



Personal Resilience Workbook

Professional Identity

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Gail Kinman,
Louise Grant and
Lisa Bostock

Professional Identity



Understanding how you contribute to your organisation's purpose is crucial for a strong professional identity. This describes a person's understanding, beliefs, and values associated with their professional role or career. Professional identity fosters a sense of purpose, belonging and career fulfilment. The following characteristics are particularly important:

- A clear understanding of your role and how they contribute to organisational goals.
- Alignment of personal values with organisational values.
- A strong sense of purpose driven by professional responsibilities and commitment to a public service ethos.
- Feelings of belonging, competence and purpose within the profession.
- Optimism about the organisation's goals and a clear understanding of what good professional practice entails.

Professional identity questions
1. Generally, I feel optimistic about the future and what can realistically be achieved in my job.
2. I know what I need to do to meet my goals and objectives.
3. I can work effectively with colleagues to achieve positive outcomes.
4. I find my job meaningful.
5. My values are closely aligned with those of the organisation I work for .
6. I recognise how my individual contribution helps meet my organisation's goals and objectives.

7. I have a strong sense of belonging and purpose within my profession.
8. I have a clear understanding of what constitutes good professional practice and how I can achieve it.
9. I take time to celebrate my achievements and successes.
10. My sense of professional identity has become stronger as I am progressing my career.
11. My job plays a significant role in shaping my personal identity.
12. I feel a sense of pride and honour to be a member of my profession.
13. I believe I do a job that makes a strong contribution to society.

Professional Identity - Core Actions



Core Action 1: Making The Most Of Continuing Professional Development

Reflective Pause

How has participating in CPD activities enhanced my professional skills and knowledge, and how can I apply these improvements to my practice to benefit both my career and the individuals I serve?

The professional identity of a health and social care practitioner is deeply connected to the values, beliefs, attitudes, behaviours and skills that characterise their profession. Continuous improvement of expertise and skills is vital for practitioners, ensuring ongoing professional development. Your professional or governing body may have established frameworks and requirements for practitioners to engage in Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for continued registration. More generally, CPD offers a structured approach to lifelong learning, crucial for enriching knowledge and skills, advancing career trajectories, and delivering optimal support to people accessing services.

Below are several advantages of engaging with CPD and some tips for maximising these opportunities:

- **Enhanced knowledge and skills:** CPD activities provide opportunities for learning new information, techniques and best practices relevant to your field within health and social care, enriching your professional practice.
- **Career progression:** By actively participating in CPD, you demonstrate commitment to your profession, which can lead to career advancement opportunities and enhanced employability.
- **Quality service delivery:** Continuous learning ensures you stay updated with the latest developments in your field, so you can provide high-quality care and support to people who access services.

- **Professional networking:** CPD events and activities often provide networking opportunities with peers, experts and stakeholders in your field, fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange. Building professional relationships through these events can also help you establish strong support networks.
- **Personal satisfaction:** Participating in CPD enables you to explore areas of interest or passion, leading to personal fulfilment and a sense of achievement.

Getting the best out of CPD to enhance your professional identity

- **Set clear goals:** Identify what you want to achieve through CPD. Are you aiming to acquire new skills or advance your career? Having a clear objective will provide direction for your development efforts and help shape your professional identity.
- **Plan ahead:** Schedule CPD activities in advance, taking into account your professional responsibilities and personal commitments to ensure effective time management. Regularly allocate time for learning and development to stay on track.
- **Identify relevant opportunities:** Look for CPD activities that align with your objectives, passions and specialist area. Consider options such as workshops, seminars, online courses and informal learning opportunities like engaging in online forums.
- **Stay updated:** Keep abreast of emerging trends, research findings and best practices relevant to your profession. Regularly review professional literature, attend conferences and participate in online discussions to stay up to date in your field.
- **Diversify learning methods:** Mixing different learning methods can provide a well-rounded learning experience and accommodate different learning styles.
- **Engage actively:** Active participation in CPD activities goes beyond merely attending sessions. It involves fully engaging by asking questions and sharing experiences with peers. This interactive approach fosters meaningful dialogue, enhances learning outcomes and strengthens professional relationships.
- **Reflect on and apply your learning:** Take time to reflect on what you have learned and how it can be integrated into your work. Identify key insights, skills, or knowledge gained from each activity and consider how you can apply them to enhance your work with people who access services.

- **Seek feedback:** Solicit feedback from colleagues, mentors or supervisors regarding your CPD. They can offer valuable insights and perspectives, helping you identify areas for further development and growth.
- **Network:** Use CPD opportunities to connect with professionals in your field. Building relationships with peers and experts can provide valuable support, insights and opportunities for collaboration.
- **Document your progress:** Maintaining a record of your CPD activities is useful for your professional registration, appraisals, job applications, and career advancement.

