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CD702: Working with People  
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LE4 - Counseling Triads Paper

Participating in the 8 counseling triads totaling around 10 hours of time with my peers was incredibly helpful. Although I didn't go into the triads putting much value into what I would receive from them I found myself surprisingly challenged and engaged because of the exercise. In 2016 I completed my Masters of Science in School Counseling and Preventative Mental Health many of the listening/counseling skills we briefly covered in this course were great refreshers for me considering it's been several years since I have intentionally thought about those skills.

Although many of the skills were refreshers there were plenty of new concepts, especially considering my previous graduate program was a secular program and had no faith/spirituality components included. Due to my previous education, I have been afforded the opportunity to participate in skill-practicing triads such as the triads we did in this class however, none that I have ever participated in in the past even compare to the experience in this course.

There is something special to be said about joining in a triad such as in this course and the type of community that was built. In my previous experience of "practice" skills time, we would be given scenarios to "act" out in the skills practice time. For example, I remember being given a brief case study of a teenage girl raised by a single Father who found herself

pregnant and went to her counselor for help. I had to step into this pregnant teen role as my classmate practiced her counseling skills while another classmate observed with a notepad and a checklist. The observer was to check off every counseling skill used from the list during the observation of the counseling session. I remember feeling so uncomfortable acting this story out and pretending as my peer attempted to work through several of the skills in order to get them “checked” off the list by the observer. I hated these practice days, we also had to record them which made it more uncomfortable.

I appreciated the structure of this course because I did have to act! I also appreciated how the first triad had clear guidelines for us to follow (which didn't include fake scenarios, acting, or a checklist observer counting how many skills we could use in a 15-minute session) yet the flexibility of the triads format after the first triads session was complete.

In my previous experience, there was never a genuine relationship between myself and others in my triads, to be honest, I couldn't even tell you who I was partners with in the past. However, in this course, I felt safe, respected, and connected to Soraya and Jason and we have been able to be in contact a handful of times since the triads were over. I can see myself staying connected with these two for the foreseeable future.

Some takeaways from the triads in this course were the power of transparency, encouragement by the community, and the potential asking the right questions has on a conversation. When it comes to transparency it

only took one person to break the ice by being honest, raw and sharing something meaningful for it to feel like a safe space for all of us. I wasn't that person however, I was extremely grateful for the one who opened up and shared some deep life struggles which allowed us to listen, ask some hard questions, and pray over the situation. Had the ice not been broken from the beginning the dynamics for the rest of our time together would have been significantly different.

Another unique thing that happened due to the way the triads were structured in allowing each person equal time to talk was encouragement flowed naturally to each person. Not only did the person who was the sharer able to get encouragement but the listener was also able to get feedback as well which made for an encouraging community. There is power in building one another up and that was demonstrated through these triads.

Encouragement was especially needed when it came time to be intentional about asking meaningful questions as a listener. There were a couple of times when the listener would get stuck and the observer was able to coach them a little to help them come up with a good question. It was also nice to be able to be in the role of the listener and know there was grace as you practiced listening skills and asked meaningful questions from your triad members.

In addition to these takeaways, I think practicing this "triad" model with developing leaders can be a great discipleship tool when teaching the power of effective listening and asking meaningful questions. I have a

discipleship group of young adult leaders who I think could greatly benefit from learning listening skills and practicing in a model such as this. Given my past negative experiences with role-playing counseling skills I wouldn't have seen this as a takeaway activity for effective leadership building but this has challenged my thought process.

If I was to give my triad members a grade for their time in the triads I would give them both A's for the way they were engaged, respected the time, respected the process, and worked to practice the skills learned during the teaching times.