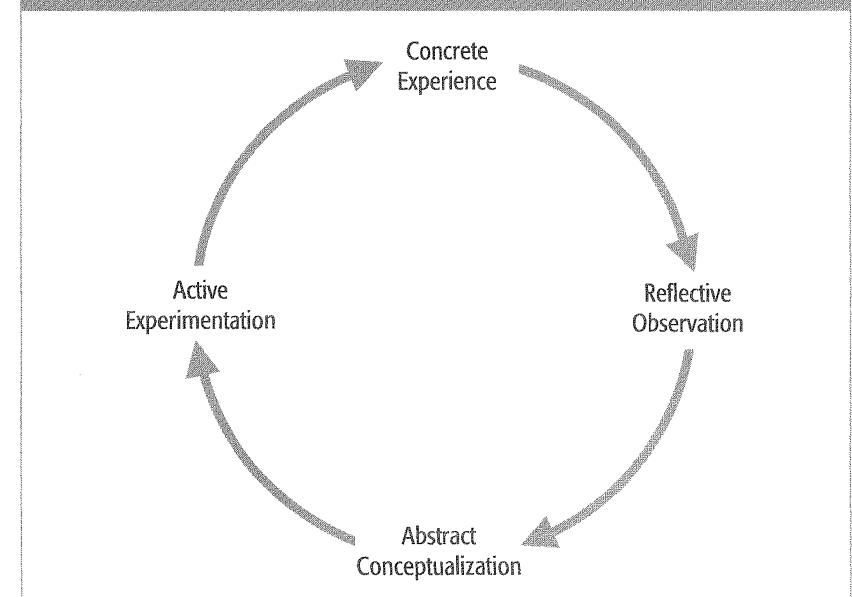
Perhaps the best-known proponent of experiential education was the educational philosopher John Dewey (1916/1944, 1933, 1938, 1940). Dewey strongly believed that “an ounce of experience is better than a ton of theory simply because it is only in experience that any theory has vital and verifiable significance” (1916/44, p. 144). However, he was convinced that even though all real education comes through experience, not all experience is necessarily educative. This idea was reiterated by David Kolb (D. A. Kolb, 1984, 1985; D. A. Kolb & Fry, 1975), who emphasized along with Dewey the need for experience to be organized and processed in some way to facilitate learning. Dewey also felt strongly that the educational environment needs to actively stimulate the student’s development, and it does so through genuine and resolvable problems or conflicts that the student must confront with active thinking in order to grow and learn through the experience.

the premise that for real learning to happen, students need to be active participants in the learning process rather than passive recipients of information given by a teacher. When learning is a passive process, teachers are the centers of energy who tell you the information that they think you need to know. But when learning is an active process, students are the centers of energy. The teacher’s role is to guide or facilitate your learning by taking an interest in your work and coaching you through the experience (Garvin, 1991). As an active participant in the learning process, you play a central role in shaping the content, direction, and pace of your learning.

A key component to experiential education is reflection. Dwight Giles, who has written extensively about service-learning and internships, makes a point about service-learning that we think applies to all the experiences covered in this book. He says that reflection is what connects and integrates the service, or the work in the field, to the learning. Otherwise, whatever theory you study can be emphasized in your classes but not necessarily integrated with practical experience. At the other extreme, practical experience is left to stand on its own. Reflection is the connection, and it is a powerful key to your success, your growth, your learning, and your development (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Giles, 1990, 2002).

David Kolb (1984) originally set forth a cycle of four phases that people go through to benefit from experiential learning, as illustrated in Figure 1.2. The first phase is

FIGURE 1.2  
Kolb’s Experiential Learning Cycle



Source: Kolb and Fry (1975)

concrete experience (CE); students have a specific experience in the classroom, at home, in a field placement, or in some other context. They then reflect on that experience from a variety of perspectives (reflective observation, or RO). During the abstract conceptualization (AC) phase, they try to form generalizations or principles based on their experience and reflection. Finally, they test that theory or idea in a new situation (active experimentation, or AE) and the cycle begins again, since this is another concrete experience. James Zull's research (2002) on the relationship between the brain, learning, and education suggests that Kolb has it right: Education can affect your brain maximally when you, the student intern, have a concrete experience in the field, reflect upon it, connect it to what you already know, and then create your own abstract hypotheses about what you've experienced and test them actively, which in turn will produce a new concrete experience for you.

You may recognize this cycle from your internship. For example, suppose you observe a customer arguing with one of your co-workers. You could then draw on several theories or ideas you have studied to try to understand what was happening or you might seek out some new information from staff. You then begin to form your own ideas about what happened and why, and you might use this knowledge to guide your own interactions with that or another customer. Once you do that, the interaction is itself a new concrete experience, and the cycle begins again.

### Predictable Stages

This book, while grounded in experiential education theory, is based on two "big ideas." The first big idea is that interns go through predictable stages of development during the course of the internship. Over the years, as we have supervised interns and worked with students engaged in service-learning, listened to their concerns and read their journals, talked with their site supervisors, and discussed similar experiences with colleagues and students at other institutions, a predictable progression of concerns and challenges began to emerge. We have organized these concerns into stages, which are modeled after the work of Lacoursiere, Tuckman, and Schutz (Lacoursiere, 1980; Schutz, 1973; Sweitzer & King, 1994; Tuckman & Jensen, 1977). Understanding this progression of concerns will help you, your campus supervisor, and your site supervisor predict and make sense of some of the things that may happen during the course of your placement and think in advance about how to respond. It will also help you view many of your thoughts, feelings, and reactions as normal and even necessary. The experience then becomes a bit less mysterious, and for some people that makes it more comfortable.

For example, if you are feeling excited but also pretty anxious as you begin the placement, you may wonder whether that anxiety is a sign of trouble or where it may have come from. Knowing that it is a common and predictable experience will help you stop worrying about the fact that you are anxious and let you direct your energy toward moving through that anxiety. Here is what one of our students had to say: *Now that I know I am not the only one that is concerned with these feelings, I am better able to share them with others without feeling embarrassed.*

### Self-Understanding

The other "big idea" is that to make sense of your internship, you need to understand more than a stage theory and the experiential nature of learning in the field; you need to understand yourself as well. No two students have the same experience, even if they are working at the same site. That is because any internship experience is the result of a complex interaction between the individuals and groups that comprise the placement site and each individual intern. You are a unique individual, and that uniqueness influences both how people react to you and how you react to people and situations. You view the world through a set of lenses that are yours alone. Therefore, each of you will go through these stages at your own pace and in your own way. Events that trouble you may not trouble your peers and vice versa. Some of you will be very visible and dramatic in both your trials and your tribulations. Others will experience changes more subtly and express them more quietly.

No one experiences an internship in a vacuum and you won't either. You have a life outside the placement (although it may not seem like it sometimes), and your network of family, friends, and academic and professional obligations will shape your experience in a powerful way. We want to help you think about yourself throughout your internship in ways that we believe will lead you to important insights and to a smoother journey on your path to personal, professional, and civic development.


