

Final Reflection Paper

Lakiesha Gonzalez

Master of Social Work Program/ Nyack College

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Dr. Kwi-Ryung Yun

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## Introduction

### *Self-Care*

Taking this class has been enlightening in so many ways. When I first enrolled in the course I was not sure how this class would impact my life however, just after reading the first chapter of the text I was captivated as it reminded me of my current perspective. What I found most engaging in Chapter one is how it discussed vicarious traumatization (VT) which is “an altered worldview that may occur for social workers who empathically engage with the trauma of their clients” (Cox & Steiner, 2013, p. 12). Vicarious traumatization was an engaging portion of the text for me because I am consistently surrounded by child welfare caseworkers who have a mindset that results from the type of work we do. I find myself reflecting on conversations I have had with my sisters who tell me that I am “thinking like a CPS worker” which I had not noticed. Reflecting on VT has made me more aware of how I process information and I feel that is beneficial to my line of work to be able to self-reflect and adjust as needed. This reading shed light on the fact that working in child welfare and seeing things on a different level than another individual could play a factor in my worldview which could be a negative thing at times when it is not needed.

The portion of the text that got me excited was when it spoke to how human service workers encounter eminent sources of stress. However, these workers have not suffered severe work-related stress disorders (Cox & Steiner, 2013, p. 13). This aspect of the text gave me hope and optimism that human service workers despite the personal and professional stressors can manage and navigate their lives. I feel like this happens when conversations and education around self-care and stress are open dialogue among human service workers to promote this optimal result.

While reading these two chapters in *Self-Care In Social Work*, it brought excitement to me when I read that there are so many ways one could go about self-care, and self-care for everyone could be seen differently. Chapter two speaks to self-care being “an antidote to various types of stress experienced by human service providers” (Cox & Steiner, 2013, p. 31). The chapter goes on to discuss social self-care which is significant to social workers who are considered high-functioning. With that being said, I find myself not only effectively completing my job task but also having a life outside of work with the people that I love. I agree when the text stated that positive relationships are correlated with happiness. I would say that I did find anything I would consider least engaging. The two chapters gave great information and insight into the topic of stress and self-care.

The section of part two that got me excited is when it said, “Mindfulness-related activities are frequently focused on building present moments awareness through visual, auditory, and tactile means” (Cox & Steiner, 2013, p. 69). This statement brought out excitement in me since I use a combination of these mindfulness activities without having previous knowledge surrounding its benefits. When Cox and Steiner (2013) mentioned, “system limitations that were apparent in situations in which their own or other agencies have exhausted their resources or neglected to help individuals in need” (Cox & Steiner, 2013, p. 53) it produced an uneasy feeling. As social workers, we want to be able to assist vulnerable individuals however, when there just is not enough resources and we have to turn these individuals away it causes an uneasy emotion.

This experience from engaging in this text has taught me that my work stress is not only contributed to on a personal level but also an organizational level. Through the reading I found empowerment knowing that I also have the power to manage my stress levels and there are tools

that I can use to assist me. With having a large family I always tend to take time off of work for vacations, special occasions, and just because moments which my colleagues would always point out as they found themselves not taking much time for themselves or families. Now reading these chapters I have come to understand that my taking this time was a part of how I maintained my self-care.

My journey reading these chapters has shown me that a major component of my self-care is organization whether in my personal or professional life. This reading has shown me that a lot of the ways I perform self-care are spread throughout the six areas addressed in the text which were physical, psychological, emotional, spiritual, professional, and balance. This experience has taught me about myself is that when I do not engage in mindfulness activities I can see the transition of my mood. Through this experience, I have become more aware of my psychological well-being. I have also learned that it is important to block habitual reactions and facilitate adaptive responses when I am faced with stressful circumstances.

