

Personal Reflection / Self Care Paper

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Crisis Intervention Strategies for Trauma and Abuse

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Abstract

Death, misfortune, loss and the grief process is a challenging subject to work with in Mental Health Counseling. Age and the developmental stage of the individual may impact how the individual will comprehend and heal in their situation. Other factors such as substance use, any medical conditions the individual may have and the economic level of the individual may also impact the healing journey. Any dynamic may have a profound effect on how the mental health counseling will assist with the individuals healing journey and if the mental health counseling will bring about any success with the individual.

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Problem Crisis.

The subject of working with an individual with any type of loss is difficult depending on the type of client you are working with. If you have been working with the client for a certain length of time you will have an idea of how the individual will process any type of notification of difficult news. If you don't know the individual and work with an agency where you have to provide a death or loss notification (such as the military) then the outcome of a reaction is unpredictable.

Personal Reaction to the Problem.

Unfortunately, I have had experience of dealing with a death and notifying members of my family about the death. It was my mother and I was informed of her terminal illness by the doctors. I then made a folder and a to do list of what needed to be done since I was the oldest. Even though I informed the family of the impending death it seemed as if no one believed what I was telling them. This was confirmed to me after my mother's funeral by family members who apologized to me. I had a list of everyone I needed to call and ensured when I called that everyone was safe and I could present the news. I can still remember some of the screams on the phone especially my grandmothers, my grandfather took the phone and told me he was afraid for my grandmother's health. After the initial shock that everyone seemed to have except me, the funeral was a beautiful one. I had no emotional reaction until months later, where I just cried and then never cried again.

Years ago a brother of mine found out an ex-girlfriend of his was murdered by her boyfriend's brother. She had a closed casket due to the stab wounds of her body. My brother blamed himself for years stating if he didn't leave her this might not have happened to her. I had to go to California and assist him to obtain Mental Health therapy as he started to self-medicate with substances and a friend of his contacted me that he was concerned for my brother's safety and life.

Another unfortunate death was with another younger brother whose fiancée died in his arms at his home after a surgery she had due to an undetected clot. Unfortunately, he didn't know how to save her and by the time the ambulance arrived it was too late. He was hospitalized in a Psychiatric Unit for several months and I have worked with him to obtain Mental Health Treatment while he lived with me and he presently maintains the treatment on his own. He no longer resides with me but is on his own now and slowly is working on his healing journey.

On my deployment I also knew what it was to see caskets with soldiers in them on a plane.

I realized all of these experiences assisted me to know that anyone can react differently with a loss and it is their journey with healing if they want and are willing to heal.

Challenges I May Anticipate.

The challenges I may anticipate are the unexpected deaths, especially with children. I feel that even though it is still difficult any death and loss of a loved one, for me a child's death is unfathomable and may be questionable with the person's beliefs with their faith. I may even wonder and question depending on the situation. However, I learned and know that life is life and no one is exempt from life if they are on this earth.

How I Will Cope?

A good question that I learned through my internship which is an Outpatient Rehabilitation Center where the population is mostly mandated parole and probation, with some court mandated and a small percentage self-referrals. It seems that tragedy has been rooted in all of these lives. They all have had some sort of losses whether it is freedom, family, friends, financial and a sense of self-worth.

This facility was not my choice of internship. I was referred and accepted there as I had a challenging time finding an internship. I feel that the Lord placed me there to learn to have compassion and some type of understanding of this population. I didn't want to understand this population. I have my personal reasons. I quickly learned to say "What would Jesus think, say and do". I had to create this for myself not to be cynical or lose empathy.

I have encountered many individuals who have had losses with family. These losses consisted of family who were either murdered, died of natural causes, or family removed from them (children and partners). I have incorporated in my sessions with clients the Kubler-Ross Stages of Grief. Although in the website Recover from Grief.com, there are seven stages. I have learned the importance of learning and understanding the individuals culture and their spiritual beliefs and how they can incorporate these beliefs with their healing journey. I work with the

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client in identifying and learning their emotions in how they can work through them. I explain to them that there is no time limit in healing as everyone's journey is different.

I realized I did not have counter transference issues. I learned a long time ago when I worked as a Bilingual Case Manager and being a Military member, is that in order for me to assist these clients' appropriately with professionalism, I can't cross professional boundaries. The moment I allow myself to have any feelings other than empathy and understanding, I know professionally I will not be able to do the best job I can to support the client or patient ethically.

However, I know I am not a robot nor I am immune to feelings, no matter how I try to maintain professionalism. I have created coping mechanisms. I will pray in the morning. I do have a prayer book to guide me. I listen to inspirational music on my way to work. I will also listen to inspirational messages. I read educational information on situations that are similar to my clients and learn from my classes in school as well that the professors teach.

My Issues to Be Addressed.

I will continue to attend individual counseling at least monthly to assist me with a professional and therapeutic outlet so I will not burn out in the Mental Health Counseling Field.

Self-Care.

I have seen what burnout looks like with coworkers and looking back realized I experienced it as a Bilingual Case Manager myself. Though I didn't realize it in the moment. Burnout is when the worker has experienced compassion fatigue which can lead to secondary trauma for the therapist. Burnout can also be experienced as emotional overload in trying to do too much for the clients or patients. Then you have Depersonalization where the therapist may feel disconnected from the career field where the loss of compassion, empathy and ethics can be affected with clients and patients. I have seen and heard how workers become cynical and

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disillusioned with the career field. As an intern I have had already three peers how have complained to me and even cried. I have had to use wisdom and experience in trying to explain to them that they cannot save the client only assist the client on their journey. It is not their journey but the clients and we have to work as a team with the client. That is where the therapeutic alliance begins and ends. The client's success and failures are not ours. It is the client's life and we are just the clinicians who assist them. I advised the importance of obtaining individual counseling, speaking with their supervisors, and personal self-care.

Vicarious Trauma.

Vicarious trauma for counselors is the exposure the counselor has to their clients or patient's trauma. The counselor is almost reliving the experience with the client. These disclosures have the therapist involved in the client's feelings with the experiences relived. This is where the Therapist has to be aware of their professional boundaries and personal boundaries. That way the therapist doesn't become engulfed emotionally in the client's journey.

My Self-Care.

My strategies I created for self-care will depend on the situation. Unfortunately, my childhood assisted me with being able to work through tragedy and trauma. I guess that is why I have learned to adapt and move forward. My childhood gave me a psychological advantage that I feel has helped me with adult life personally and professionally. Though I have had my human moments.

Individual and Group Supervision of cases and peer assistance is important I feel in a work environment, as I am constantly learning. Each client though similar as they maybe with life's challenges, are still different lives that have to be worked with appropriately professionally. However, I have to be wise professionally if I feel that I may not be the professional the client

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needs, I have to ensure the client receives the best possible treatment. I will discuss with the client alternatives to assist them professionally, so that they receive the best professional quality care and treatment possible. The goal is to assist the client in their journey with the best possible professional treatment that will help them not harm them.

Professional private counseling is important for the therapist. Spiritual strategies whether church attendance, inspirational online teachings, readings and music are helpful. I also love family time with my husband. He is my blessing. I enjoy having six brothers and three sisters as there is always family to speak with. I also have a large extended family. I am close to my grandmother. I enjoy having a bucket list and traveling. I learned to live life to the fullest as best I can due to seeing too much death.