In summary, appreciating the experiential nature of the learning that takes place will help you to understand how different learning by doing is from traditional classroom learning. The stages of an internship will help you understand internships in general and some of the experiences that are apt to happen during your internship. Understanding yourself will help you recognize the particular style in which you will experience the internship. Combining these pieces of knowledge will give you a powerful tool to understand what is happening to you, to meet and deal successfully with the challenges you face, and to take a proactive stance in making your internship the most rewarding experience it can be.

### THE INTERNSHIP SEMINAR

Many of you will be meeting with an instructor and other interns on campus during the semester. We refer to these meetings as seminars. The word *seminar* comes from the Italian *seminare*, which means to sow or seed. The class sessions are a medium that is most helpful in the integration of intellectual and affective learning, encouraging new understanding and creative responses, and strengthening the effectiveness of interpersonal relationships (Williams, 1975). The seminar provides an opportunity for you to share your experiences and what you've learned in a mutually supportive place, discuss problems you are facing and concerns that you have, and seek guidance from your campus instructor for the journey you are taking (Sweitzer & King, 1995; Williams, 1975).

A seminar may be a bit different from other classes you have taken (see table below). For example, one basic assumption of a seminar is that each person has something to contribute (Royle et al., 2007), unlike many classroom experiences where the assumption often is that only the teacher has something to contribute. If everyone has something to contribute, everyone shares the responsibility for the success of the experience. You have additional responsibilities in this type of class, but then you also reap additional benefits.

The importance of the seminar to the quality of the internship cannot be overstated. A workshop given at the National Society for Experiential Education described the seminar as “a keystone to learning” (Hesser & King, 1995) because the quality of learning is enhanced when interns come together as a community of learners.

| Traditional Model  |  Seminar Model   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The teacher has the most to contribute</li> <li>• Many students, one teacher</li> <li>• Students and teachers blame one another when things go wrong</li> <li>• The group is a collection of individuals</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Everyone has something to contribute</li> <li>• All are teachers; all are learners</li> <li>• Students and teachers take collective responsibility</li> <li>• The group is necessary for the accomplishment of learning goals</li> </ul> |

An effective seminar affords opportunities for reflective dialogue, support, the development of important relationships, and a variety of new learning experiences. A seminar class is one in which an exchange of ideas takes place, where information is shared, and mutual problems are discussed. It is also a forum for problem-centered learning. You will have the chance to hear about and perhaps learn new professional skills, strengthen analytic and problem-solving skills, and develop knowledge of other placement sites as well as the communities in which they are located.

Although many courses carry the title of “seminar,” they are not all run the same way. Michael Kahn uses clever metaphors to distinguish different kinds of seminars: the Free for All, the Beauty Contest, the Distinguished House Tour, and the Barn Raising (Kahn, 2003). In the Free for All approach, students compete for the teacher’s attention and approval. The group itself is not necessary; its only function is efficiency, since a group of twenty-five costs the same to run as a group of five. From the individual student’s point of view, however, the other students are only seen as competitors. In the Beauty Contest approach, students show off their wonderful ideas and then spend their time thinking of the next wonderful idea rather than listening to anyone else’s ideas. Once again, the size or even the presence of the group serves no educational purpose. In the Distinguished House Tours approach, each student might present a case, a piece of writing, or an idea, and the group *does* pay careful attention, perhaps with skilled guidance from the instructor. Then they turn their attention to the next student. In a Barn Raising approach, everyone has a role and the group is essential. The group must be of a certain size, and the task can only be accomplished through cooperation and collaboration.

As you think about your internship seminar and its goals, ask yourself where they fit? Is the group really necessary or is it only there for efficiency? We believe that the last two types, the Distinguished House Tour and the Barn Raising, are the most appropriate models for an internship seminar. Using the first of these two models, each intern can be given a chance to talk about his or her experience or perhaps present a case. The intern practices the skill of reflection by trying to interpret the story through various theoretical lenses. The group is there to give feedback and support and perhaps to assist in the reflection and analysis.

If we use the barn raising metaphor, then what is the barn? It is what the group is trying to accomplish together. One possibility is that it is trying to build a collective understanding of the profession using the experiences of different people at different sites. Another possibility is that it is trying to build a collective understanding of the community or communities, of their assets and challenges, and the role that each of the sites and professions might play in maximizing those assets and addressing those challenges.

A third and very common possibility is that the group is trying to create a community of support, where support is provided not simply by the professor but by everyone. It is important that interns have a place where they can talk about their experiences, their feelings and reactions, and their struggles and achievements. Although your friends and family can do some of this for you, it is often helpful to have this exchange with others who are undergoing a similar experience. Support groups exist for almost every purpose; perhaps you have participated in some. While the seminar is not a support group in the formal sense, one of its principal benefits is the quality of connections that you develop with your peers. Through these relationships, you give and receive support. In fact, you receive a double benefit—not only do you give and receive support but you also become more skilled at each of these functions. We will talk more about these skills in the next chapter.

In trying to build a community of support, it is also important to remember that the seminar class is a group, and it goes through developmental stages and group dynamics like any other group. It is not hard to describe the atmosphere that you would want in a group where people are sharing ideas, joys, and fears. But the atmosphere of trust, openness, safety, honesty, and feedback that characterize successful groups (Baird, 2007) does not just happen. It happens in stages, over time, with all members investing in it. Because of the sensitivity of some of the information that is shared in the seminar class (about clients or customers, supervisors, co-workers, the site, or yourself), it is very important to be clear early on about what is expected in terms of confidentiality, disclosure of information, and how interns are to conduct themselves in the class. The obligation to keep that information “in the room” is a common guideline for this course.

Please remember that this is not a therapy group. You are not therapists (nor are your instructors in therapist roles, although they may have those skills). There may be times when certain individuals encounter a challenge in the internship or an experience that evokes feelings that need the attention of a counselor or therapist. Your campus supervisor can help you recognize those instances and locate appropriate resources to deal with them.

“That’s work?” they may say, or “You get credit for that?” They may not understand your need to get to sleep early, work on weekends, or cut back on your social life. Or they may have negative attitudes about the population you are working with, like the homeless, the addicted, or people with HIV/AIDS.

If you have discovered gaps in your support system, we urge you to take steps to fill them. Cultivate new friends; discuss your needs with friends and family. Like investing in self-understanding, it will pay off for you now and later.

## ESSENTIAL ATTITUDES

As we mentioned in the previous chapter, many professions have lists of essential attitudes and values. What we present to you here are attitudes we believe are essential to success in any internship, regardless of the profession.

### *Being Open-Minded*

You approach an internship with at least some preconceived ideas about the profession, the work you will be doing, your likes and dislikes, and so on. In some cases, the internship may confirm every one of those preconceptions. In most cases, though, some will turn out not to be true. It helps a great deal if you keep your mind open to the way things really are, as opposed to the way you wish they were or thought they might be. If you keep an open mind, you can also learn that there are many ways to do a good job, that many styles work well depending on the situation, and that norms and customs that may seem strange, useless, or even destructive to you in fact serve an important purpose.

