

Happy Finals Week! As the semester begins to wind down, it's the perfect time to pause, reflect, and celebrate on your journey these past four months. In this newsletter, our focus is on reflection. It's all about taking a look back to focus on highlights, learn how we can continue to grow, and set the stage for what's ahead.

In the Articles section with Additional Resources on Reflection, I included an article from [Jane Sparrow with Forbes](#). In it, she shares the importance of capturing your "trophy cabinet" and adding to it on a regular basis. Before you go any further, I'd like you to grab a notebook or start a new document and reflect on what you've added to your trophy cabinet this year. Specifically, think about these three questions:

- What are three major wins you've accomplished in 2024?
- What are some of the prospective wins you can look forward in 2025?
- How can you start setting yourself up for success with those future wins today?

This is a very short and simple activity that you can do to recognize your accomplishments and I encourage to have your staff engage in it as well. See what they feel have been their biggest accomplishments in their own eyes and reinforce their efforts by providing recognition. Don't let these accomplishments fade into obscurity: go back to polish your trophy cabinet often to keep you motivated for the future.

Here's to growth, gratitude, and everything yet to come!

Until next month!

Let us know what you think about the newsletter and what you'd like to see in the future!

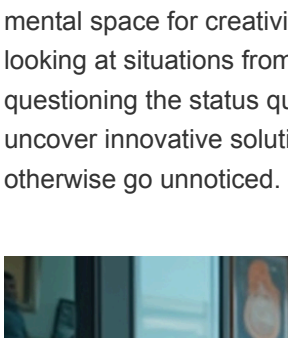
[Jesse Heath](#)

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[Feedback Form](#)

Reflection



"A battle lost or won is easily described, understood, and appreciated, but the moral growth of a great nation requires reflection, as well as observation, to appreciate it."

-Frederick Douglass

In the fast-paced world we live in during each semester, the concept of reflection often takes a backseat. With deadlines looming and to-do lists piling up, the idea of pausing to think about what we've learned, how we've grown, or where we're headed can feel like a luxury. Yet, reflection is far from a mere indulgence—it's a cornerstone of meaningful growth, innovation, and fulfillment.

Taking time to reflect allows us to process experiences, gain insights, and approach the future with clarity and intention. It's not just a personal exercise; reflection has profound impacts on teams, organizations, and communities. Here's why it matters and how to make it a habit in every aspect of life.

Why Reflection Matters

It Provides Direction and Purpose

Amidst the daily grind, it's easy to lose sight of the bigger picture. Reflection acts as a compass, helping us reconnect with our values, goals, and priorities. It ensures we're not just busy but are making meaningful progress toward what truly matters.

It Turns Experience Into Learning

Whether you've navigated a challenging project, achieved a personal milestone, or faced an unexpected setback, reflection helps identify what worked, what didn't, and why. Without reflection, we risk repeating the same mistakes or missing out on opportunities for improvement.