Due to the line of work, I am currently in my weekly routine is very strict. Before adding school to my already full week, working full time with children and families has given me first-hand experience that it is important for me to self-care daily. With that being said, I make sure now, with a school on my schedule, even if it is just five minutes to take time to myself and unwind. However, weekly to maintain self-care I will pray, read my bible, take my 15-minute breaks twice a day, go get a pedicure, manicure, eyebrow wax, massage, facial, vacation or spend time with my family. My self-care activities vary from week to week depending on the demand of my home, work, and school obligations.

***Rule of Life***

What is a personal rule of life? A personal rule of life is “a holistic description of the Spirit-empowered rhythms and relationships that create, redeem, sustain and transforms the life God invites you to humbly fulfill for Christ’s glory” (Macchia, 2012, p. 14). The text speaks to how a rule of life is something used for guidance rather than a set of laws that prohibits us from doing things. A personal rule of life provides a way of support to achieve entities we yearn for and require. My favorite part of the reasoning behind a personal rule of life is the fact that it provides you with an intentional and purposeful way of living.

As I begin to craft my own rule of life the aspect of God’s grace that feels most inviting is to know God’s purpose for me. To find out God’s purpose I have to ask him to reveal things. My greatest fear about writing my rule of life is not completely knowing my purpose, feeling unworthy and not good enough, and failure. The path of God’s word is coming alive for me through this discovery process as it is allowing me a sense of joy, peace, and freedom. This experience has allowed me to let things go and set things into perspective.

Reflecting on my life’s journey and the place I am in today I can see my deepest contentment and how I enhance the world through God’s purpose for my life. One scripture that comes to mind is Proverbs 4:23 which says, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (KJV). God has called me to save the lives and souls of young females where I meet them at a time in their life where they may feel that they have no support, no way of accomplishing anything, or no will to even want to find meaning and purpose.

Since I am an introvert, interacting with new people is something I struggle with which has caused a hindrance with the gifts that God has blessed me with spiritually and naturally. In return, my gifts have been underutilized however, God has been pushing me out of my comfort

zone to do his will. In this season God has been putting me in places where my spiritual gifts are necessary and around people who will push me to utilize my gifts to the glory of God despite my temperament. To pursue a deepening of self-understanding I have to spend more time seeking God through reading my bible, prayer, resting in God's presence, intentionally utilizing my gifts, and receiving guidance from my mother and Pastor.

My current heart posture is that I give myself away so Jesus can use me. Most recently I have devoted more time with Jesus to learn his word, pray and fast. When I would read my bible and pray once a day now I have devoted time at least three times a day for prayer, twice for reading my bible, and fasting once a month. My prayer closet is my room where I do most of my praying especially if I am warring in the spirit however, I sometimes use my car as a refuge for prayer if I am at work and need to spend time with Jesus. As I deepen my relationship with God I feel that also deepening and strengthen my relationship with my Pastor and being more involved in church events is significant.

### **Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life**

When I think of the word compassion I believe it to mean an act of supporting someone in need. In reality, it is not supporting, however, being willing to go through the suffering with them. I always thought I was a compassionate person and that was part of the reason I wanted to enter into the social work field. There have been times when I have supported my clients however, there have also been times when I had to go through the sufferings with them to ensure they came out successful.

Compassion is showing concern for the misfortunate. "But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?" as the scripture states it is our duty in this Christian walk to make sure we are

helping others if we can (1 John 3:17). Being a Christian social worker there is a double responsibility to guarantee we are using compassion to ensure that our clients are being helped to a better life. In the text, it states, “The word compassion is derived from the Latin word *pati* and *cum*, together mean ‘to suffer with’”(Nouwen, 1982, p. 3). In essence, when we show compassion for another person’s adversities, we are seeing it from their point of view. We are moving past our problems and making sure to show interest in someone else’s. “When they sat on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights. No one said a word to him, because they saw how great his suffering was” this verse describes compassion in its entirety (Job 2:13).