### *Being Flexible*

We hope that you and your campus support people have planned your internship carefully; if so, the internship site is clear with you about what will happen, when, and with whom. But in most organizations, situations change — and sometimes suddenly. Some environments are very fluid, and things change all the time; emergency shelters are a good example. Other settings, such as corporate settings, are more stable. No organization is immune, though, and when situations change for the organization, sometimes they change for you. The more flexible you can be, the better you will be able to respond. If you can keep focused on the essential learning opportunities that are there for you and that may arise while you are there, you will be less attached to the specific experiences by which you learn.

### *Being Receptive*

It is imperative that you be receptive to constructive feedback on your work. If you are not, you will surely make a bad impression, but more importantly, you will miss out on great learning opportunities. Supervisors, co-workers, other interns, instructors, and even clients (if you have them) can be valuable sources of information about your strengths and weaknesses. We don’t mean to say that you should accept all feedback at face value,

### Think About It

#### **Do Others See You as “Just an Intern”? Is That How You See Yourself?**

Many interns find relief in knowing they are not being treated as “just an intern.” As a matter of fact, feeling like “just an intern” is one of the most prevalent fears and sources of anxiety that interns report having when they begin their internships. You might want to give some thought to these questions now so you can head off an attitudinal shift before it happens at the placement site, whether it’s your attitude or those of site supervisors.

- What exactly does the phrase “just an intern” mean to you?
- How would you know if you were being treated as “just an intern”?

Have you been feeling this way? If so, what is it about your internship that cultivates this attitude in you? In your supervisors or co-workers? If not, what is it about your internship that leaves you feeling like more than “just an intern?”

only that you should consider it from a nondefensive position. If you think of feedback as criticism, you are apt to become defensive. If you react defensively, you will be less likely to get feedback in the future and even less likely to benefit from it.

### *Being Open to Diversity*

It is very likely that you will meet people whose cultural backgrounds are different from your own, by virtue of their race, class, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and in other ways as well. There is a natural human tendency to react with some suspicion to difference, and for some people, their first response is to equate difference with being somehow wrong. Others are tolerant of difference but assume that their way of doing things is really the best way and attempt to get others to change. Yet others take a “live-and-let-live” approach, appearing to accept diversity but not showing any real interest in it. All those stances result, again, in lost opportunities for learning and growth. If you are willing to learn about and from members of other cultural groups, if you look for the strengths and assets in their norms and values, then diversity will enrich your experience, making you a better professional and a better citizen.

## ESSENTIAL SKILLS

Your attitudes form a solid base for you to move forward, while your skills are the hands-on tools you will need. Again, many more skills will be presented later, both in this book and at your placement. But here are some that we consider crucial for you to have right away.

## The Skills and Habits of Reflection

*Reflection to me is the connection that you make between an experience and all of your feelings that surround it. I believe more and more that reflection can only make someone better. Just looking at myself in regard to my internship, school, and personal life, if I never stopped to reflect on the emotions that I was feeling, the thoughts that I was having, and the knowledge that I was being taught, I would never learn and, essentially, never grow.*

### STUDENT REFLECTION

Reflection is a fundamental concept in any kind of experiential education, and the internship is no exception. It is also the hallmark of professional practice (Schon, 1987, 1995; Sullivan, 2005). In order to turn your experience into a learning experience, you need to stop, recall events, and analyze and process them. Although this may sound daunting, you actually do it all the time. If you are walking back from class and find yourself mulling over the remarks of a professor or wondering how a classmate came up with a particularly interesting comment, you are reflecting. If you are in the car and start to think over an argument you have had with your child, your partner, or a friend, trying to figure out what happened and how you could have handled it differently, you are reflecting.

These examples, though, are instances of spontaneous reflection; we want you to make reflection a deliberate and regular habit. Reflection means to look back, and there will come a time when we ask you to look back on your experience as a whole, but for your internship, reflection should start at the beginning and be integral to the process (NSEE, 1998). Developing the habit of productive reflection takes patience, practice, and discipline. It means setting aside quiet time to think because as one of our students put it, “the best answers come from the silence within.” And it means resisting the temptation to just keep going from one activity to the other, in your internship or in your busy life; another intern said, “The internship proceeded at such a fast pace that I often felt it was one step ahead of me.” Paradoxically, we have found that one of the best ways to stop the internship from getting ahead of you is to take time to stop and think.

There are lots of techniques for reflection; we will discuss some specific ones below, but it is not a comprehensive list, and you will need to find the one or ones that work best for you, your instructor, and your situation. Remember, too, that there is a difference between reflecting and recording, although the two can overlap. Your campus instructor, your placement site, or both may have specific ways that they want you to keep a record of what you have done. These records may be used for documentation and kept in official files. They may be used in supervision as well. The primary purpose of reflection, though, is to promote your growth and learning, and the primary audience for a reflective technique is yourself.

Eyler and Giles (1999) have offered important guidelines for selecting and assessing potential reflective techniques. These principles are called the “Five Cs”: *connection*, *continuity*, *context*, *challenge*, and *coaching*. In keeping with these principles, you need to make reflection a habit; structure and connect that reflection to learning goals; and make sure you are challenged to reflect more deeply and through a wider range of lenses. You also need to work with your campus supervisor or instructor to ensure that your choice of techniques makes sense for your particular

## Focus on THEORY

### Eyler and Giles’s Five Cs

The principle of *connection* refers to the importance of connections . . . between the classroom and the field, the campus and the community, your experience and your analysis of it, your feelings and your thoughts, the present and the future, you and your peers, the community, and your campus and site supervisors (Eyler & Giles, 1999).

The second principle is that of *continuity*, which refers to learning as a lifelong process for you, and the importance of developing a habit of reflecting on your field-based learning experiences, be they service-learning, practicum, internship, co-op education, or study abroad. The principle of *context* is the third principle and refers to the thinking and learning you will be doing in the field with the tools you are given, the concepts you are learning, and the facts of a given situation. This principle also refers to the importance of the style you use and the place where your reflecting takes place.

The fourth principle is that of *challenge*, and it refers to the need for you to be challenged in order to grow. It is the challenge of a new situation and new information, such as that of your internship, that creates an ambiguous situation, at odds with your perspectives, and requires that you resolve these differences by developing “more complex and adequate ways of viewing the world. . . .” (pp. 184–185).

The fifth principle is that of *coaching*, which refers to the emotional as well as intellectual support you will need during your internship; the sources of these forms of coaching could come from both your campus and site supervisors, your peers, and your personal support system. By emotional support is meant a safe space where you know that you can express your feelings and share your insights without criticism and with respect. By intellectual support is meant having the opportunities to ask questions, think in new and different ways about situations, and question in retrospect how you think about issues and situations that challenge you (p. 185).

context and that you get the coaching and guidance you need to use these techniques to your best advantage.

### KEEPING A JOURNAL

*I believe that class work and journals are critical to internships because they allow support from peers, feedback from teachers, and reflection on your own work and feelings.*

### STUDENT REFLECTION

One of the most powerful tools for reflection that we know of is keeping a journal. Your instructor may require you to keep a journal of some kind, but even if it is not required in your setting, we strongly recommend that you keep one. We also suggest that you write an entry following every day that you go to your internship. Although it may occasionally seem like a chore, if you put time into it, journal keeping will give you a way to see yourself growing and changing. It also forces you to take time on a

regular basis to reflect on what you are doing. Many of the quotes you have seen and will continue to see throughout this book are drawn from student journals. A well-kept journal is a gold mine to be drawn on for years to come. It becomes a portfolio of the experience as well as a record of the journey.

