

Final Reflection Paper

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What is self care and why is it important in the field of social work? In this class we have read multiple books that have provided an answer to this question. These books include “Self-Care in Social Work” by Kathleen Cox and Sue Steiner and “Crafting Your Rule of Life” by Stephen A. Macchia. Not only do these books explain various strategies and information on how to implement self-care practices into this field of social work, but it also allowed us to truly internalize the information for ourselves and gain an introspective insight on who we are and the type of social worker we are called to be. This paper will discuss my overall reflection on how these readings have advanced my professional capacity.

When it came to these readings, I found multiple sections of these readings to be impactful in understanding myself as a social work professional. For starters, in the Cox and Steiner readings I learned multiple things about myself that I’ve never really paid attention to before. Some of which including, understanding my mind and trends in negative thinking and my different types of coping responses. Growing up I experienced bullying for the majority of my childhood experience, and by the time I reached high school, my dad was diagnosed with cancer causing me to grow up fairly quickly. However, when it came to reading this book by Cox and Steiner, I learned that these past experiences had a great impact on my mind and my way of thinking. More specifically I learned that these experiences cause me to not only frequently engage in negative and self-limiting thinking, but I also learned that because of these past experiences, I tend to engage in negative thoughts about myself or my situation and mainly prioritize others over myself and my personal interest. (Cox, K., & Steiner, S. (2013)). Although there has been a lot of growth in learning how manage my past negative way of thinking by engaging in various self-care practices such as setting boundaries, self-affirmation

practices, and prioritizing myself and the gifts and hobbies I genuinely enjoyed these readings because they allowed me to take a deeper look at myself and how to understand and incorporate these skills into my professional practice. For example, when it comes to the coping skills addressed in chapter two of this Cox and Steiner book, I tend to avoid the situation that affects me personally by distracting myself from dealing with the problem at hand. However, when it comes to events that not only include myself but affect other people as well, I tend to take a more proactive approach in order to make sure needs are met. Although this proactive coping strategy is useful and effective when it comes to my role in the social work field, it is also important to note that this lack of balance between the two could also become an issue if I don't prioritize maintaining this balance, self-awareness, self-regulation and various self-care strategies (Cox, K., & Steiner, S. (2013)). Understanding these concepts from the reading is important because not only will it prevent compassion fatigue, burnout and low job satisfaction rates, but it will also help me to prevent transferring my coping response or negative and self-limiting thoughts to the clients that can ultimately cause harm to the clients I am trying to serve.

I also appreciated how both the Cox and Steiner and Macchia readings both connected to each other when it came to understanding who we are and how we fit into this field. A social worker won't always find their perfect job on their first go. Many social workers bounce from job to job before they find that perfect place where they belong. A concept that I have struggled with many times in the past. As much as I would like to hope and imagine that I'm going to graduate and immediately be placed in the place God has called me to, it doesn't always work like that. Speaking to my classmates at our retreat and these readings taught me that sometimes these jobs are meant to be stepping stones or overall learning opportunities that are meant to lead us toward our overall purpose or calling. With that being said, It is important to note that these

stepping stones towards our calling will never be clear to us if we don't understand the factors that play a role in not only understanding organizations themselves but also how we fit within them. Chapter 6 of the Cox and Steiner book taught me the importance of discovering the values, cultures, beliefs, and communication and leadership styles that are important to me and how they relate or correlate with the organizations I am trying to be a part of (Cox, K., & Steiner, S. (2013)). This is important because working in an environment that does not match your personal values and beliefs can not only lead to dissatisfaction and burnout, but it could also potentially harm the clients, groups, or community we are serving as well. (Cox, K., & Steiner, S. (2013)). Stephen Macchia also affirms this concept by using his book "Crafting your rule of life" to have us take a deeper look at our overall mission, vision, talents, and desires when it comes to the field of social work (Macchia, S. A. (2012)). In other words, questioning what kind of social worker we want to be? Creating this rule of life was important because it helped me answer that question. I learned for myself that my true desire for social work is to spread the gospel through how I love and serve others. A desire that can be accomplished through the mission, vision and talents God has given me. It is my vision to one day have a non-profit organization of my own. One that brings all different helping fields together in order to serve a community in need. More specifically to help those who have felt helpless or powerless due to their situation and not only providing them the resources they need, but also helping them build community so they never have to feel like they have to go through their situation alone. This reading helped me look inwards about my giftings and natural talents and helped me realize how they can help me accomplish this mission, vision, and desire. For example, I not only learned that I have a gift of servitude, but I also have natural talents in leadership, administration, problem solving and video editing. All of which are useful skills that will not only help me grow professionally as a social

worker in whatever field I end up in next, but also in someday reaching this overall mission and vision for the future. In order to meet these outcomes I plan on continuing to grow in these areas by continuing to sharpen my talents and spiritual gifts by taking the time to be prayerful and research the various opportunities that lay before me and making sure that my values, beliefs, mission, desires, and visions are being met in whatever field I plan on entering next.

In conclusion, this class has taught me a lot about myself, self-care, and who I want to be as a social worker in the future. The Cox and Steiner book helped me take a deeper look into myself and helped me realize the areas in which I need to work on in order to grow in my professional capacity. These include understanding and using various self-care strategies such as self-affirmation, setting boundaries, and discovering talents and hobbies, to help me face my unbalanced coping response and negative and self-limited thinking. Something that is important to not only prevent burnout, compassion fatigue and overall job dissatisfaction, but also to prevent unintentionally transferring these things to my client and ultimately causing them harm (Cox, K., & Steiner, S. (2013)). This book also brought clarity to the idea of not only understanding organizations but understanding our function within one. Although social work itself is a broad field, not all jobs within this field are for everyone. In order to truly grow, thrive, and fit into your organization, one must be aware of the culture, values, beliefs, and communication and leadership styles the organization has and how they fit in or correlate with your own. A concept that is also required in order to prevent burnout as well (Cox, K., & Steiner, S. (2013)). In the book “Creating Your Rule of Life” by Stephen Macchia, the author takes this concept a step further by having the readers truly dive into themselves and ask the question of who we are and what kind of social worker we want to be. This is accomplished by having the reader assess their overall talents, mission, vision and desires within this field of

social work (Macchia, S. A. (2012)). I personally found this reading helpful because it truly helped me affirm my calling into this field of social work. This reading not only made it clear that my overall mission, vision and desire for the future is to one day have a non-profit organization of my own that brings all helping fields together in order to help those who feel alone, helpless, or hopeless in their situation and ultimately spreading the gospel through how we serve others within this community. This reading also helped me take a deeper look into my giftings and natural talents and how they connect to this mission, vision and desire. Not only do my gifts and talents in servitude, administration, problem solving, leadership and video editing are not only helpful skills that will help me sharpen my skills and help me grow in my professional capacity in whatever field or position I end up in next, but hopefully overtime these skills will help me one day reach my overall mission, vision, and desire for the future.

References

Cox, K., & Steiner, S. (2013). *Self-care in Social Work: A guide for practitioners, supervisors, and administrators*. NASW Press.

Macchia, S. A. (2012). *Crafting a rule of Life: An invitation to the well-ordered way*. InterVarsity Press.