My understanding of this dimension in serving Christ has grown in that I have learned listening plays a significant part in the understanding of servanthood. That is that we are hearing from God, completing his will. The text references Jesus when it discusses servanthood because Jesus was obedient to God’s will. The Bible states, “ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28). No matter what task God, told him to complete he completed it. Even if the task was painful, or not what he wanted Jesus did it. Jesus knew that he was aligned in God’s will because he would spend time with his father. Jesus would often seek a quiet place to pray and hear from God. In these moments is when he knew he was completing his calling. By Jesus submitting himself to God’s will he gave us the best example of what servanthood looks like in the natural. To serve Christ is to follow in the purpose he has for our lives and not making our plans for our lives.

When the authors state that “Only God is not in competition with us” they are saying that God is omnipresent, God’s power is evident, there is no way we could ever compete with him. If we give ourselves to God’s will and not our own will we can be in a better place. As Christians, once we declare that Jesus died for our sins, in that declaration we are submitting to a higher

power. With that declaration, we are starting a new life. In our new life if we focus on God is all-knowing then we can submit to his will, and extend compassion to others. Once we tap into the new life, we also like Jesus can tap into the power from God. “But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. “Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

The New Testament message is compassionate life is a life together means that as we enter that deeper level of intimacy with Jesus, we form as well as a natural connection with like-minded people. During this section, the authors are stressing fellowship, and why it is important. “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy” (1 Peter 2:9-10). The authors state that compassion is not an individual action, it’s a lifestyle. The way we commit to this lifestyle is by making sure we are surrounded by people who are also in the compassionate lifestyle.

My discovery impacts my sense of what it means to be a social worker in that as social workers we are doing the will of God. As social workers we are servicing people from all walks of life however, just as Jesus loved and cared for everyone despite their wrongdoing, we as social workers should strive to do the same. Social work is a profession that is focused on the empowerment of people and communities, to promote social change. Social work is a non-judgmental profession and as Christian believers, we are not supposed to judge which should make social work for Christian believers easier. However, as social workers, we must understand that if we are called to be social workers it is our job to help others even through adversity. As social workers, there will be many times when we have to confront different situations however,

the key to compassionate confrontation and patient action is humbleness. To call out injustices done, we have to be able to confront the parties causing the injustice. When confronting someone of wrongdoing, we want to make sure we are not letting our natural man emotions control the situation.

What I have discovered about myself through this course is that I was called to a social worker and in difficult times I know I can pray and God will provide me with the guidance and strength I need to continue to do his will. This course has shown me that compassion is something that is not easy and it is something that needs to be worked on. Compassion is a willingness to bring yourself to a place of suffering to help someone else who needs help. The Bible shows so many instances where God and Jesus were compassionate and how we should strive to do the same. After reading this book I had to evaluate my life and see how many times God was compassionate to me and understand that I would be in a bad place if he had not been. With this new knowledge, I can be mindful of how I can be compassionate daily. Something that I was not aware of that I now make a conscious effort to manage is the way I confront someone even if they are in the wrong. This course has shown me that I don't have to compromise my faith for my profession but to show love to all God's people. Through this course, I was able to understand that my being able to work with people who believe in different things from myself does not have to affect my ability to help them through their struggles. I realized that my world-views have shaped how I deal with my current clients while also cautioning me to be aware of my values and not imposing them on my clients.

### **Conclusion**

Emerging from this course was an experience I was not expecting. From the readings to the engagement at the retreat, and the assignments that allowed me to reflect on the journey of learning me and discovering new ways to improve myself. This course has opened my eyes to

self-care and deepening my life with Christ. I realized that when I encounter my clients or work situation that stirs up the negative thoughts that I have my first strategy is to always pray. After I pray if I am able my next strategy is to listen to gospel music. Before enrolling at Nyack my relationship with Christ was decent however, since attending Nyack I have gained great knowledge on the profession I am deeply passionate about and a deeper relationship with Christ.

## Reference

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