It Encourages Innovation and Creativity

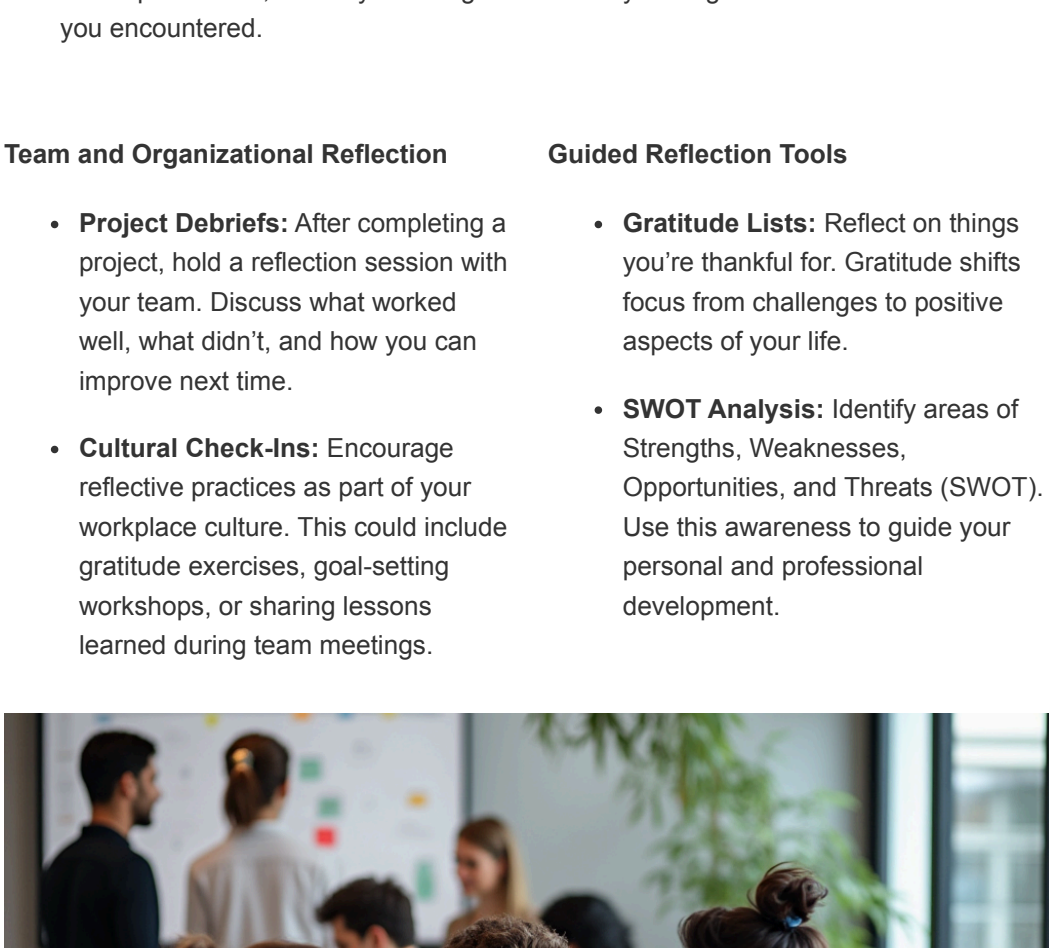
Some of the best ideas come not when we're in the middle of doing, but when we step back to think. Reflection creates mental space for creativity to flourish. By looking at situations from new angles and questioning the status quo, we often uncover innovative solutions that would otherwise go unnoticed.

It Fosters Resilience

Life and work are full of ups and downs. Reflection provides a way to process emotions, manage stress, and develop a stronger sense of self-awareness. When we reflect, we not only make sense of our successes but also find meaning in our failures.

It Strengthens Relationships

Reflection isn't just an individual practice—it's also a tool for fostering connection and understanding. When teams reflect together, they build trust, improve communication, and create shared meaning. In personal relationships, reflecting on interactions can lead to greater empathy and deeper bonds.



How to Cultivate Reflection in Your Life

Daily Reflection Practices

- **Journaling:** Spend a few minutes each day writing about your experiences and takeaways. Prompts like "What went well today?" or "What could I improve tomorrow?" can guide your thoughts.
- **Mindfulness Moments:** Take 5–10 minutes to sit quietly and think about your day. Focus on your feelings, accomplishments, and any challenges you encountered.