Again, perhaps the most important thing you can do for your journal is to allot sufficient time to do it. Doing it over lunch on the due date is not a good approach! For many of you, it is going to take practice and focus to learn to write in your journals in the most effective and productive way. As you plan your days and weeks, leave at least thirty minutes after each day at your internship to write.

If you have learning challenges that make it impossible or difficult for you to write, or if writing does not come easily to you, your journal could be tape recorded instead. Your instructor can listen to the tape each week and respond to you on tape or in writing, whichever the two of you prefer. Of course, you will need to negotiate these arrangements with your instructor, but a little time and thought should yield a method that allows you to reflect comfortably on your experience and maintain a dialogue with your instructor.

For those of you who are doing your internship at a great distance from campus, or as part of a distance-learning program, the journal is even more important. In addition to the benefits already mentioned, the journal and responses to it are a way for you and your campus instructor to have a continuing conversation about your work and your reactions to it. Advances in web-based technology such as Blackboard and WebCT make it easy to send journal entries back and forth. If you do not have access to these technologies, e-mail can work just fine.

If you do decide to keep a journal, make sure you are very clear with your instructor, supervisor, and clients about the intent of the journal and issues of confidentiality. If your journal is for your personal use only, then there is no issue. You have full responsibility for its contents and for ensuring that what you write is for your eyes only. However, if you want, or are required, to show it to other interns, your instructor, your supervisor, or anyone else, you must be careful not to disclose information about clients, the placement, or even yourself that is supposed to be kept private (see Chapter 13 for a discussion of the privacy issues in the pervasive new Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA) regulations). Discuss this issue with your instructor and your site supervisor before going too far with your journal. You may also be concerned that you cannot be completely candid in your journal if some of the people you are writing about are going to read it. Some interns keep their journals in loose-leaf format and merely remove any pages they wish to keep private before showing the journal to anyone else.

There are many different approaches to journal writing, and many different reflective techniques. Your instructor may have forms and techniques that you are required to use, but we would like to discuss just a few of the more common forms here.

**Unstructured Journals** The simplest form of journal writing is just to take time after each day to think back on what stood out for you that day. Although there is no “right” length for these entries, they should record what you did and saw that day, new ideas and concepts you were exposed to and how you can use them, and your personal thoughts and feelings about what is happening to you. It may be helpful to divide what you learn at an internship into five categories: (a) knowledge, (b) skills, (c) personal

## Focus on SKILLS

### When You Don't Know What to Write

Many interns tell us they are afraid that there are going to be days when there is just nothing to say. Well, our experience is that you won't have that happen very often, but there may be some days when writing is difficult. For those days, here are some questions to consider, generated by a community service program a number of years ago that apply as well today as they did then (National Crime Prevention Council, 1988):

- What was the best thing that happened today at your site? How did it make you feel?
- What thing(s) did you like least today about your site?
- What compliments did you receive today and how did they make you feel?
- What criticisms, if any, did you receive and how did you react to them?
- How have you changed or grown since you began your work at this site? What have you learned about yourself and the people you work with?
- How does working at this site make you feel? Happy? Proud? Bored? Why do you feel this way?
- Has this experience made you think about possible careers in this field?
- What kind of new skills have you learned since beginning to work at this site and how might they help you?
- What are some of the advantages or disadvantages of working at this occupation?
- If you were in charge of the site, what changes would you make?
- How has your work changed since you first started? Have you been given more responsibility? Has your daily routine changed at all?
- What do you think is your main contribution to the site?
- How do the people you work with treat you? How does it make you feel?
- What have you done this week that makes you proud?
- Has this experience been a rewarding one for you? Why or why not?

From “Reaching Out: School-Based Community Service Programs,” by the National Crime Prevention Council, 1988, p.101. Reprinted with permission.

growth, (d) career development, and (e) civic development. Try to include all these categories in your journal.

**Other Kinds of Journals** (Baird, 2007; Compact, 2003; Inkster & Ross, 1998) Some other forms of journals that have been used with interns include:

- **Key Phrase** journals are those in which you are asked to identify certain key terms or phrases as you see them in your daily experience. A more expanded version of this concept will be discussed later.
- **Double Entry** journals are divided into two columns. In one column, you record what is happening and your reactions to it. In the other, you record any ideas



and concepts from classes or readings that pertain to what you have seen and experienced.

- In **Critical Incident** journals, you identify one incident that stands out over the course of a day or a week and write about it in some depth.

### PROCESSING TECHNIQUES

There are a number of processing techniques that you can use and that you may want to include in your journal. Some techniques are specific to a discipline, such as “verbatims” in pastoral counseling or “process recording” in social work. If you are not in one of these fields, you can use different ones at different times or you can use one consistently, depending on your preference or that of your instructor. There are merits to both choices. Switching techniques from time to time may let you see things you have been missing. On the other hand, using a consistent technique allows you to look back over several entries and look for patterns. Common techniques include process recording (Sheafor & Horejsi, 2003), SOAP notes, and DART notes (Baird, 2007). In two Focus on Skills entries in this chapter, you can read about two other techniques that are less common but that we think are very useful. Three-Column Processing is particularly useful for those just learning the skill of reflection (Weinstein, 1981; Weinstein, Hardin, & Weinstein, 1975). It provides a structured way of writing about incidents (both positive and negative) that you recall so that you can look for tendencies and patterns. The Integrated Processing Model (Kiser, 1998) is a particularly useful approach for developing the art and skill of Practical Reasoning, as it guides you back and forth between theory and practice.

### Focus on SKILLS

#### Weinstein’s Three-Column Processing

Gerald Weinstein (1981; Weinstein, Hardin, & Weinstein, 1975) developed a method of reflecting on events that may be helpful with your reflective journal. Take a moment at the end of the week to recall any events that stand out in your mind. Select one or two (they can be positive or negative). Divide a piece of paper into three columns. In the left-hand column, record each action taken by you or others during the event.

Record only those things that you saw or heard, such as “She frowned,” “He said thank you,” or “They stomped out of the room.” List them one at a time. Now review the list and try to recall what you were thinking when the different actions occurred. When you recall something, enter it in the middle column, directly across from the event. For example, you may have been thinking “What did I do now?” when the people left the room. Finally, read the list again and try to recall what you were feeling at the time each action and thought occurred. Record what you recall in the right-hand column. For example, you may have felt embarrassed, confused, or angry when they walked out.

