

# Professional growth

*CPD, reflection & AI*

David Winter



# Overview

- A bit about me
- Three questions to think about
- The challenges of CPD
- The importance and difficulties of reflection
- How do you promote critical reflection in the age of AI?



# A bit about me

- HE careers practitioner, manager and consultant
- Trainer — Guidance Skills (Advanced)
- Blogger — Careers – in Theory
- NICEC Fellow
- AGCAS Learning Director
- Module leader — strategic employability in HE
- Visiting Lecturer — career theories
  
- Narrative techniques in reflective practice: [doi.org/10.20856/jnicec.2804](https://doi.org/10.20856/jnicec.2804)
- Using AI in reflective practice: [www.linkedin.com/pulse/using-ai-reflective-practice-david-winter-7wrze/](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/using-ai-reflective-practice-david-winter-7wrze/)
- Hall of Mirrors: [sites.google.com/view/hallofmirrors](https://sites.google.com/view/hallofmirrors)
- Wintry Thinking: [wintrythinking.wordpress.com](https://wintrythinking.wordpress.com)



# Three questions to think about

- **What experience has had the biggest impact on your professional development and confidence?**  
(*#impact*)
- **How do you incorporate reflection into your professional development?**  
(*#reflection*)
- **What makes reflection difficult (for you and others)?**  
(*#challenge*)



# The challenges facing CPD

- **Money** — provider and purchaser budgets
- **Time** — demands, deliverables
- **Change** — technology, policy, resourcing
- **Professional diversity** — contexts, roles



# Benefits of a good reflective practitioner

- They teach themselves
- They keep improving
- They adapt to change
- They personalise their own learning



# Why is reflection hard?

- Often assumed not taught
- Pays off more easily in repeated activities
- Requires time and space
- Vulnerable to bias (confirmation, hindsight)
- Depends on acknowledgement of imperfection (dissonance)

## Affirmation

Reinforce existing behaviours/thinking

## Challenge

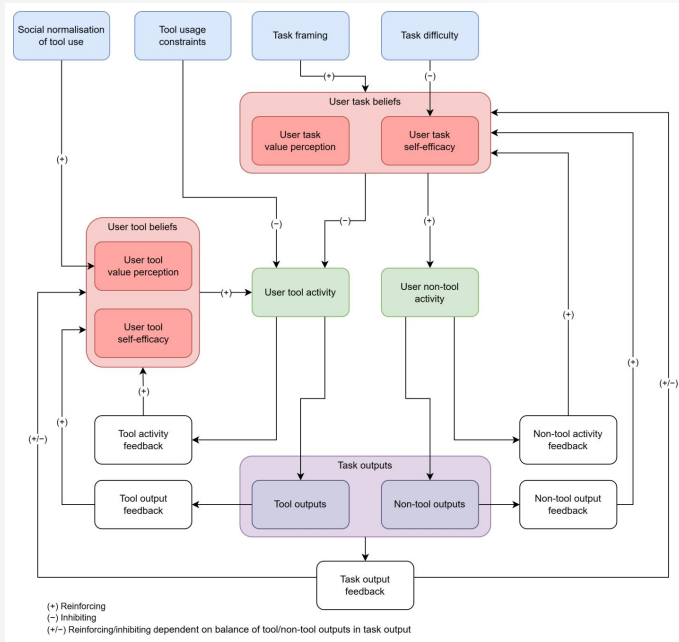
Question existing behaviours/thinking

# Does AI make reflection harder or easier?

<b>Level 4 Dialogue</b>	Collaborative thinking & ideation	<b>AI as provocateur</b> Gets you thinking differently
<b>Level 3 Feedback</b>	Iterative output improvement	<b>AI as performance coach</b> Helps you do your tasks better
<b>Level 2 Combination</b>	Hybrid output co-creation	<b>AI as contributor</b> Lets you get on with the vital bits
<b>Level 1 Utilisation</b>	Basic output generation	<b>AI as black-box copywriter</b> Does the task for you