Periodic Deep Dives

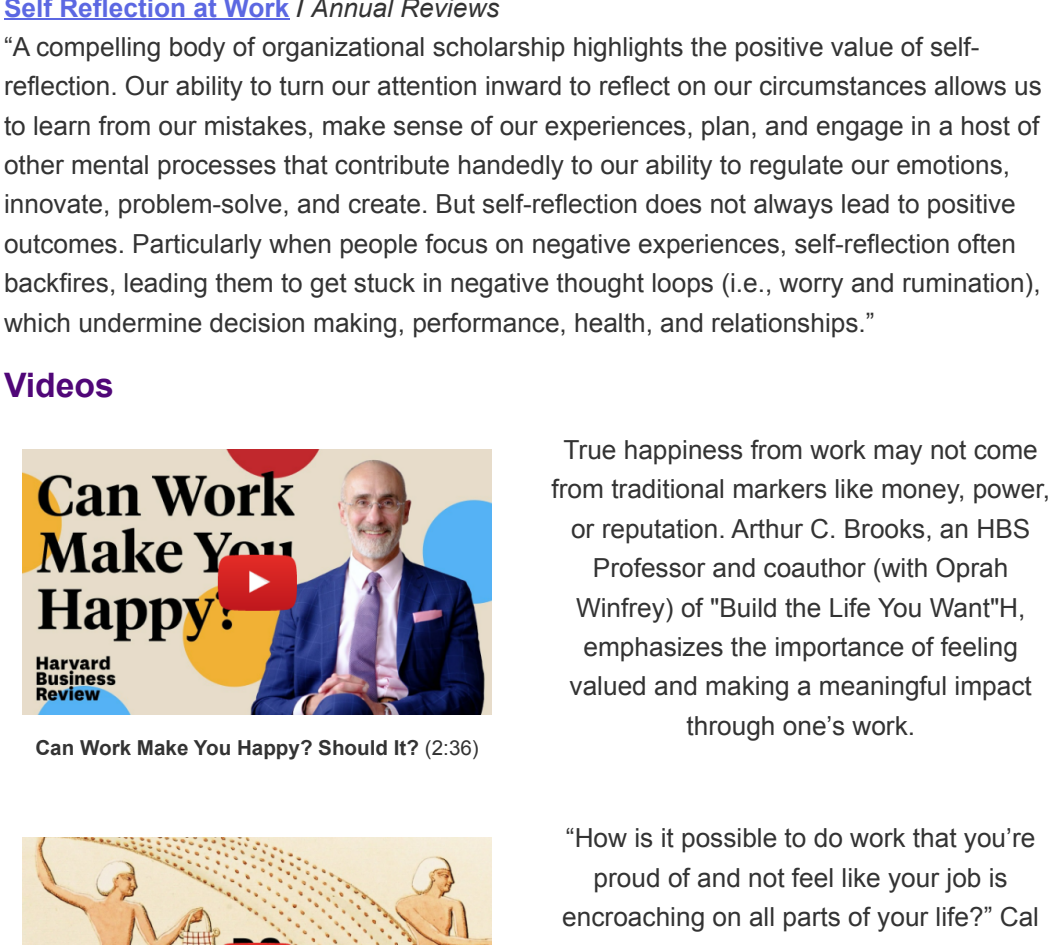
- **Weekly Reviews:** At the end of each week, review your goals, progress, and lessons learned. This is a great time to recalibrate and set intentions for the week ahead.
- **End of Semester Reflections:** Dedicate time to look back on longer periods. Reflect on major achievements, challenges, and how you've grown over time.

Team and Organizational Reflection

- **Project Debriefs:** After completing a project, hold a reflection session with your team. Discuss what worked well, what didn't, and how you can improve next time.
- **Cultural Check-Ins:** Encourage reflective practices as part of your workplace culture. This could include gratitude exercises, goal-setting workshops, or sharing lessons learned during team meetings.

Guided Reflection Tools

- **Gratitude Lists:** Reflect on things you're thankful for. Gratitude shifts focus from challenges to positive aspects of your life.
- **SWOT Analysis:** Identify areas of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT). Use this awareness to guide your personal and professional development.



The Ripple Effects of Reflection

When individuals and teams make reflection a priority, the benefits extend far beyond the immediate. Personal growth translates into better decision-making, increased emotional intelligence, and stronger relationships. In organizations, reflection fosters a culture of learning, adaptability, and innovation. Reflection is about more than just looking back—it's about moving forward with greater awareness and purpose. It's a powerful reminder that every experience, no matter how small, holds the potential to teach us something.

As you move through the year, make time to pause. Reflect on where you've been, what you've learned, and where you want to go. The insights you uncover may surprise you—and they'll undoubtedly shape a brighter, more intentional future.

