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SWK 649

Final Integrated Paper

Impacted me as a person and as a professional

This semester's reading was intended to impact social workers in various parts of their careers. The lack of self-care has been the silent killer of competent social work professionals for a very long time. Thankfully the voice of self-care is emerging more and more to where this idea is becoming commonplace. These texts tackle the many ways we need to test ourselves and intervene with healthy self-care strategies. I am grateful for these readings because I can receive the knowledge in this book today and tomorrow.

The impact of this book started in the first two chapters of the self-care book. These chapters forced me to engage the way I have been dealing with my stress and mental wellness previously. It forced me not just to be aware of the need for self-care but to become an advocate for myself by being more proactive in caring for myself. Before taking this class, I thought I knew what I was doing to take care of myself. I worked out and spent time with friends and other practical ways of managing stress, but in hindsight, I was unaware of my career's toll on me. I was unaware of all my underline stressors and ignored them. This led to a destructive pattern with unfortunate results in losing a marriage.

But now, with the knowledge attained from the text reading for this class and the Christianity in Social Work class, I know that I have been given a solid foundation to see the

barriers around me and ensure I have the resilience and strength to overcome them. These texts are engaging because they forced me to look at myself, my deficits, and my weaknesses. As a man of God and a social work professional, I need to recognize these strengths and lay them before God to represent Him more than I express myself.

Integrated self-care practices work on my personal journey.

Integrating practices learned in the Steiner text addressed the lack of self-awareness to another level. It was helpful to me to learn with a greater understanding of my coping styles. I am very proactive because I am anxious about getting things done and performing at my best. Being proactive has helped me with my assignments and study habits but also contributes to less peace of mind. Learning this about myself allows me to self-regulate more than without this understanding. I have known to be more present by stopping doing the extra work, resting, and saying no to others to give myself what I need. Now I fight the temptation to work earlier than usual to keep my peace. This has increased my ability to stay present and go with the flow more than trying to manipulate and control my environment.

What I learned about this self-care and spiritual journey.

In this journey with Alliance, I can say I am not the same man I once was. I am growing to be whom the Lord has created me to be. I have slowed down trying to control every aspect of my school, professional and private life and, in this, being reminded of who is in control. God owns everything, and that's how I want it to be. That's the way it should be. The text offers us coping model strategies that forced me to find the benefit in any situation, remind me that good is always present, change my mind to what is essential now, reaffirm the truth, and empower me when I feel weak and experiencing a loss of control in this life.

How did the “rule of life” help to deepen your spiritual life.

Crafting the rule of life took me down into a deep internal search of who I have been, who I am, and whom I am forming to be. Even at the age of 46, where I am in my “mid-life” (sad to say), this is still useful. Evaluating my current roles, God-given gifts, desires, vision for the future, and mission, I see a consistent pattern in my life narrative. That pattern fails, learns, recovers, and teaches others from my life hits and misses. This has helped me as a social worker when I look at others who may not be aware of their strengths, abilities, or weaknesses they have. It helps me to highlight this to the clients in my care to make changes or recognize the reality they don’t see.

The “rule of life” framework helped me to look at these aspects of who I am and see what God has already been doing for me, with me, and through me that I may not have seen before. This has allowed me to spiritually lean into the direction God is taking me with fewer blinders on my eyes. The more I can be in tune with whom I was created to be, the more I can see what Direction God is taking me. This gives me freedom and peace spiritually. Not to try to perform in a manner God wants, but to see it is already there.

What are you learning about yourself?

As time passes, we learn more about ourselves than we did. This is a unique part of our journey as humans. Sometimes we learn from experiences and others from interactions with others. The “Rule of Life” book and the retreat presentations helped me know more about myself. I have learned not only that I have a genuine desire for truth, but I have learned why. Lies have destroyed relationships in my life that will not be recovered fully. Lies have destroyed so many lives and have kept people from the knowledge of Christ. The only way to deal with lies

is to shine a light on them and allow the truth to do the work. So, this is my life rule. Shine the light of truth to everything the darkness of lies wants to take. This will be done professionally for my community, my life with myself, family, friends, and the church. This "rule of life" has reinforced some truths I already know but shed more excellent light on them.

“Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life”

Although I read this book last semester, much of the text I read is still with me, and I hope it always will be. One thing that stays with me is the word *Pati Cum*, when translated from Latin, means to "suffer with." This is a powerful revelation of how God shows compassion by embracing suffering with all of us and for all of us. This description adds vivid imagery of where this feeling comes from in the body. The gut is often described as the second brain. A place that bears much pain, but sometimes when painful, the whole body is debilitated.

This reading helps me see how much Jesus embraced the pain in suffering with me so that I can do the same for others, especially those that don't know who suffered for them. We should treasure and duplicate beauty in this as often as possible. It is a call for me to copy and try to embrace the suffering of someone else and with someone else. Imitating the love that He showed by making His want and needs secondary to serve someone else with no reward but love.

The Compassion book showed me something about the mind of Christ. In John 13:35, Jesus stated that the world His and His displacement from heaven and willingness to accept humility is the self-sacrificing expression of true love. This love is the context for how we treat others and how the world would know we are Christians by the love we offer each other.

Emptying oneself sounds different from what people would sign up to do. In fact, most run away from this call. It sounds difficult or may invoke fear. Nevertheless, like fasting, serving

ourselves not for personal attainment but for the betterment of someone else removes us from our flesh to see what is truly important. But we do have help in this area. We were given the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit prompts us to be still, listen, move, and speak appropriately. I must be reminded of this daily as I am willing to move on with my natural instincts. All of this while this pruning and molding me as an individual into one body to look like Christ and be an acceptable spotless bride is quite difficult. Difficult but necessary. Difficult but needed.

This book challenges me to understand and embrace being compassionate. I have been challenged to have the type of compassion that moves people into action, but sometimes this action requires people to step up against evil or correct someone in love. It was a joy to read, but it challenged me to realize that there is always a greater level of compassion to be shown. But while doing this, we must be very aware of how we are being compassionate with ourselves. Taking care of ourselves so we can take care if there is something this class and these readings really brought to light.