### Focus on SKILLS

#### Kiser’s Integrative Processing Model

The Integrative Processing Model (1998, 2008) consists of six steps:

- **Gathering Objective Data from Concrete Experience** In this step, you select an experience that you have seen or been part of. You can use a written, videotaped, or audiotaped account of the experience.
- **Reflecting** In this step, you record and assess your own reactions to the experience. You may respond to particular questions or you may use a less structured format.
- **Identifying Relevant Theory and Knowledge** Here, you seek out or recall ideas that can help you make sense of the experience in a variety of ways.
- **Examining Dissonance** Now you review all the ways you have looked at the experience to see whether there are any points of conflict. These conflicts may be between or among competing theories; between what the theory says should happen and what actually did; between what you believe and what the agency seems to value; or between any two or more aspects of the experience. Sometimes this dissonance is resolvable, and sometimes it is not.
- **Articulating Learning** Here, you look back over your writing and thinking and write down the major things you have learned from thinking about this experience.
- **Developing a Plan** This comes next, and here is where you consider the next steps in your learning and your work. You may identify areas you need to know more about and places to pursue that knowledge. In addition, you may identify new goals or approaches you plan to use in your work. Taking these next steps can be another new experience, and the cycle can begin again.

### PORTFOLIOS

Another use for your journal is as part of a portfolio of your experience. You can use a portfolio as a personal record, but many academic programs require them. A portfolio is often used to document and reflect on your entire academic journey in your major, and your internship experience can make a valuable contribution. There are many types of portfolios, and a discussion of them is beyond the scope of this book; however, there are resources listed at the end of the chapter if you want to explore portfolios further. Portfolios can also be valuable assets in an interview for a job, for graduate school, or even for another internship. If you are interested in using portions of your journal for this purpose, start planning for and discussing that project with your instructor. There may be items you will want to remove, such as highly sensitive comments about a person or organization. There may also be items you want to include, such as samples of your work, photographs, brochures, and so on. Your instructor can help you think about this now so that you know what sorts of items to seek out and save and so that you avoid violating confidentiality.

## Communication Skills

You may have already studied the skills of effective communication in your courses. There is a wide range of such skills and we cannot cover them all here. Once again, we have chosen two that we believe are essential for an internship.

### ACTIVE LISTENING

We all listen to others every day, but really listening well is an art, a skill, and a gift to the other person. Active listening means giving the other person your full attention. It means making sure that you understand what the person is trying to tell you. It means avoiding the impulse to rush in with advice or to tell a story about something similar that happened to you (Johnson, 2006). There are, of course, many other ways to respond to someone, and they all have their strengths and weaknesses. The Focus on Theory box in this chapter presents one way to categorize and think about responses.

The most important component of support is listening, so start there. It sounds simple, but think about how rare it is that someone really wants to listen to you, especially when you are struggling. Attention wanders, small talk intrudes, unwanted advice is given. It is a wonderful experience just to have someone listen quietly, attentively, and empathically to whatever you want to say. It is also a wonderful gift to give another person. As one student put it: *“Knowing that others are feeling similar feelings doesn’t make those feelings go away, but it does make me feel better about having them. I feel more comfortable now opening up to my classmates and feel better equipped in encouraging them.”* Listen carefully, and listen actively. Use skills such as paraphrasing to be sure that you understand what the person is trying to say. You will often find that these techniques also help the person to elaborate even more.

Once you have listened, and listened carefully, we suggest that you ask the person what she or he needs at the moment. Advice, analysis, problem solving, or reassurance can be wonderful if they are wanted. Or it may be enough just to be listened to.

### GIVING FEEDBACK

You may be in situations at the site as well as in an internship seminar where you are asked to give feedback to a peer, a co-worker, or even a supervisor. You have almost certainly studied the principles of effective feedback, but they bear repeating. Effective feedback is specific and concrete, as opposed to vague and general; it should refer to very specific aspects of the situation being discussed. It is descriptive rather than interpretive. You can tell the person how you feel about what they did or did not do, but it is not your job to tell them why they did it. It is usually best delivered using an “I” statement rather than a “you” statement. “I had a hard time understanding what was happening when you were describing the situation” is better than “Your story was really confusing.” If you have feelings about what was said, state them directly and attach them to a specific statement or portion of the story. And finally, feedback should always be checked with the receiver to see whether you have been understood and whether you have understood the other person.

## Focus on THEORY

### Modes of Responding

Theories about and guidelines for effective communication abound in the helping professions. You may very well have read some of them. We offer here, as one way to think about responding, categories of responses suggested by David Johnson in his extraordinary book *Reaching Out* (2006). Imagine that you or a peer has just told a story about something at the internship. A patient has relapsed, a co-worker or supervisor has been very harsh in their criticism, a community meeting turned into a shouting match, or whatever other event you want to imagine.

**Advising and Evaluating** If you have taken a helping-skills class, you probably know that giving advice is often not the best approach, but when a friend or classmate is struggling, it can be awfully tempting to offer your heartfelt suggestions. And it can be a great relief as well. But it is not always helpful, and it certainly does not empower your peer to confront and resolve the situation—not to mention the next one! We have found that it is usually best to hold your advice until and unless it is asked for.

**Analyzing and Interpreting** Here, the listener uses theory to interpret what has happened. It may be an opinion about the underlying psychological dynamics of the people involved, a sociological analysis, or any number of other interpretations. These thoughts can be contagious as other students move into the intellectual realm they know so well. But they can also be very distracting, especially if that is not the direction in which the person telling the story wants to go.

**Questioning and Probing** There is a difference here between asking clarifying questions so you are sure you understand and asking questions that take the conversation in a different direction. So, if a student tells a story about a customer and someone asks, “Is this the same customer you spoke about last week?” that is clarifying, but “Who referred this customer to your agency?” is not.

## ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE

In addition to essential personal resources, attitudes, and skills, there is also knowledge that is essential to have as you begin this journey in learning. In this section, we will introduce the sorts of knowledge you may need as well as some issues you could encounter in your role as an intern that could have professional, ethical, and/or legal implications.

### Information About the Site

You will learn a lot about your internship site as the internship progresses, but there are some things you should know before you begin. Depending on how the placement



## Framing the Experience: The Developmental Stages of an Internship

*Internship is like a diamond, in that it is multifaceted; it is also like a roller coaster with its highs and lows.*

*Allowing the stages to happen allows the intern to learn and have positive learning experiences.*

STUDENT REFLECTIONS

Each intern's experience is unique, and yours will be too. You may have a different experience from other interns at the same placement or from any previous field experiences you have had. Placement sites differ too, and you may be in a seminar with peers who are doing very different work with very different groups of people. We continue to be amazed and enriched by the diversity of experiences that interns have as well as the diversity of their personal, professional, and civic development; it is one of the factors that makes working with interns gratifying, even after many years. Over time, we have noticed some similarities that cut across various experiences. Some of the concerns and challenges that interns face seem to occur in a predictable order. Our experience, our review of years of student reflections, plus our study of other stage theories have yielded a developmental theory of internship stages that helps to guide the thinking behind this book (Lacoursiere, 1980; Sweitzer & King, 1994, 1995).