Additional Resources for Reflection

Articles

[How Self-Reflection Can Lead to Career Success](#) / SHRM

"These days, [Nanci] Appleman-Vassil said, there is too many outside influences affecting career decisions: People are swayed by salary and benefits, more impressive job titles, or their perceptions of companies. But using those parameters to make career decisions can result in people living inauthentically, being unhappy about their career trajectory, and ultimately not being good leaders. The key is engaging in self-reflection and searching inward for the career goals you want to achieve, Appleman-Vassil said."

[As Leaders, Reflection Needs To Be A Rhythm](#) / Forbes

"In my coaching conversations, at both an organizational and an individual level, I talk about the importance of capturing your 'trophy cabinet' and adding to it on a regular basis. The principle is to get good at recognizing the things that you have achieved, contributed and learned over the prior week. So, rather than come to the end of a period in your career, or the end of the year, having to think really hard about what you have done, you build in the time to reflect as you go along. I usually recommend a short time doing this at the end of each week."

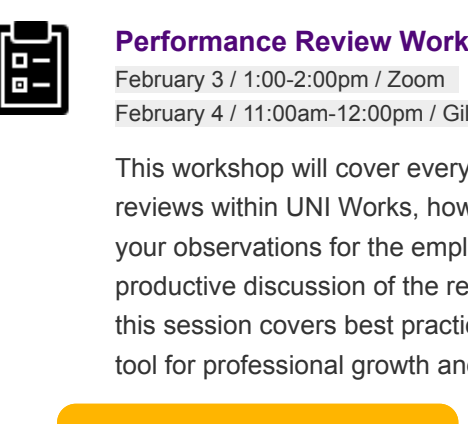
[Don't Underestimate the Power of Self-Reflection](#) / HBR

"The practice itself is all about learning, looking back on the day (without bias or regret) to contemplate your behavior and its consequences. It requires sitting with yourself, taking an honest moment to think about what transpired, what worked, what didn't, what can be done, and what can't. Reflection requires courage. It's thoughtful and deliberate. Being at the "top of your game" only comes when you extract from your past how to engage the future."

[Self Reflection at Work](#) / Annual Reviews

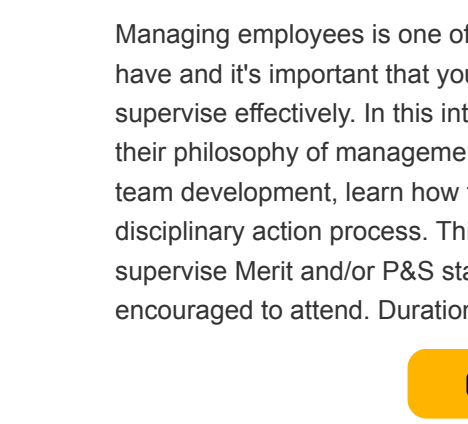
"A compelling body of organizational scholarship highlights the positive value of self-reflection. Our ability to turn our attention inward to reflect on our circumstances allows us to learn from our mistakes, make sense of our experiences, plan, and engage in a host of other mental processes that contribute handily to our ability to regulate our emotions, innovate, problem-solve, and create. But self-reflection does not always lead to positive outcomes. Particularly when people focus on negative experiences, self-reflection often backfires, leading them to get stuck in negative thought loops (i.e., worry and rumination), which undermine decision making, performance, health, and relationships."

Videos



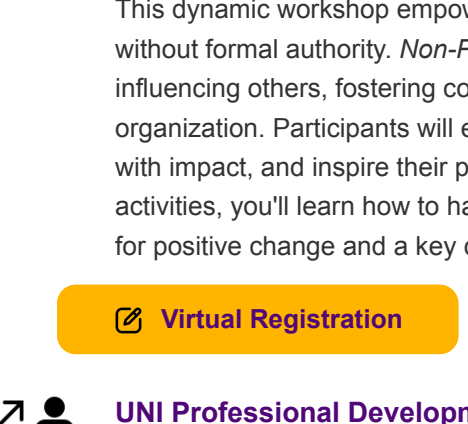
Can Work Make You Happy? Should It? (2:36)

True happiness from work may not come from traditional markers like money, power, or reputation. Arthur C. Brooks, an HBS Professor and coauthor (with Oprah Winfrey) of "Build the Life You Want", emphasizes the importance of feeling valued and making a meaningful impact through one's work.



