

along with the technical knowledge and skills needed to develop clinical expertise.

In addition to enhancing our clinical decision-making skills, reflection is the key to self-assessment and self-monitoring, which are critical to professional development and lifelong learning. It is through the reflective process that we begin to hone our self-assessment skills.^{23,42,53} Self-critique is what allows us to recognize the limits of our own knowledge; it is only once we recognize our own limitations that we begin to seek new knowledge and skills. It is this ongoing critique that leads to continuous improvement in practice and encourages lifelong learning. The process of self-monitoring also enables us to be mindful practitioners. Epstein³⁸ describes a *mindful practitioner* as one who “attends, in a nonjudgmental way, to his or her own physical and mental processes during ordinary everyday tasks to act with clarity and insight.” Reflection and mindful practice enable us to recognize how our emotions and biases may be influencing our thoughts and actions. For example, if you are upset with your patient because he or she did not follow your instructions and reinjured him- or herself, you may interact differently than if you were empathetic instead.³⁴ Through this metacognitive or self-monitoring process we can begin to recognize our own “blind spots” or areas of deficiency in our thinking and decision making that we might not have otherwise recognized.³⁸

Finally, through the reflective and critical-thinking processes described by Schön, Mezirow, and Brookfield,^{9,11,30,31,51,54,55} we can begin to recognize our own values, beliefs, attitudes, and assumptions, and how they might differ from those of our colleagues, patients, and families. Integrating the perspective of the practitioner and the patient in the clinical decision-making process ultimately enhances patient adherence and outcomes. Reflection, underlying mindful practice, is what enables us to recognize our own beliefs, attitudes, and assumptions. Of equal importance, reflection and mindful practice enable us to recognize and consider our patients’ beliefs, values, and assumptions, making for a more effective therapeutic relationship. Figure 2-1⁴¹ depicts the essence of an expert practitioner; reflective, mindful, and self-monitoring while engaged in patient care.

KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER

Reflection:

- Facilitates self-assessment
 - Self-assessment facilitates lifelong learning
- Facilitates critical thinking
- Informs the clinical decision-making process
- Is integral to the development of expertise

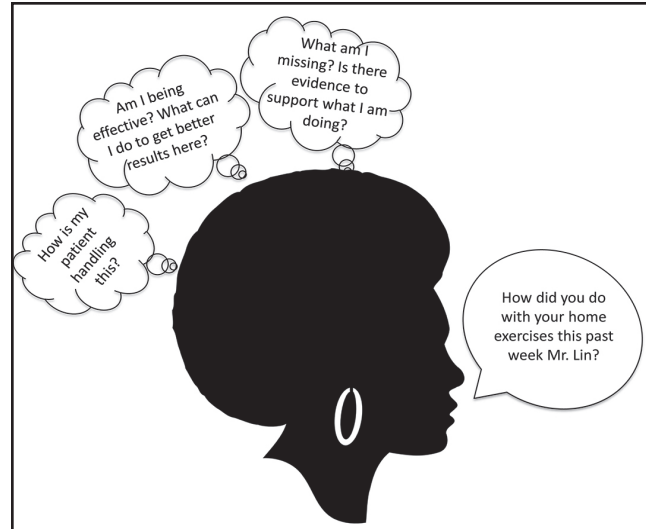


Figure 2-1. The expert practitioner: reflective, mindful, and self-monitoring.

ELEMENTS OF REFLECTION

Schön's⁹ work is often cited in the reflective practice literature. He describes 2 types of reflection: *reflection-in-action* and *reflection-on-action*. We, as learners, teachers, and therapists, are often faced with unique and ambiguous problems in the clinical setting during which we are forced to stop, think, and problem solve in the midst of what we are doing. For example, you may walk into a patient's room in an acute care setting with a plan to work on ambulation. As you begin to transfer the patient from sit to stand, he or she complains of feeling faint. You immediately change your plans to accommodate a very different situation than you had anticipated. At the very moment when you recognize that something was not right, you begin to reflect and question what was going on in that situation and how you would need to quickly adapt. Schön⁹ calls this *reflection-in-action*. In clinical practice, reflection-in-action requires us to function on the following 2 levels simultaneously:

1. Attending to the task of interacting with the patient.
2. Continually self-monitoring, questioning, observing, assessing, and adjusting our thoughts and actions throughout the session.²³

Based on the previous example, in addition to monitoring your outcomes throughout the session, you want to be sure that you are continually interacting with your patient to ensure that trust, confidence, care, and compassion are maintained. Simultaneously, you are continually assessing outcomes and making decisions about any changes you might need to make given the dynamic situation in play. It is truly a complex interaction! While some of this is done