### THE DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE MODEL

*As I read through the stages, I was comforted in knowing that I was not the only one experiencing all the various emotions. Knowing that others have felt the same way calmed my fears a bit to know that (what) I was experiencing was "normal."*

*The focus (of the week) has been for me to normalize my feelings and allow the process to happen.*

STUDENT REFLECTIONS

We have identified five developmental stages that students tend to experience in an internship: Anticipation, Disillusionment, Confrontation, Competence, and Culmination. The learning in each stage is driven by concerns that the intern experiences; the concerns reflect what is most meaningful to the intern at that time in the internship. Once the concerns are no longer the focus of the intern's energy and attention, the intern is able to move forward in the journey of learning. The stages are not completely separate from each other; rather, concerns from earlier and subsequent stages can often be seen, in a less prominent way, during the current stage. Certain concerns and issues are apt to be particularly prominent during a designated stage, along with associated feelings and/or affect.

Each of the stages has its own obstacles for you to deal with and its own opportunities for you to grow through. There are concerns you will have during each stage, and to some extent, those concerns must be resolved for you to move forward and continue learning and growing. The process of resolving the concerns is also a learning experience in and of itself. In each stage, there are important tasks that will help you address the concerns. We cannot predict how quickly you will move through the stages; we can only predict the order in which the stages will occur.

An important distinction to keep in mind as you read and think about each of the stages in this model is what is meant by the terms *morale* and *task accomplishment* (Lacoursiere, 1980), both of which describe important aspects of your internship experience in each of the stages. The term *morale* refers to the interpersonal and intrapersonal tone of your experience at the agency. High morale is characterized by positive feelings about yourself, your work, and the agency. The tone is one of hope, optimism, and enthusiasm, and there is movement toward goals, even in the face of obstacles. As much as you would probably like to have high morale at all times, that is not usually what happens. The good news is that morale can often be recovered when it drops, and there is great learning in the process that only occurs if you fully experience both the drop and the recovery.

The term *task accomplishment* refers not so much to the specific tasks assigned by the placement site but to the attitudes, skills, and knowledge that you hope to acquire. Of course, there may be considerable overlap between the two. Here again, you might hope that the growth of this dimension would follow a steady, linear, upward path, but our experience suggests that this is not the case. There will be periods when you are learning and growing at an incredible pace. There will also be periods where you feel

stuck, and you may be tempted to think you aren't ever going to get where you want to go or that you aren't learning anything. You are always learning, though, or at least the opportunity is always there, and paying attention to what you are learning, rather than dwelling on what you are not, will help you get back on track. Keep in mind that your rate of progress through the stages is affected by many factors, including the number of hours spent at the agency; previous internships or field experiences; your personality; the personal issues and levels of support you bring into the experience; the style of supervision; and the nature of the work.

### *Stage 1: Anticipation*

As you look forward to and begin your internship, there is usually a lot to be excited about. Interns often look forward to the internship for several semesters, and it is your best chance to actually get out there, do what you want to do, and make a contribution to others. For most interns, however, along with the eagerness and hope, there is inevitably some anxiety. It may not be very visible, even to you, but there are enough unknowns in the experience to cause some concern and anxiety in anyone.

For interns, this anxiety generates the first set of concerns, which generally center on the self, the supervisor, co-workers, the community, and in some cases the clientele, such as customers, patients, contractors, citizen groups, or clients. We often refer to this as the "What if . . . ?" stage because interns wonder about things like: What if I can't handle it? What if they won't listen to me? What if they don't like me? or What if my supervisor thinks I know more than I really do? You will probably be concerned about what you will get from the experience and what it is really like to work at this particular site. Many interns wonder whether they "really can do this" and what will be expected of them.

Some interns report fears that they are not competent, that they have gotten this far only by great good luck and that in their internship, they will surely be found out. You may also wonder about your role; you are not in a student role while in the placement, but you are not a full-fledged employee either. Depending on your personal situation, you may also be concerned about your family and the effect that such a demanding experience will have on them.

#### **In Their Own Words**    **Voices of Anticipation**

I had a lot of anticipation going into my internship. Even at training, I asked if it was normal to feel as nervous as I did. The trainer reassured me that if I didn't feel nervous, something would be wrong.

This stage reminded me of my first year in high school and college. I just wanted to be accepted and didn't know how to do that. Although I am starting to gain a sense of what is expected from me in the internship, I am still wondering what staff members and clients think of me. Do they think I am stupid, lazy, ignorant, etc.?

You are going to interact with a number of people during your internship, and it is natural to wonder what to expect from them and whether they will accept you in your new role. You may, for example, be unsure of the role and responsibilities of the site supervisor, and you will be unusual if you don't wonder what your supervisor will think of you and whether he or she will care about you. Those working directly with clientele inevitably wonder about how they will be perceived and accepted by them and just what kinds of demands, behaviors, or problems they are going to exhibit. You may also wonder how you are going to manage the other responsibilities in your life and who is going to be there to support you. And finally, most interns are concerned about how they are received and treated by staff in the role of an intern.

The level of task accomplishment at this time is often relatively low, meaning that you may not be learning the specific things you went there to learn, and that can be frustrating. What is most important at this stage, however, is that you learn to define your goals clearly and specifically and begin considering what skills you will need to reach them. You must also develop a realistic and mutually agreed on set of expectations for the experience. Since you have not yet actually experienced the internship but have probably thought and maybe heard a lot about the agency where you will be working, it is inevitable that you will make assumptions, correctly or incorrectly, about many aspects of the internship (Nesbitt, 1993). Some of these assumptions come from stereotypical portrayals in the media of certain client groups (such as the mentally ill) or organizations (such as detention centers, corporations, law offices, green businesses etc.); others may come from your own experience with certain issues or problems. As much as possible, these assumptions and expectations need to be made explicit and then examined and critiqued. Key to moving beyond this stage is feeling accepted by and developing good relationships with supervisors, co-workers, the community, and/or the clientele.

You might be thinking to yourself that this doesn't really apply to you and that you have had some uncomfortable feelings but nothing you would label as anxiety—at least not yet. And that might well be the case. We have found that students who are in required internships for their academic majors and whose internships are graded do tend to experience this stage with much more intensity than do students in internships that are not graded or are pass/fail and are not related to their academic majors. The pressure of a graded internship that is essential for graduation can be much more stressful than an optional internship selected because of personal interest.

### *Stage 2: Disillusionment*

Sooner or later, you are probably going to reach a time when you are not as certain or as positive about your internship as you would like to be. You may find that you are having some trouble getting up and going to the internship or that you are mumbling under your breath or complaining to friends about it. This experience is by no means universal, but many interns experience some kind of disappointment with their internship.

When the shift in tone happens, as it so often does, one reason for it is that there is almost always a difference between what you anticipated about your internship and

what you really experience.<sup>1</sup> The size of this gap, and hence the dip in your morale, will depend on how successfully you accomplished the tasks of the Anticipation stage. If the concerns of the Anticipation stage have been adequately addressed, you will be less likely to encounter a wildly different reality from what you expected. As this intern noted: “I have never, so far, complained about it, even though it is still so early in the semester. I truly hope that I skip this stage.” Most likely, there will be some discrepancies, and some of them will be troubling. Furthermore, issues may arise that you simply never considered. For some of you, the change will be subtle and barely noticeable; for others, it will be profound and overwhelming. It is important to keep in mind that *having problems* is a necessary and essential element of an internship; otherwise, growth and development will not occur. This is quite different from believing that your *internship* is the problem; this belief will tend to define your entire internship experience and affect all aspects of it as well as affect your sense of self as an intern along with your feelings.