The Lost Art of Accomplishment Without Burnout (6:13)

"How is it possible to do work that you're proud of and not feel like your job is encroaching on all parts of your life?" Cal Newport, author of 'Slow Productivity,' explains. When it comes to reflection, it's important to understand how you (and your employees) are working at a realistic pace that offers balance. Cal Newport's reflections here give us a starting point.



Cultivating Collaboration: Don't Be So Defensive (15:17)

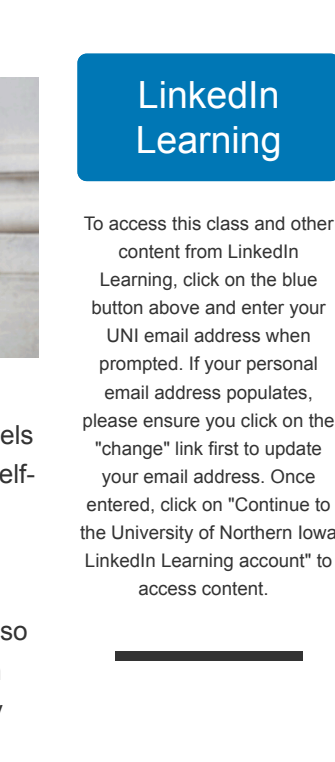
Ever see red? It's called being defensive, and turns out, it is the single greatest inhibitor to true collaboration. Jim Tamm shares years of experience in getting out of the red zone and cultivating a "green zone" attitude. Jim Tamm is a former law professor and senior administrative law judge for the state of California. He mediated nearly 2,000 employment disputes and handled 200 legal decisions that impacted national labor policy.

Read Recommendation

[The Mountain Is You: Transforming Self-Sabotage Into Self-Mastery](#)

by Brianna Wiest

This is a book about self-sabotage. Why we do it, when we do it, and how to stop it—for good. Coexisting but conflicting needs create self-sabotaging behaviors. This is why we resist efforts to change, often until they feel completely futile. But by extracting crucial insight from our most damaging habits, building emotional intelligence by better understanding our brains and bodies, releasing past experiences at a cellular level, and learning to act as our highest potential future selves, we can step out of our own way and into our potential. For centuries, the mountain has been used as a metaphor for the big challenges we face, especially ones that seem impossible to overcome. To scale our mountains, we actually have to do the deep internal work of excavating trauma, building resilience, and adjusting how we show up for the climb. In the end, it is not the mountain we master, but ourselves.



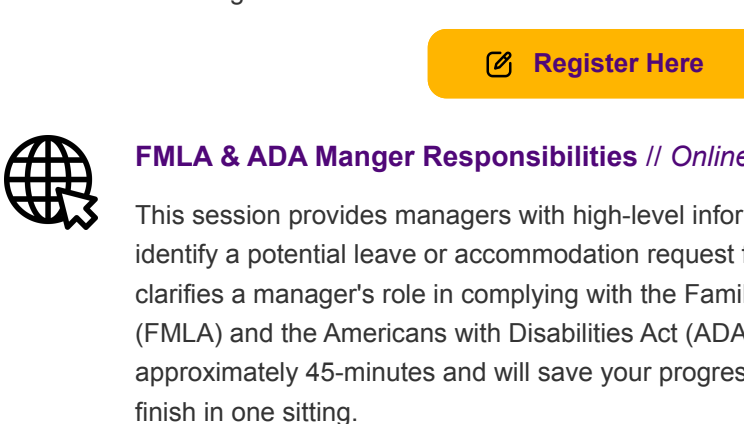
Available At:
[Cedar Falls Library](#)
[Waterloo Library](#)

Notable Quotable: "It is very hard to show up as the person you want to be when you are surrounded by an environment that makes you feel like a person you aren't."

LinkedIn Learning: Class Highlight

[Developing Self-Awareness](#)

Dr. Gemma Leigh Roberts



LinkedIn Learning

To access this class and other content from LinkedIn Learning, click on the blue button above and enter your UNI email address when prompted. If your personal email address populates, please ensure you click on the "change" link first to update your email address. Once entered, click on "Continue to the University of Northern Iowa LinkedIn Learning account" to access content."

