

Journal Entry for week of 10/27/20

Attended Clinical Observation on 10/28/20 from 8:00P.M.-9:10PM

The closer I am approaching the start of my internship, the more anxious I am beginning to feel due to the fact that we are still in the middle of a pandemic. I am truly reluctant to put my and my family's health at risk. One professor gave me the advice to go and see the internship site's new office space. I took her advice and was told by my internship director that he can save me an internship spot closer to my graduation date. This way, I can delay having to go into the new office space for interns' weekly training and twice a week of therapy sessions with clients. I felt so relieved and knew God's hand was working things out for my good. This means I had to reorganize my schedules for both the upcoming Spring semester and all the semesters leading up to graduation. Furthermore, I spoke to Dr. Wells to make sure it is okay to begin an internship at a later date. Dr. Mercurio gave me additional information as to when Dyadic Supervisions, Group Supervisions, and Class Supervisions are likely to be offered in the coming years. All I have left to do is email Dr. Ili to approve a change to my courses for Spring Semester and call my internship director up to let him know I plan to begin the internship late January or early February of 2023. If all goes according to plan, I would graduate in May of 2024.

Journal Entry for week of 11/03/20

Attended Clinical Observation on 11/04/20 from 8:00P.M.-9:10PM

Connecting deeply through intuitive empathy is an important topic that was part of our class discussions this week. I feel I have the gift of connecting deeply with another person as well as having intuitive empathy because God has allowed me to suffer much in my life. I have experienced much suffering, betrayal, and disappointments but kept a heart of faith and perseverance in the promises of God.

God's grace has enabled me to have the capacity to understand, relate to, and help guide another person from their pain to hope. The more I allow myself to experience my limitations, humanity, and weaknesses the more I am able to relate to another person through empathy. In order to become God's instrument of holiness and righteousness, I need to be willing to allow Him to put me through His tests of fire and water. I have the conviction that when God puts me through His many and various trials and tests, that I am not alone. God is always with me and he is my constant help in times of trouble. I have decided to surrender and trust God to powerfully use me as His instrument of healing. I am willing to keep honing in on my therapeutic skills through training, practice, and application of theories. My goal is to become mature and equipped for doing God's good work in the lives of my future clients.

Journal Entry for week of 11/10/20

Attended Clinical Observation on 11/11/20 from 8:00P.M.-9:10PM

This week's reading material is on confrontation and this word alone makes me want to run away. Growing up, I did not have any role models who demonstrated a healthy way of confronting an issue with another person who had hurt, disrespected, or disappointed them. Basically, confrontation was non-existent in my family-of-origin and it is just beginning to happen in my nuclear family. This is only because of this MFT Program I am in. Like the story in the textbook, I was like Noreen who would ignore hurt feelings and when I can no longer repress it anymore, I would end that relationship. Observing the new couple this semester during clinical observation, I see the importance of cultivating self-of-the therapist in relations to teaching, guiding, modeling, and encouraging the couple to confront each other of the issues in their relationship. I've learned that in order to be the effective, authentic, genuine, compassionate, professional, and empathetic therapist I desire to become, I need to keep practicing and applying what I am learning in my classes and from our readings in my daily life. Putting these applications and practice in my life has been both painful and uncomfortable. I have been experiencing heart palpitations, anxieties, sleepless nights due to anticipating the confrontation while knowing it will

lead to feeling pain and sadness. Being vulnerable and open with my woundedness is a novice action for me. The good news is that having been confronting my issues in my marriage, family, and friends in the last month or two, there have been gains and breakthroughs. Prayers definitely helped. I will continue to pray without ceasing and cast all my cares onto God.

Journal Entry for week of 11/17/20

Attended Clinical Observation on 11/18/20 from 8:00P.M.-9:10PM

I'm still processing the idea of delaying my internship. I got a chance to speak to Dr. Mercurio and go over the MFT program courses that I still need to complete before graduation. I have a better idea of what classes are offered during which semesters and in what order I need to take them. My heart is pulled in two directions and the feeling is quite painful. One part of me wish to complete the twelve months internship program and graduate as soon as possible. And I can do this, but it will be at the expense of my family and especially my relationship with my 5-year-old son. My son is still young and needs me to be there for him. My desire to be a good, nurturing, and attentive mom is telling me to take it slow, see things from a different perspective, and ask myself what is most important to me. Dr. Wells gave me the best advice today after class and that is to seek God for the answer. God spoke to me powerfully and helped me to understand His plans and will for me. I am grateful for God's answer. However, there is still a part of me that wants to press on and finish as soon as possible. I have concluded that sacrifice is truly hard and it boils down to denying self for the betterment of others. The question I need to ask myself is: Am I willing to do as God asks? Am I willing to sacrifice my goals for the betterment of my son's well-being? I'm praying for a sold-out heart to follow God's will and perfect timing for my life.

Journal Entry for week of 12/01/20

Attended Clinical Observation on 12/02/20 from 8:00P.M.-9:10PM

This is the first session after Mark and Rebecca returned from their Thanksgiving break for their couple's therapy session with Dr. Mercurio. During clinical observation, the couple shared about their vicious cycle of trying to discuss their conflicting stance regarding having a biological baby and where they would like to live. Dr. Mercurio started off the session by acknowledging both their pain and fragile state after another failed attempt to communicate in a healthy way. Dr. Mercurio guided the couple from the start to the end of the session with competency in using several theories and taught them valuable skills to reflect back what the other person is saying. This is a great use of self-of-the-therapist. It seemed Mark and Rebecca each wanted the other person to change despite remaining strong in their personal stance for three years now. I appreciated Dr. Mercurio's honesty of letting the couple know that they have three options, and one of them is to break up. Furthermore, Dr. Mercurio gave the couple practical tools, skills, and action plans if they desire to try and work out their differences through sacrifice and focus on winning as a team.

Journal Entry for week of 12/08/20

Attended Clinical Observation on 12/09/20 from 8:00P.M.-9:10PM

Today is the second to last session for Mark and Rebecca before the end of our Fall semester's clinical observation. The session started off with affirmations of what went well this past week between the two of them. It was a time of celebration for all the good each of them had contributed to the relationship. The goal was to highlight all the positives and help the couple understand that they can strengthen their relationship. They have also done their homework assignment by speaking each other's love language this past week. Both Solution-Focused Therapy and Narrative Therapy were used at the beginning of this session to build the clients up to understand that they can each make efforts to turn this relationship around. It is within their ability to do so. Despite Rebecca's tearful sharing of her fears and concerns in regards to her relationship with Mark, the therapist remained neutral and balanced. Dr. Mercurio made sure each of the clients are able to share, feel heard, and were validated for their feelings.

This was an atypical session where Dr. Mercurio shared three or four stories to encourage, inspire, and challenge the couple to choose love and sacrifice, if they want their relationship to become stronger to withstand their differences relating to the baby issue and living situation. And even then, there are no guarantees and all relationships come with risk. The point of the matter is that even if things don't work out between the two of them in the end, at least they know they have made a great effort. There will be no regrets because they gave it their all. It was a powerful, realistic, and sobering therapeutic session.