If the Anticipation stage was the “What if . . . ?” stage, then the Disillusionment stage is the “What’s wrong with my internship?” stage. Concerns in this stage center on many familiar aspects of the placement: supervisors, the organization, the “system,” the community, the clientele, such as customers, contractors, patients, citizen groups, or clients, or yourself. However, feelings associated with these concerns often include frustration, anger, sadness, disappointment, and discouragement. You may find yourself directing any or all these *feelings* toward any of these people, the community at large, or the organization itself.

This stage is the onset of what we refer to as *a crisis of growth*. It is possible to become stuck in this stage, and that can have unfortunate consequences. At best,

**In Their Own Words**

**Voices of Disillusionment**

At a certain point, the internship was not what I expected it to be.

I was still unsure of what I would be doing next, and getting up early was very difficult for me. I found myself wanting to go back to bed rather than getting up and going to my internship.

The most critical learning incident of the week was by far the decision to review the stages . . . most particularly stage 2 . . . dissatisfaction . . . it was right on. It was important because it reassured me that my feelings of confusion, frustration and the emotions were normal . . . essential in keeping the intern in touch with reality during (the) internship. It allows me to relax and allow the experience to be true and legitimate. Previously I had thought of “where am I going with this . . . how will this work?”

<sup>1</sup>In some cases, the intern’s primary focus is not the work of the internship but the alluring location of the internship site. For example, some students use an internship in part as a way to be in a major city, like New York, Chicago, or Washington, D.C., to be part of a cultural experience, such as Hollywood, Wall Street, or Walt Disney Pictures, or to work or study internationally. In the case of such geospecific internships, the Disillusionment stage, if it occurs, is likely to focus on some of the unexpected realities of life in this new and intriguing place. Of course, some interns are focused equally on the work and the location. For them, there may be two possible sources of feelings of disillusionment in the internship experience.

learning and growth will be limited; at worst, the placement may have to be renegotiated or even terminated. On the other hand, letting yourself feel the impact of these issues and working through them present tremendous opportunities for personal and professional growth and development.

**Stage 3: Confrontation**

As the saying goes, “The only way around is through.” The way to get past the Disillusionment stage is to face and study what is happening to you. Some interns resist acknowledging any problems, even when their level of task accomplishment is dropping. You may fear that any problems must somehow be your fault or that you will be blamed for them. You may think that “really good” interns would never have these problems. Paradoxically, though, it is the failure to acknowledge and discuss problems that can diminish your learning experience, your performance, and your evaluation by supervisors on site and on campus (Blake & Peterman, 1985).

Moving through this stage often involves taking another look at your expectations, goals, skills, and role. Although you may have set goals that were reasonable at the time, experience may have shown you that some of them are not realistic or the opportunities may have changed. Most importantly, having a clear sense of your role in the organization and what is expected of you in that role is critical to feeling grounded

TABLE 3.1  
Developmental Stages of an Internship

| Stage           | Associated Concerns   | Response Strategies   |
|-----------------|---|---|
| Anticipation    | Positive expectations<br>Acceptance<br>Anxieties<br>Self<br>Supervisor<br>Co-workers<br>Field site<br>Clientele<br>Community<br>Life context  | <i>Examine and critique assumptions</i><br><i>Develop key relationships</i><br><i>Acknowledge concerns</i><br><i>Clarify role and purpose</i><br><i>Make an informed commitment</i><br><i>Develop a learning contract</i> |
| Disillusionment | Unexpected emotions<br>Frustration<br>Anger<br>Confusion<br>Panic<br>Adequacy of skills<br>Breadth of demands<br>Relationship with clientele<br>Operating values of organization<br>Disappointment with supervisor/co-workers | <i>Acknowledge and clarify feelings</i><br><i>Acknowledge gap between expectations and reality</i><br><i>Normalize feelings and behaviors</i><br><i>Acknowledge and clarify specific issues</i>                           |

TABLE 3.1 (continued)

| Stage                | Associated Concerns  | Response Strategies   |
|----------------------|--|---|
| <b>Confrontation</b> | Achieve independence<br>Gain confidence<br>Experience effectiveness<br>Changes in opportunities<br>Interpersonal issues<br>Intrapersonal blocks                      | <i>Reassess goals and expectations</i><br><i>Reassess support systems</i><br><i>Reassess role and purpose</i><br><i>Develop specific strategies</i> |
| <b>Competence</b>    | High accomplishment<br>Investment in work<br>Quality supervision<br>Ethical issues<br>Worthwhile tasks<br>Home/self/career issues                                    | <i>Develop coping strategies</i><br><i>Share concerns openly</i>  |
| <b>Culmination</b>   | Redefine key relationships<br>Termination with patients or clients<br>Transfer of case management<br>Collegial gatherings<br>End of studies<br>Post-internship plans | <i>Set final supervisor meeting</i><br><i>Identify feelings</i><br><i>Engage in introspective/reflective writing</i>                                |

and having a sense of purpose in your work. This is also a time to reexamine and perhaps take the necessary steps to bolster your support system—your lifeline when the going gets tough as well as when the going is great.

There may be interpersonal issues between you and your supervisor or co-workers that are getting in the way or you may be at odds with the way the community or the clientele is approaching a problem or project. What may be needed is some help clarifying these issues and developing a strategy for resolving them. You will need to consider intrapersonal factors, such as mounting personal problems or unexpected crises in your outside life. There may also be aspects of your personal makeup that are contributing to the problems. For example, it may be that your reactions to some typical features of an internship (such as negative

**In Their Own Words** | **Voices of Confrontation**

I recognized, sensed, and felt the great struggle exploring change can initiate within others as well (as me).

I chose to confront this situation and figure out just what was happening to me that made me feel unsatisfied.

Once I confronted these anxieties, though, everything worked out. I am beginning to confront this situation by making something good of this.

feedback, authority, or speaking in or before a group) reflect patterns evident throughout your life that are being exacerbated by the internship. There are many strategies for dealing with these intrapersonal issues, and we will explore them in Section Three of this book.

As the issues raised in the Disillusionment stage are resolved, morale begins to rise, as does task accomplishment. Your task at this stage is to keep working at the issues raised; ways to do just that are discussed later in the book when we explore in greater depth how to manage the necessary confrontation. This is a time in your internship when you may be tempted to “freeze the moment” and resist raising any more issues for fear of spoiling the progress you have made. The temptation is normal, but if you give in to it for long, you may find yourself stagnating or even regressing. However, with each new round of confrontation, you will feel more independent, more effective, and more empowered as a learner. You will have a sense of confidence that comes not just from what you have accomplished, and not from denying problems, but from the knowledge that you can grapple with problems effectively.

**Stage 4: Competence**

As your confidence grows, you will forge ahead into a period of excitement and accomplishment. This is the stage that every intern looks forward to—the reason for the internship. Morale is usually high, as is your sense of investment in your work. Your trust in yourself, your site supervisor, and your co-workers often increases as well. You may find yourself thinking of yourself less as an apprentice and more as a professional. You may even wonder why you are not being paid!