Upcoming Learning & Development



Performance Review Workshop

February 3 / 1:00-2:00pm / Zoom
February 4 / 11:00am-12:00pm / Gilchrist Hall 009

This workshop will cover everything you need to know about performance reviews within UNI Works, how to write an evaluation that is a fair summary of your observations for the employee, and some tips on how to have a productive discussion of the review. This process doesn't have to be mundane; this session covers best practices that transform performance reviews into a tool for professional growth and engagement.

[Virtual Registration](#)

[In Person Registration](#)



Fundamentals of Supervision

March 12 / 8:30am-12:00pm / Maucker Union's Oak Room

Managing employees is one of the most impactful responsibilities that you can have and it's important that you are equipped with the skills needed to supervise effectively. In this interactive workshop, participants will reflect on their philosophy of management and leadership, understand the stages of team development, learn how to serve as a conflict mediator, and review the disciplinary action process. This training is recommended for those who supervise Merit and/or P&S staff but ALL managers are welcomed and encouraged to attend. Duration is 3.5 hours with two 5-minute breaks.

[Register Here](#)



Non-Positional Leadership: Leading from the Middle

April 16 / 11:00am-12:00pm / Zoom
April 17 / 1:00-2:00pm / Gilchrist Hall 009

This dynamic workshop empowers professionals to lead effectively, even without formal authority. *Non-Positional Leadership* teaches essential skills for influencing others, fostering collaboration, and driving change across an organization. Participants will explore strategies to build trust, communicate with impact, and inspire their peers and supervisors alike. Through hands-on activities, you'll learn how to harness your unique position to become a catalyst for positive change and a key contributor to organizational success.

[Virtual Registration](#)

[In Person Registration](#)

UNI Professional Development Conference

May 29 / 8:30am-4:00pm / Location TBD

Join us for the Six Degrees of T.C., UNI's Professional Development Conference for staff and faculty who are committed to personal growth, skill-building, and career advancement. This inspiring event brings together the best and brightest within the institution for a day of engaging workshops, network opportunities, and an insightful keynote session. Whether you're looking to enhance your leadership abilities, expand your network at UNI, or ignite your professional potential, the Professional Development Conference is the place to learn, connect, and thrive. This conference is organized by the P&S Council.

[Registration Coming Soon](#)

Navigating Difficult Conversations

June 23 / 1:00-2:00pm / Zoom
June 24 / 11:00am-12:00pm / Gilchrist Hall 009

In this practical workshop, participants will develop the skills needed to handle challenging conversations with ease and effectiveness. Whether it's addressing performance issues, resolving conflicts, or delivering tough feedback, this session provides tools and techniques to communicate openly and productively. This workshop is ideal for anyone looking to turn difficult conversations into opportunities for understanding and growth.

[Virtual Registration](#)

[In Person Registration](#)

Fundamentals of Supervision

July 23 / 8:30am-12:00pm / Maucker Union's Oak Room

Managing employees is one of the most impactful responsibilities that you can have and it's important that you are equipped with the skills needed to supervise effectively. In this interactive workshop, participants will reflect on their philosophy of management and leadership, understand the stages of team development, learn how to serve as a conflict mediator, and review the disciplinary action process. This training is recommended for those who supervise Merit and/or P&S staff but ALL managers are welcomed and encouraged to attend. Duration is 3.5 hours with two 5-minute breaks.

[Register Here](#)

FMLA & ADA Manger Responsibilities // Online Learning

This session provides managers with high-level information about how to identify a potential leave or accommodation request from an employee and clarifies a manager's role in complying with the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This training takes approximately 45-minutes and will save your progress if you are unable to finish in one sitting.

[Access Here](#)

Our Vision

All employees will be positively engaged in achieving their greatest potential while contributing to the success of the university.

Our Mission

Human Resource Services fosters an environment of integrity and collaboration through innovative solutions and communications contributing to the successful recruitment, development, and retention of university employees.

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