Core Action 2: Developing Professional Networking Skills

Networking enhances your professional identity, expands your contacts and offers opportunities for personal and career growth. It helps you develop a sense of belonging and purpose within your profession, boosts self-confidence and provides support during challenging times. Networking also allows you to learn from others and mentor individuals embarking on their careers, which is highly fulfilling.

Developing professional networking skills involves a combination of strategies and practices. Here are some steps you can take to enhance your networking abilities:

- **Define your goals:** Identify what you want to achieve through networking. Are you seeking career opportunities, mentorship, or professional insights?
- **Build your online presence:** Maintain a LinkedIn profile (see below) and engage with relevant online communities and forums. Share insights, participate in discussions and connect with professionals in your field.
- **Attend networking events:** If possible, attend relevant seminars, workshops, and other networking events. They provide opportunities to meet new people and build connections.
- **Initiate conversations:** Approach people with confidence and initiate conversations by starting with a friendly introduction. Express genuine interest in their work and ask open-ended questions to encourage dialogue. If approaching new people feels daunting, seek support from peers or managers. Engaging in role-playing scenarios with peers can help initiate conversations and employing strategies outlined in sections focused on self-efficacy and confidence-building will also be helpful.

- **Active listening:** Practice active listening during conversations (see Core Action 3.1). Pay close attention to what others are saying, ask relevant follow-up questions and show empathy and understanding.
- **Follow up:** After meeting someone, send a follow-up email or message to reinforce the connection. Express interest in staying in touch and offer to provide value where possible.
- **Add value:** Seek opportunities to contribute to your network. Share useful resources, make introductions, or offer insights based on your expertise. Networking thrives on mutual benefit, and providing value enhances and deepens connections over time.
- **Sustain relationships:** Maintaining long-term connections demands continuous effort and engagement. Nurture your professional relationships by staying in touch, checking in regularly, and offering support when needed.
- **Seek mentorship:** Identify experienced practitioners in your field who can offer guidance and mentorship. Their insights, advice and support can be invaluable for your career development. Additionally, consider mentoring others as a way to give back and contribute to your professional community.

When used professionally, social media is a valuable platform for networking, building important connections, and staying up to date of current research, best practice and career prospects. Quick win 4.4. below offers some ideas on using LinkedIn for networking purposes and developing your professional identity

Core Action 3: Making The Most Of Feedback

Reflective Pause:

How has your approach to receiving and integrating feedback evolved over time? What strategies have you found most effective in using feedback to enhance your personal and professional growth?

While this workbook emphasises the importance of focusing on strengths, it is equally important to acknowledge and address constructive feedback. Feedback serves not only to evaluate current performance but also a way to help you advance professionally. However, receiving challenging feedback can evoke feelings of anxiety or distress, which are normal human responses, particularly when striving for success.

Choosing a feedback giver (assessor) whom you like and respect is essential. Knowing that the individual has your best interests at heart increases the likelihood of embracing the feedback provided. Additionally, preparing for feedback and communicating to the assessor what would contribute to your professional development can be beneficial.

Here are some tips to help you to prepare for feedback and maximise its benefits:

- **Approach with an open mind:** Be receptive to feedback, regardless of whether it is positive or constructive. Embrace it as an opportunity for growth and improvement.
- **Think before responding:** Take a moment to pause to consider your response when receiving feedback. Recognise that your 'chimp brain', which reacts instinctively and emotionally, may perceive feedback as a threat to your self-esteem or identity.
- **Seek clarification when unsure:** If the feedback is unclear, ask the assessor for specific examples or further information.
- **Listen actively:** Respectfully listen to the assessor.
- **Identify patterns:** Look for recurring themes in the feedback you receive to pinpoint areas for improvement.
- **Set goals:** Use feedback to set actionable goals by establishing specific, measurable objectives that address the areas highlighted.
- **Seek support:** If needed, seek support from mentors, colleagues, or professionals to help you address areas identified in the feedback.
- **Implement changes:** Act on the feedback by implementing changes or adjustments to your behaviour, performance, or approach.
- **Monitor progress:** Regularly assess your progress towards addressing the feedback and evaluate the impact of any changes made.
- **Express your gratitude:** Show appreciation to those who provide you with feedback, regardless of its nature. This gesture encourages ongoing feedback and strengthens professional relationships.
- **Give feedback:** Offer constructive feedback to others to contribute to a culture of continuous improvement and mutual growth.

Quick win 4.1 below provides some tips on how to gain 360-degree feedback.