As an emerging professional, you have a solid platform from which to expect, or even demand, more from yourself and your placement. You may find that you want more than you are getting from your assignments, your instructor, or your supervisor. Many

**In Their Own Words** | **Voices of Competence**

The Competence stage consists of being confident in myself. I am looking forward to that aspect of my internship. It's not that I have never been competent in a task before. It is just that the sense of professionalism will be much greater.

(The site supervisor) gave me some good guidance and lots of space to create what I wanted. This is usually a good thing for me. To be left alone to do what I wish. I felt intimidated by my audience, so I want to be perfect in what I present and not look stupid. So, I have had some difficulty getting it all together.

I feel that all my years of schooling have been for this exact purpose. The minute I walked in the door, I felt at home . . . and in my element. . . . It's like nothing I have ever felt before.

While I was aware that I had experienced a difficult day (at work), my focus at the internship at night was to be more attentive. It meant putting into perspective all that occurred during the day in order to be effective at night. Balancing the work during the day continues to be the hard work of negotiating the intellect and the affect.

interns also report that during this time, they are better able to appreciate the ethical issues that arise in their placements and are more willing to confront them. These are all positive developments. If taken too far, though, they can lead to perfectionism. You may begin to apply unreasonable standards to those around you, to yourself, or both. Excellence, not perfection, is your goal in this stage.

Another issue that can arise during this time is the stress of juggling your life outside the internship with your increasing commitment to the work. You may feel pulls on your time and loyalties throughout your internship; however, they may feel stronger now. That is because your earlier anxieties and roadblocks may have demanded too much of your attention to think about these conflicts at the time. Now that you have moved beyond the earlier crises, conflicts between home, campus, internship, and friends can surface more easily. This can be overwhelming, especially if you strive for perfection rather than excellence in all these aspects of your life.

### Stage 5: Culmination

This stage occurs as your internship approaches its ending date. The end of the internship, coupled with the end of college or university experience, a variety of feeling in your achievements and soon in direct service, you may also feel a sense of concern that no one will be as effective with certain customers or clients as you have been (and you may be right!).

For those of you who are ending your college career, you may be concerned with continuing your education, employment, or economic survival. Relationships with friends, family members, lovers, and spouses that have been organized around your role as a student have to be reorganized. In any case, there are many goodbyes to be said. Goodbyes are never easy, and for some people, they are very difficult.

Often, interns find ways to avoid facing and expressing these feelings, particularly the negative ones. Avoidance behaviors may include joking, lateness, or absence. Some interns may devalue the experience—they begin saying it hasn't been all that great or find increasing fault with the placement site, the community, the supervisors or the clientele. Many interns find themselves having a variety of feelings and reactions—some of them conflicting and changing by the hour. This can be very confusing and upsetting.

To address the concerns of this stage, you need to focus on your feelings (whatever they may be), have an appropriate place to express them, and find satisfying

#### In Their Own Words

#### Voices of Culmination

I looked forward to entering the Competence stage, but I am not looking forward to stage 5—when placement ends.

The end of this experience will be sad . . . everything is ending . . . but the reflections will be great.

ways to say goodbye to staff, supervisors, community groups, customers, patients, clients, and, in some cases, other interns—both at the site and in an internship seminar on campus.

Of course, if you do not pay attention to the concerns of the Culmination stage, the internship will end just the same. However, you could be left with an empty and unfinished or unfulfilled feeling. In some cases, interns struggling with the Culmination stage actually sabotage their internship by allowing their discomfort about ending to color their perceptions of the entire experience and affect others' perceptions of their work.

### SUMMARY

*Reading about (the) stages, I was amazed to see how much in common I had with the student reflections.*

*Reflecting on a recent confrontational situation at my site . . . I began to read (about the stage), but after a few pages, I stopped. I had two immediate reactions: One, I wish I had this material a few weeks ago. It would have helped me greatly. . . . Two, I would prefer to read (this) text from start to finish . . . (even now that my internship has ended) . . . to follow the internship process “postmortem.”*

*aware that my stages and concerns are not unique to me . . . One strategy to respond to the concerns of each of the stages. The vocabulary (of the stages) gave me a way to express myself . . . to work to normalize my feelings and behaviors . . . This week, I acknowledged feelings, reassessed goals, expectations, and support systems, began to develop strategies, and I shared concerns and started to identify unfinished business. These experiences spurred me to make decisions—to choose behaviors I would not have in the past.*

#### STUDENT REFLECTIONS

Now you have a sense of what is ahead in your internship and in this book. And you have an awareness of the resources, qualities, and essential skills that you will need to navigate the course ahead. Remember that even though these stages may hold true for many or even most interns, especially when viewed from the outside, both the pace with which you move through the stages and the phenomenological experience of being in each of them will vary a great deal from individual to individual. As you move through the experience of your internship, you will find that the chapters that follow explore each stage in more depth and also encourage you to remain focused on aspects of yourself, which you will explore in the next chapter.

### For Contemplation

#### PERSONAL REFLECTION

As you read the description of the stages of an internship, did anything seem remotely familiar? Did the stages remind of you of any other experiences you have had? As you read the stages, did any one in particular stay in your mind or attract your attention? Why?

## SEMINAR SPRINGBOARDS

Think about the issues raised for you by your understanding of the stages and discuss your thoughts with your peers. Are there issues that the stages do not obviously address? What are your thoughts about knowing about these stages at this point in your placement?

### *For Further Exploration*

- Birkenmaier, J., & Berg-Weger, M. (2007). *The practicum companion for social work: Integrating class and field work* (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon  
Thorough, contributive fieldwork text for the social work student.
- Baird, B. N. (2007). *The internship, practicum and field placement handbook* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.  
Comprehensive and especially useful to graduate students in the helping professions.
- Boylan, J. C., Malley, P. B., & Reilly, E. P. (2001). *Practicum & internship: Textbook and resource guide for counseling and psychotherapy* (3rd ed.). Philadelphia: Bruner-Routledge.  
Takes a comprehensive approach to many aspects of graduate counseling internships.
- Chiaferi, R., & Griffin, M. (1997). *Developing fieldwork skills: A guide for human services, counseling and social work students*. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole.  
Offers a developmental framework of stages for the intern-supervisor relationship.
- Chisholm, L. A. (2000). *Charting a hero's journey*. New York: The International Partnership for Service-Learning.  
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- Cochrane, S. F., & Hanley, M. M. (1999). *Learning through field: A developmental approach*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.  
Takes a developmental approach to the fieldwork experience in social work education.
- Faiver, C., Eisengart, S., & Colona, R. (2000). *The counselor intern's handbook* (2nd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.  
Takes a focused, pragmatic approach to counseling field experiences.
- Gordon, G. R., McBride, R. B., & Hage, H. H. (2005). *Criminal justice internships: Theory into practice* (5th ed.). Cincinnati, OH: Anderson Publishing.  
Offers the undergraduate criminal justice intern a comprehensive guide to issues specific to a criminal justice internship.
- Grobman, L. M., Ed. (2002). *The field placement survival guide: What you need to know to get the most from your social work practicum*. Harrisburg, PA: White Hat Communications.