

**Week 1 (September 15, 2020):**

In this week's reading, I was particularly struck by the section in Chapter 2 which emphasizes the importance of understanding our pasts. Through my own counseling experience, while I feel I've gained much peace with my past, I am conscious of how countertransference may rise in the future, as clients may present problems that trigger my own experiences. It is important to have a clear goal, as a counselee, to ensure that my past is only a tool in my toolbox, but no longer the primary lens through which I view all of life.

Additionally, I am encouraged that this book, *Skills for Effective Counseling*, stresses the importance of microskills and basic concepts that we can continue to use in our growth as a therapist. There may be many situations presented by clients in which I have never needed to navigate before, and it is comforting to know there is a systematic framework I can rely on to effect positive change, regardless of my accumulated experience.

**Week 2 (September 22, 2020):**

This week, I was ruminating on the sense of fear I have when I think through eventually being labeled as a "therapist." It is one thing for me to use language such as, "I work as a (*insert label here*)," but I believe serving as a therapist is a calling. The vocational label is one that I must reckon with. I have been called to this academic study of Marriage and Family Therapy, which naturally flows into the calling of the vocation itself. The title holds so much responsibility and weight in service to others that I am afraid of not doing it well enough, doing it wrong, and doing it without a sense of vigor.

Being "called" to something interacts differently with my identity than my prior business career choices. I feel as if I will no longer be as free to be as amorphous as I was before, in the "rock-climbing" corporate ascension where I could take my strengths and creatively find different ways to consult and contribute to an organization. I won't be able to "just quit" something that I no longer feel dedicated to. Being a therapist is a lifelong path, and one that I am now soberly terrified of in the context of having to sit with real patients. Will I be able to hold my own, in the midst of a contentious family? How will I work through infidelity issues when it so sharply triggers my own story? I know the Lord is with me, and I know I have to trust the process.

### **Week 3 (September 29, 2020):**

In reading through the internship file, it seemed that many of the documents were several years old and possibly outdated. The internship sites listed seemed to be procured from 2018. It brought some concern as to whether or not these sites are current, and whether relationships with these sites have remained intact and are a good starting point for our class to begin the internship search. We were informed we would be responsible for locating our own internship site, so while a large measure of independence has been communicated to be necessary, I wonder if the support that new students need will be sufficient. I think it would have been more helpful for the students if we went over internship expectations and folder structure in the classroom setting, first, and then reviewed these documents on our own.

Beyond that, I am very excited to revamp my resume from its current “corporate” tone to the field of therapy. I’m a bit nervous and have many, many questions about the norms of the field, such as standard internship cycles, whether the therapy field provides networking opportunities, and what we should be looking for with respect to a quality internship site. I’m hopeful that next week’s class will go over these things.

### **Week 4 (October 6, 2020):**

As a cohort, we have been delving deep into the conceptual of systems therapy, and it feels like I’ll never be able to put them into practice. Dr. Mercurio’s clinical observation session this week was absolutely wonderful to witness, and it feels like lightyears before I’ll be able to drive a session as he did. The initial assessment of the couple went splendidly, each expressing at the end that they felt seen and heard. He asked thought provoking questions to both individuals, which in turn imparted insightful responses and served as new information for the other partner. At one point, Dr. Mercurio asked them both: “How lonely do you feel in this relationship?” The woman was stunned at the question and responded with tears. It’s evident that she has felt alone in the relationship for a long time, and has been considering leaving. This revelation seemed to be new to the male, Mark.

I am thinking of the courage it takes for this couple to reach out during a global pandemic for help in their relationship matters. The courage that it takes for the two of them to agree to be anonymously observed is no small matter, and I’m impressed with how open and committed they are to the therapeutic

process. I'm really looking forward to future sessions with them, and I pray they will get find these hours with Dr. Mercurio beneficial and healing to their issues.

**Week 5 (October 13, 2020):**

As we walk through more theory and self-work, I am confronted with the dynamic of fusion and emotional cut-off in my own family. How can I be a good intern, and thus a good counselor, when these issues have not been resolved in my own family of origin? I pray that through these next few semesters, my active awareness of these issues, coupled with coursework and my own therapy, will allow me to gain greater resolution and thus, confidence, in my internship search. Of special note: through this week's reading and class discussion, I've applied the skill of reflecting content back to my peers when they have explained something to me, and I've found it incredibly helpful in processing the information for myself. The reflection skill, otherwise known as "mirroring" in negotiation terms, goes beyond superficial parroting, but is a real opportunity to engage with the facts being presented by another individual and clarifying one's understanding of what is being said.

This week, our first draft of resumes are due for submission. I'm finding it hard to lay down my corporate identity, something that I am so proud of, and transitioning my path in a way that makes for a compelling story on the resume. Basically, it feels like all the career advice I've been exposed to over the last decade is now irrelevant. I pray that all these skills acquired over the past ten-plus years will continue to serve some purpose... even if I don't see it yet.

**Week 6 (October 20, 2020):**

I am increasingly nervous about the internship search. I'm so grateful to God and Nyack for a Practicum course that shepherds us along the process of both rebuilding our resume, and also walking us through the process of applying for internships. As of this moment, I sense from God that I needn't be anxious about it -- and especially not now. My first task at hand is to finalize my resume, incorporating feedback provided from Dr. Wells a few weeks ago. After that, I will get organized around the various sites I intend to apply to, including Redeemer. Following Dr. Wells' encouragement, I've reached out to Professor Beidel about internship opportunities there. What a dream that would be, to work and learn alongside the counselors at Redeemer! The work they do there, along with the continuing education opportunities, really motivates me to continue looking for counseling centers like theirs, where such

wonderful ongoing support is given to counselors. On the other hand, an opportunity there seems too good to be true. I feel like I would have to “earn my stripes” elsewhere, wherever God wishes to place me, and to learn as much as I can.

**I still can't believe I'm going to be a therapist.**