

Self Care Versus Rule of Life

As I sit and reflect on all that I have read and understood about Self Care and creating a Personal Rule of Life, one thing comes to mind, Routine. The funny thing is I ran away from doing things routinely for two reasons, 1. It was boring and 2. I liked to do things as they came up. As I was getting older I realized that we all need a routine in order to create stability, security, consistency and growth. As it states in *Crafting A Rule of Life*, “There is already a rule in place that you are following today. Isn't it time to give up our unwritten rule and prayerfully write one that more closely matches the heartbeat of God? Those who fail to do so are like wild, untamed grape vines. They will produce some fruit, but they probably won't be as abundant as they could be” (Macchia, 2012, p. 15). Although I was able to make logic out of complex things, the simple things were mundane to me and I couldn't seem to bring myself to take care of it. After a while that started to bother me because I couldn't seem to focus on small things and later I found out that was due to my past traumas.

When I started to address my traumas I realized that was the barrier that has kept me from having healthy and fruitful relationships and the first relationship I needed to work on was my relationship with God. Years ago I started to work on my Relationship with God because I tried almost everything under the sun and it wasn't working for me. I had to understand what relationships were and how to handle them. For me it all went in this order: What did I need in a relationship with God, Why did I want a relationship with God, How was I going to go about getting a relationship with God and what was in the way of me getting a relationship with God. That was when I realized I wanted a relationship with God because I was seeking something that only God could help me with and that was stability. Then I realized that I was looking to people for security when that only comes from God and that people couldn't offer what they didn't have

to give. I was going to gain a relationship with God through being consistent in my pursuit of Him, even if I didn't understand it all at first. What I did eventually realize is that I can't be all over the place and needed to begin some routine. Last but not least, I needed to grow up. Intellectually I was smart and I could handle many things, however mentally and emotionally I was a wreck due to past traumas that weren't dealt with. Big thought, I was the only person that was getting in my way.

Identifying roles in life is one of the most important jobs that we have. We have to learn how to set boundaries with people and prioritize our roles in their lives as well as their roles in our lives. As we think about the roles we play in life we have to identify our boundaries as it pertains to our mental capabilities. One of the things that we don't take into account when working on our roles is the effect of not dealing with the mental and emotional strain of everyday living. We must lean on God for all our strength. In *Crafting A Rule of Life* "Our gifts and talents all come from the hand of the almighty God. We can't claim them as our own, as if we created or designed them by ancestry or practice" (Macchia, 2012, p. 35). One thing that I used to think was that I was such a wonderful person and that I had great ideas. As I got older I realized that my life is not my own and it belongs to God. So the thoughts that I have are there because I have been destined to service others and not myself.

I am referring to this reading the most because as I read it became clearer to me that when you get personal with God, you can truly be personal with yourself. I believe that in order to practice Self Care you have to care about yourself and for a very long time I was running away from who I was because I didn't love me, heck I didn't even like me. I started asking myself questions which went like this, who am I, why am I here, if I have a purpose, what are my desires and best of all, what am I even good at if anything. tube personal with yourself. Although

I started answering these questions years ago, participating in the retreat, the poster project and other activities I realized that I had only touched the service of who I was and what I was created for. I noticed that there was more to me than I was capable of understanding. I started understanding that I had to discover my God given talents, take care of my temple and learn how to trust. Crafting a Rule of Life has become an everyday routine that is shaping the way I think about the God that I serve, who I am in Christ and His purpose for my life.

I am constantly crafting a rule of life that enhances all of the gifts, talents, abilities, desires, and strengths that God has gifted me with. I am also allowing God to sharpen other areas of my life so that I can allow God to fully shape my life into the vessel that he has created me to be for the Kingdom. I have always been one of service and Crafting a Rule Life states that "As a member of the body of Christ, your personal rule of life is formed, released and fulfilled within the context of a covenantal faith community in worship, love and service" (Macchia, 2012, p. 139). In other words, do you want to serve and love people so much that it is actually looked at as worshiping God? Thinking of others more highly than you think of yourself and wanting and desiring what is best for others over yourself. This is true worship and what God desires of us and it is where I want to be.

Self Care in Social Work hits on other areas, such as the workplace and what I desire the most and that is helping and serving others by assisting in their journey of what they believe is best for them. Self-care is important for the physical, psychological, emotional and professional areas of my life and helps to keep balance among family, rest, play, relationships and work. It is important to set boundaries in every area of my life so that I can make sure I am taking care of myself. It wasn't always like this for me when it came to taking time for myself. I thought that I could do it all on my own and not take time for myself and I almost burned myself out. I started

getting irritated, frustrated and angry because I was doing the most and no one seemed to notice or care. I thought I could do everything for everyone and be there for others but I was neglecting myself above all else. I couldn't care for others and want the best for them because I didn't care for myself and I didn't know how to or where to even begin. In order to practice self care in social work can't put limitations on the systems we use to assist the people we serve. We must routinely take inventory on ourselves (self-reflection) "if we are to avoid imposing our personal beliefs, values and culturally acquired presumptions on the clients we serve" (Cox & Steiner, 2013, p. 59). We must always make proper self-explorations because burnout is real and it affects the physical, mental and emotional health of a person.

I used to say that I wasn't prepared for being a social worker and ran away from the profession for almost 15 years, just for God to bring me right back around to the place I was supposed to be 15 years prior. Every step of the journey was designed for me to help me heal and realize the gift that was placed in me from the very beginning. I ran away from it because with all that I was going through it was scary to believe that someone wanted to listen to what I had to say, especially if I wasn't believing what I was saying. It wasn't genuine for me and I need to be real and authentic to the people that I would assist. The part of my life that had to be upgraded began with my bachelors but I am finding out so much more about how to separate myself from the profession and organization and finding ways to maintain my mental, emotional, physical, spiritual and financial stability so that I can be effective in working with the people that I have been called to serve and service.

No matter what part of the ladder I climb I want to remember that self care is an important part of my growth and development, even as an adult. In self care in social work it states, "there are many approaches to making changes in the workplace that can help reduce

stress, encourage self-care and improve morale. There is not one approach that will work for all organizations (Cox & Steiner, 2013, p. 138). This part helps me to understand that not all techniques work for every workplace when it comes to reducing stress and finding solutions to the stressors that are plaguing all workers, supervisors, program directors and even directors. There is so much more for people to do today and so many things that people have to worry about. So many issues from a person's mental to physical to financial and spiritual health and then to have the ability to maneuver through systems that do not always seem easy to navigate. Daily, weekly and monthly obligations that can become overwhelming and cause unnecessary anxiety and stress. Maybe we gain the ability to take a vacation that will allow us some time away, however short it may be, to recuperate, be rejuvenated and refreshed.

Practicing self care is a big part of Crafting a Rule of Life. Self care of my work life, personal life and spiritual walk with God takes a lot of energy. Even though I started working on things years ago, I am always open to learning new techniques and ways to enhance my walk with God and how to navigate the everyday nuances of this thing called life. I love life and I love all that life has to offer but being honest with myself it can become a bit much at times. I am grateful that God has not forgotten about me and has been with me every step of the way. Crafting a Rule of Life and Self Care go hand in hand and we must always remember to take care of ourselves in the midst of all that is going on.

References

Cox, K. & Steiner, S. (2013). *Self-Care in Social Work A Guide for Practitioners, Supervisors, and Administrators*. Council of Social Work Education. ISBN: 978-0-87101-444-3.

Macchia, S. (2012). *Crafting a Rule of Life: An Invitation to the Well-Ordered Way*. Intervarsity Press. ISBN: 0830835644