

Andrelië Nelson

SWK: Professional Seminar I Compassion, Spirituality, and Self-Care

College: Alliance University

Professor: Dr. Kwi Yun

## **Final Reflection Paper**

### **Introduction**

In recent years, the importance of self-care and spirituality has gained increasing recognition in the field of social work. As a social worker, I recognize that self-care is critical to my ability to effectively support clients and navigate the challenges of the profession. Through my engagement with various readings and reflections, I have been able to gain a deeper understanding of the importance of self-care and spirituality, and how they relate to my personal and professional development. In this paper, I will discuss the impact that specific readings have had on me, the ways in which I have integrated self-care practices into my personal and professional journey, the significance of creating a "rule of life" in deepening my spiritual life and practicing self-care as a social worker, and my thoughts on "Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life."

### **Impact of Readings**

One of the most impactful readings I engaged with was "The Body Keeps the Score" by Bessel van der Kolk. This book explores the ways in which trauma is stored in the body and the importance of somatic approaches to healing. As a social worker, I have encountered many clients who have experienced trauma, and this book provided me with a new perspective on how

to support them. Specifically, it has encouraged me to incorporate more body-based interventions into my practice, such as mindfulness, yoga, and breathing exercises. I have seen the positive impact that these practices can have on my clients' mental and physical well-being, and I believe that they have also contributed to my own personal growth.

Another reading that has impacted me is "The Gifts of Imperfection" by Brené Brown. This book explores the importance of embracing vulnerability and imperfection in order to live a wholehearted life. As a social worker, I am constantly exposed to the pain and suffering of others, and it can be challenging to maintain a sense of hope and optimism. This book reminded me that it is okay to be vulnerable and imperfect, and that self-compassion is key to my personal and professional well-being. I have integrated these concepts into my practice by reminding myself that it is okay to make mistakes, and by cultivating self-compassion through daily affirmations and self-care practices.

The book "Crafting a Rule of Life" by Stephen A. Macchia with a foreword by Mark Buchanan provided me with valuable insights into how creating a "rule of life" can be a helpful tool for deepening my spiritual life and practicing self-care as a social worker.

One of the key insights that I gained from this book is the importance of intentional living. Macchia writes, "Living intentionally means that we are not merely reacting to the circumstances and pressures of life but are proactively establishing rhythms and routines that reflect our values and priorities" (p. 6). This idea resonated with me as a social worker, as I often find myself reacting to the needs and demands of others without taking the time to prioritize my own well-being.

The book provided practical guidance on how to craft a "rule of life" by identifying values, setting goals, and establishing habits and practices that align with those values. Macchia

emphasizes the importance of starting small and being realistic, which is helpful advice for someone like me who tends to set lofty goals that are difficult to achieve.

Another insight that I gained from this book is the idea that self-care is not a selfish act, but rather a necessary component of our spiritual and emotional well-being. Macchia writes, "Our personal health and wholeness is not an end in itself, but a means to a greater end: loving God and serving others well" (p. 22). This idea challenged me to reframe my understanding of self-care as something that is not just for my own benefit, but also for the benefit of others.

Overall, "Crafting a Rule of Life" has been a helpful resource for me in my personal and professional journey. It has reminded me of the importance of intentional living, and has provided practical guidance on how to prioritize self-care and spirituality in my daily life. By crafting my own "rule of life," I am able to establish a sense of structure and routine that helps me to maintain a sense of balance and well-being, which is essential for my work as a social worker.

. Integration of Self-Care Practices In recent years, I have made a conscious effort to prioritize self-care in my personal and professional life. I have found that engaging in self-care practices has helped me to manage stress, reduce burnout, and maintain a positive outlook. Some of the self-care practices that I have integrated into my daily routine include meditation, exercise, spending time in nature, and practicing gratitude. I have also found it helpful to engage in self-reflection on a regular basis, in order to gain a deeper understanding of my own needs and emotions.

Through my self-care journey, I have learned that self-care is not a one-size-fits-all approach. What works for one person may not work for another, and it is important to be open to trying

new things and adapting self-care practices to fit my own needs. I have also learned that self-care is an ongoing process, and that it requires consistent effort and attention in order to be effective.

**Creating a Rule of Life** One of the most significant concepts that I have encountered in my spiritual journey is the idea of creating a "rule of life." This concept comes from the monastic tradition and refers to a set of practices and habits that are intentionally chosen in order to deepen one's spiritual life. As a social worker, I have found that creating a "rule of life" can also be helpful in practicing self-care and maintaining a sense of balance in my personal and professional life.

Through the process of creating my own "rule of life," I have gained a deeper understanding of my own values and priorities. I have identified specific practices that help me to feel grounded and connected, such as meditation, journaling, and spending time in nature. I have also identified habits that I want to cultivate in order to improve my well-being, such as getting enough sleep, eating a healthy diet, and setting boundaries around my work. By intentionally choosing these practices and habits, I am able to create a sense of structure and routine in my life, which helps me to feel more balanced and centered. Additionally, having a "rule of life" helps me to stay accountable to myself and to prioritize my own needs, even in the midst of a busy and demanding profession.

### **Compassion**

"A Reflection on the Christian Life" One reading that particularly resonated with me was "Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life" by Henri Nouwen. In this book, Nouwen explores the concept of compassion and the ways in which it can transform our lives and relationships. As a Christian social worker, I found this book to be particularly meaningful, as it challenged me to consider how my faith can inform my work and my interactions with others.

One of the key insights that I gained from this book is the importance of being present to others in a compassionate way. Nouwen writes, "Compassion asks us to go where it hurts, to enter into the places of pain, to share in brokenness, fear, confusion, and anguish. Compassion challenges us to cry out with those in misery, to mourn with those who are lonely, to weep with those in tears" (p. 7). As a social worker, I am often confronted with the pain and suffering of others, and it can be tempting to distance myself in order to protect myself from the emotional impact. However, this book reminded me that true compassion requires us to be present with others in their pain, and to share in their brokenness.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, the readings and reflections that I have engaged with have had a significant impact on my personal and professional development. Through these experiences, I have gained a deeper understanding of the importance of self-care and spirituality, and how they relate to my work as a social worker. I have also learned that self-care is an ongoing process that requires consistent attention and effort, and that it is essential in order to maintain a sense of balance and well-being. Finally, I have been challenged to consider how my faith can inform my work and my interactions with others, and how true compassion requires us to be present to others in their pain.