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### Personal and Professional Impact

As a social worker I know the threat of burnout is an important thing to guard against in my personal and professional life. Social work is a helping profession and social workers work in a variety of settings and among diverse populations to help alleviate suffering and empower vulnerable communities, families, and individuals. Working among individuals and groups that are currently in crisis, vulnerable to crisis, or struggling in some way can take a toll on the individuals who serve within this space. I appreciate reading Cox and Steiner's book on self-care practices for social workers because of how important it is us to understand how we are affected by the trauma of others and take self-care practices seriously. It was enlightening to learn about how to recognize stress and understand how stress is necessary to reach my fullest potential, however extended stress could lead to emotional exhaustion and burnout. Burnout as described by Cox and Steiner refers to "the gradual draining of energy that has occurred for the social worker who was once "on fire," but who is now emotionally and physically exhausted (Cox & Steiner, 2013, pp. 10).

Another important takeaway from Cox and Steiner that I will carry into my personal and professional life is the aspect of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy speaks to the confidence that I can have in my own capacities and capabilities and the energy that I can bring to tasks and situations to make the most good come out of any activity. Learning about the importance of self-efficacy as it relates to self-care was ground-breaking for me because it made me take a closer look at my insecurities and reevaluate where I have not given myself enough credit for the competency that I have gained through my social work education and experiences. I think for me building my self-efficacy and my confidence is crucial in remaining connected to my social work practice because the reason I am in this line of work is deeply personal and connected to my life and the calling

that I have discerned from God to serve in a cross-cultural context and meet peoples' physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. We are all on a journey and that is a core part of self-efficacy that Cox and Steiner addressed when they wrote, "no matter where a social worker is in his or her professional development, self-efficacy needs to be nurtured and supported" (Cox & Steiner, 2013, pp. 83). It's important for me to remember that my skills will continue to strengthen as I practice, but when I have confidence in my capacities, then I will be able to draw the best out of my clients and work within this helping profession in a sustainable way.

### **Self-Care Integration**

Throughout this semester I have taken advantage of the different opportunities in the assigned readings, journals, retreat, and assignments to reflect on the activities that bring me joy and renew my energy and sense of purpose. Being made aware of my hobbies has been a crucial step in me being able to plan them into my schedule and make sure that my routines are not packed in the brim with work, internship, and school only. These tasks are super important right now and are responsibilities that I am supposed to steward, however they are not the only things that matter. My wellbeing matters and my relationship with God and others matter and because of these important things, making a plan for self-care matters very much. I have a lot of hobbies because there are a lot of activities, places, and sensations that bring me deep joy and delight. For instance, I love to bike! I love to bike because I feel so alive when I am in motion and so I like to bike really fast. I also love being outside and so when I bike I also enjoy the views of the water, the trees, the sky, or the people I pass. Another hobby that I have identified as self-care is reading. I absolutely love to read novels and get so caught up in a good story that I keep turning page after page. Even though this semester was super busy, I took time during my day off and sometimes in the evening to read a book called "The Great Alone" by Kristin Hannah. This book

brought me so much joy because at the end of a long day, it was a way for to me relax and unwind from the pressures of deadlines and the pressures of meeting other people expectations. Reading is something that I can enjoy just with me and in the midst of a profession and calling that relates so much to others, it is an essential part of self-care for me to find things that I enjoy doing with just me.

### Rule of Life

“Disciples of Jesus Christ become lovers of others within the faith community as a direct reflection of how Jesus has loved us as his disciples” (Macchia, 2012, pp. 58). Developing a Rule of Life is all about learning how to use the days that I have been given to love God fully, love myself, stewarding my body and my gifts, and live a life of love to all those whom God has called me to live in relationship with. Living by a Rule helps me to discern how God wants me to live in the day to day, month to month, and year to year rhythms of my life. Macchia quotes Gordon Smith saying “Discernment, indeed the whole Christian experience, is like a dance with God. God in his love and holiness invites us into a dialogue, a conversation, a relationship that includes not only submission but also the engagement of our will and our freedom with God” (2012, pp. 64). I love this idea so much because the Rule of Life is not designed to create rigidity or the feeling of being boxed in, but rather it’s designed to free me from all the lesser things that could take my time and attention and help me to live life to the fullest and find my deepest satisfaction in faithfulness to Jesus and all that He has designed me to be and to do. This is why creating a Rule of Life has been an amazing experience this semester because honestly my life has felt cluttered and very full. As a social worker with work that quickly feels emotional exhausting and the needs of the people I’m serving can quickly becoming overwhelming, and the trauma that they have experienced can burden me, it is important to make sure that the most

important parts of my life like my relationship with God and others stay at the forefront and don't get pushed to the side in the effort of doing good.

### Compassion Reflection

From reading Nouwen's book on the compassion of God, I had many takeaways that impacted my faith and the way that I live following Jesus. I love how Nouwen makes compassion understandable by the way that he teaches about how God "is not a distant God, a God to be feared and avoided, a God of revenge, but a God who is moved by our pains and participates in the fullness of the human struggle" (Nouwen, 1982). God's compassion took shape in Jesus when he came to live on earth as Emmanuel, God with us. In Jesus, we have a perfect example of what compassion looks like in the day to day of our lives, in the midst of relationships, work, and worship. One aspect of Jesus' life that we have the invitation to imitate is voluntary displacement. Obviously, Jesus' displacement from his heavenly home with the Father looks very different from the displacement we may choose, however he is our inspiration and example. The displacement that I chose on this side of heaven is, as Nouwen describes, "a call to solidarity with the millions who live disrupted lives" (Nouwen, 1982, pp. 66).

As I begin to anticipate graduation at the end of the summer session, I am beginning to think more seriously about where I am willing to live in order to be fully obedient to following Jesus. My heart is moved with a desire to live with individuals, families, and communities of people who have been involuntarily displaced. I recently heard a story from a friend living overseas about an Iranian man who was severely beaten when attempting to gain asylum in a Middle Eastern country to which he had no visa. My heart goes out to him because it seems to be an unjust act to beat someone for the crime of having no safe citizenship. I have an opportunity to visit Rome in May to explore the possibility of living there and joining a ministry team that

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focuses on providing services to immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers who enter Italy.

Although it breaks my heart to think about leaving New York City, I want to participate in the invitation to voluntary displacement that Nouwen wrote about. He said one way that we follow Jesus is by answering “the call to move away from the ordinary and proper place” (Nouwen, 1982, pp. 63). There is no other reason to move away from a place and from the people I love except to obey Jesus and go where He leads. I realize now that my heart is moved by the compassion of God. My favorite quote from Nouwen is that “It is the compassion of [God] who keeps going to the most forgotten corners of the world, and who cannot rest as long as he knows that there are still human beings with tears in their eyes” (Nouwen, 1982, pp. 27). It is the compassion of God that moves my heart and I love to feel a little bit of his heartbeat.

## References

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