<https://wintrythinking.wordpress.com/2025/02/15/types-of-assistive-tool-use/>

# AI and cognitive tasks

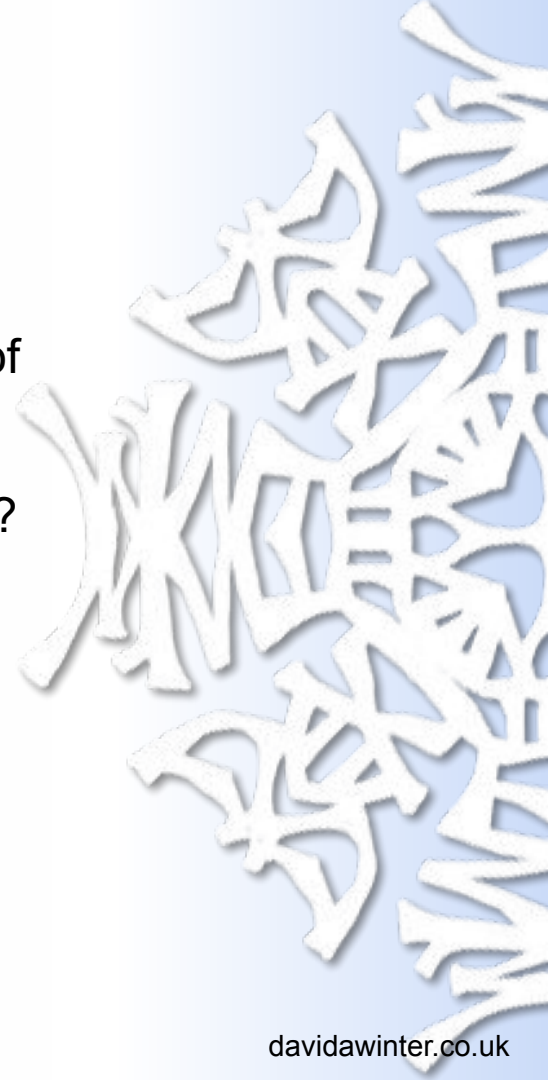


More likely to use AI as a shortcut for thinking task if:

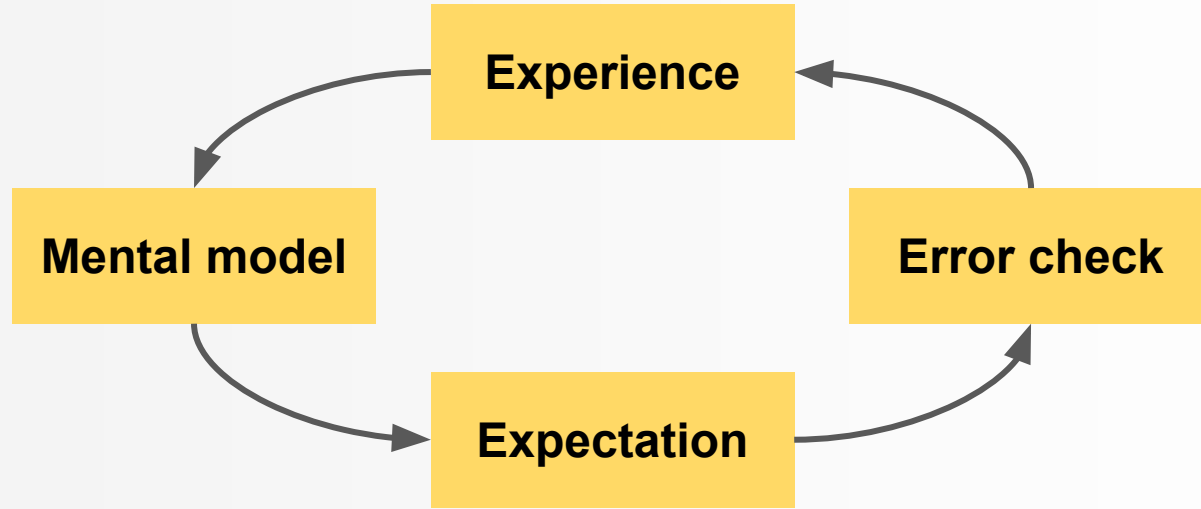
- don't understand task
- low self-efficacy
- don't value the outcome
- don't value the process

# Some thoughts

- Should reflection be a core professional competency?
- Should we teaching explicit processes and techniques of reflection?
- Should we focus on emotional preparation for reflection?