Core Action 4: Showing Moral Courage And Maintaining Ethical Practice

Fairness and the commitment to confronting injustice and inequality are central to most professional codes of ethics. Professional values uphold ethical standards that validate justifiable actions, forming the foundation of health and social care practices and guiding professional identity. Codes of practice set clear standards for good practice, while policies, procedures and legislation also guide our work.

Reflective Pause:

How has encountering ethical challenges and witnessing injustices in my professional role impacted my sense of moral integrity and commitment to advocating for change?

Health and social care work can evoke feelings of dissonance or moral injury, where ethical dilemmas challenge our personal or professional values. Moral injury refers to the distress resulting from actions (or inactions) that violate a person's moral or ethical code. For example:

- A social care practitioner's commitment to alleviating distress may be compromised when working with someone with dementia. For example, planned respite visits, while essential for caregivers to have a break, may cause upset for the individual receiving care.
- A social worker may encounter bureaucratic barriers in their system that prevent them from providing sufficient support and resources to marginalised communities. Despite advocating for change, they might feel powerless and frustrated, experiencing moral injury as they witness ongoing harm and injustice.
- A paramedic working in an understaffed ambulance service may experience moral injury when they are required to respond to multiple emergency calls and are unable to provide the level of care they believe their patients require.

Moral injury has become more prevalent in health and social care, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, due to difficult decisions or actions many have been obliged to take (Williamson et al., 2020). It is crucial for your professional identity to recognise situations where you may be at risk of moral injury and seek supportive people to discuss your feelings before they impact your wellbeing.

Organisations must address moral injury among employees, especially in professions like health and social care, where ethical dilemmas are common. Promoting an ethical culture, establishing ethical guidelines, providing training and support and encouraging open communication are essential. Leaders should be accessible and proactive in addressing ethical concerns. Practitioners also bear responsibility for developing moral resilience, which is the ability to navigate ethical challenges and uphold integrity during adversity. There are several ways to enhance your moral resilience:

- **Reflect on values:** Clarify your personal and professional values and how they guide your actions in challenging situations.
- **Build self-awareness:** Develop self-awareness to recognise your moral compass, emotions, triggers and biases. This awareness enhances your ability respond effectively to ethical dilemmas.
- **Seek training:** Keep updated about ethical principles, professional standards and relevant laws and regulations. Continuous learning provides the knowledge and skills required to make ethical decisions.
- **Practice ethical decision-making:** Establish a systematic approach to ethical decision-making. Weigh the consequences of various actions, evaluate alternatives and, wherever possible, prioritise actions aligned with your values and principles.
- **Build supportive relationships:** When facing moral challenges, seek out support and guidance from colleagues, mentors, and supervisors.
- **Engage in moral dialogue:** Encourage open discussions about ethical dilemmas with peers and colleagues to clarify values, perspectives, and potential solutions.
- **Develop coping strategies:** Practicing mindfulness, self-care and stress-reduction techniques can help manage stress and uncertainty in ethically challenging situations.
- **Seek supervision:** When facing complex ethical dilemmas, obtain guidance, perspective and support by consulting with supervisors, ethics committees, or trusted advisors.
- **Learn from experience:** Reflect on past experiences to learn from both successes and challenges. Analyse how you navigated ethical dilemmas, identifying areas for growth

- **Advocate for ethical practice:** Speak up against unethical behaviour and advocate for policies and practices that uphold ethical standards.

As well as shaping our interactions with people who access services, adherence to ethics and values should foster inclusive and respectful working environments. Despite efforts in the health and social care sector to enhance inclusivity, inequalities, microaggressions, racism and discrimination persist. Organisations are responsible for creating fair workplaces, but they consist of individuals. When individuals collectively challenge discrimination and inequality, it improves working conditions for everyone, strengthens professional identity and moral purpose, and supports resilience and wellbeing.

Being an ally in the workplace demonstrates moral courage aligned with professional ethics. Allyship involves actively supporting and advocating for marginalised colleagues or groups. It requires individuals with privilege to use their position to challenge discrimination, promote inclusivity, and amplify marginalised voices. This support includes speaking up against injustice, listening actively to marginalised individuals and using influence to create equitable policies and practices. Fostering a culture of allyship makes workplaces more inclusive, supportive and respectful for all employees.

Allyship in the workplace reinforces professional identity by demonstrating values and commitment to social justice. Active engagement in allyship shapes how employees are perceived by colleagues and stakeholders, influencing their reputation within the organisation.

Being an active bystander is crucial in demonstrating allyship. An active bystander intervenes in situations of potentially harmful behaviour or wrongdoing, taking steps to prevent harm. This may involve directly intervening to stop harmful behaviour, confronting the perpetrator, or seeking assistance from authorities or others who can help.

Quick wins 4.2 and 4.4 outline some ways you can be an effective ally and an active bystander.

