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MFT 603 - Spring 2023
Dr. Tesia Wells
Reading Reflection - Week 1

1. *Concept of Health*

I realized that I compartmentalize aspects of health, considering the psychological, social, cognitive, and environmental influences as unrelated rather than interrelated to each other. The holistic approach to health underscores balance in all these areas. “Health is not static but dynamic and can move backward and forward from state of wellness to illness or disease” (Polan & Taylor, 2017, p. 5). Our health can fluctuate, depending on our circumstances and environment, but we can work towards maintaining it. I used to give myself a hard time for not keeping up with exercise, drinking enough water, and sleeping enough hours, but I am aware of tending to my needs and caring for my well-being. At times, my motivation for a healthier lifestyle wanes, but it’s a practice that can develop.

When helping future clients in therapy, these different areas provide starting points to explore with a client and address things that contribute to their overall well-being and functioning. The WHO frames “health” as a completeness and wholeness, not just “the absence of disease or infirmity” (Polan & Taylor, 2017). The exploration of these topics may lead to greater awareness of a client’s habits and deepen their understanding of life. When we apply the holistic view of health onto therapy, we advocate and prioritize the client’s wholeness and development towards their best self, with the qualities and resources God has given them.

2. *Stressors*

Life is filled with stressors. Stress is a natural part of the rhythm of life. My tendency has been to try to remove stress from my life, and now I realize why my efforts have been so tiring and discouraging. Stress management has been an area I’ve been working on with my therapist because I can only identify the polar ends of stress levels. I know when I’m not stressed or in panic, but I’m unaware of my in-between levels of stress and unsure of what to pay attention to. “Part of stress management is identifying what is perceived to be overly stressful” (Polan & Taylor, 2017, p. 12). After identifying stressors, the next step would be to find a coping mechanism to adjust and adapt to the new change. But I realize that even for myself I need help

coming up with ideas to deal with stress. I used to consider myself pretty adaptable, but now I think I dealt with my stressors by avoiding and ignoring my feelings. As seen in the examples of stressors of various lifestyles, there are feelings involved with these transitions and lifestyle changes people face. Stress does not affect only our physical environment, but it impacts our internal world and perception and we often forget to navigate and address the emotions associated with change.

3. Blocks to Communication

I was surprised to find “Agreeing” as a potential block to communication (Polan & Taylor, 2017, p. 23). But I think the main takeaway from this section is to be mindful of the ways we cut off communication in our therapeutic role. Clients come in with certain expectations of what they might be looking for in therapy, and while we cannot meet every expectation, I think it’s important to do our best to meet the client where they’re at and connect with them. Our world is filled with so many distractions that disrupt opportunities for connection. When a person seeks therapy, I find that it’s important to honor a type of connection that will allow a person to pause, notice, and process in a safe space.

Positive statements might seem harmless in casual and familiar relationships, but in a professional setting, where we want to build trust and rapport with clients, our care needs to be expressed with some more thought, both verbally and nonverbally. Genuine care affects how open and receptive the client might be to delve into their issues and trust the therapist to take the lead on treatment. I hope to challenge myself and practice these interpersonal skills with the people I encounter. I wonder if it would be possible to stretch out my social battery. Finding ways to recharge might be a professional homework assignment for me.

Reference

Polan, E., & Taylor, D. (2017). *Journey across the lifespan human development and health promotion, revised reprint*. F.A. Davis.