# Predictive coding



## Assimilation

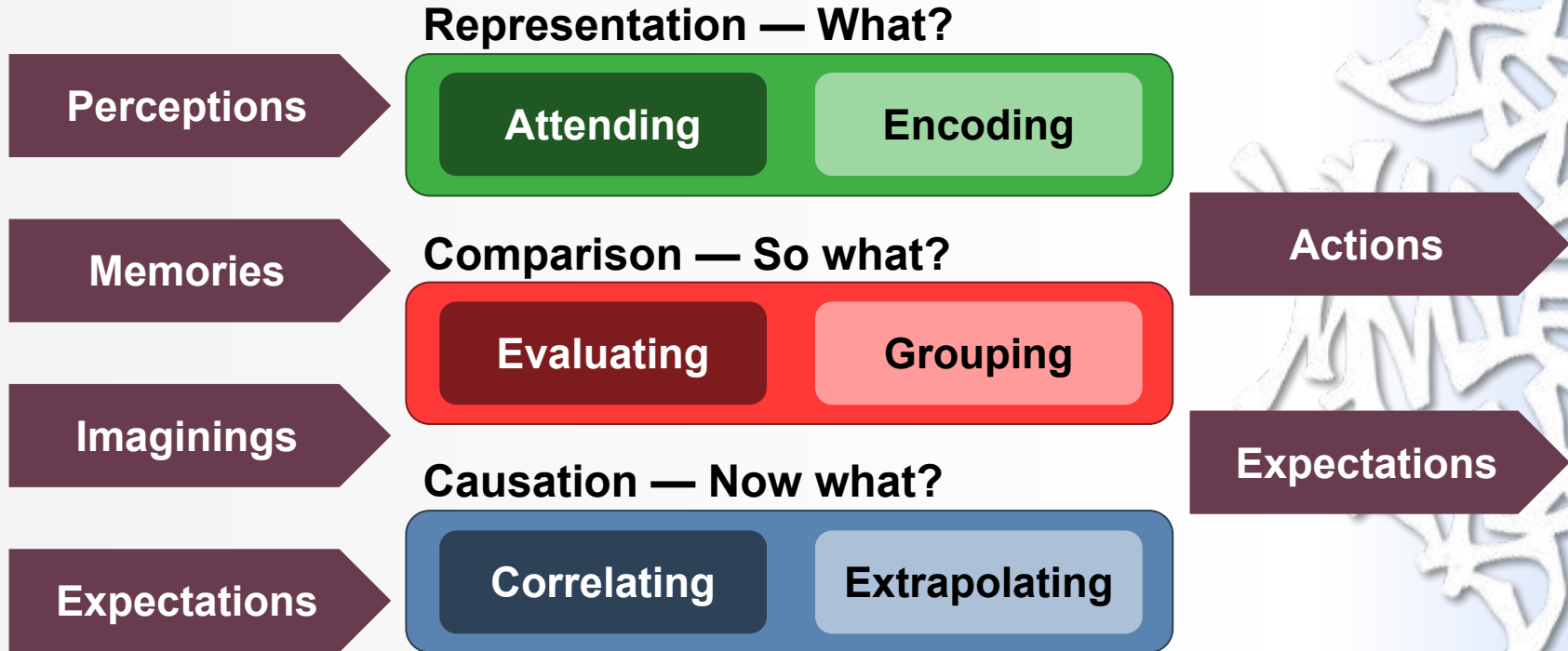
Experience adds to existing mental models

## Accommodation

Experience transforms mental models



# Elements of reflection



# Elements of active learning design

## Exploration

Freedom to explore rich learning environments  
Build understanding from personal experience

## Errors

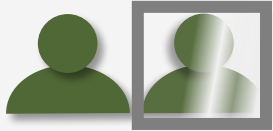
Developing a growth/mastery mindset  
Normalising, encouraging and modelling errors

## Emotions

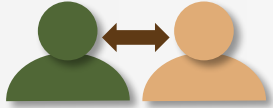
Acknowledging emotional component of learning  
Encouraging emotional regulation

# Four mirrors of critical reflection

What are you comparing your experiences to?



**Autobiographical** – your expectations and experience



**Stakeholder** – the expectations and experiences of those impacted by your work



**Peer** – the expectations and experiences of colleagues / role models



**Theory** – the idealised expectations of models / frameworks and the experience of research

Adapted from Brookfield (1995)