

Position Paper 4

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Being a professional counselor means being culturally competent and meeting our client's needs as they present themselves. Gerald Corey has set a foundation for how I see counseling and the approach that I plan to take with my clients. In his textbook *theory and practice of counseling and psychotherapy*, Corey list 14 personal characteristics of an effective counselor; these characteristics include but are not limited to:

- Effective therapists have an identity. They know who they are, what they are capable of becoming, what they want out of life, and what is essential.
- Effective therapists respect and appreciate themselves. They can give and receive help and love out of their own sense of self-worth and strength. They feel adequate with others and allow others to feel powerful with them.
- Effective therapists are authentic, sincere, and honest. They do not hide behind rigid roles or facades. Who they are in their personal life and in their professional work is congruent (2013).

These are some of the characteristics of an effective professional counselor that I hope to have obtained throughout my education at Alliance University, and that I hope to maintain throughout my career with my clients.

It is not enough to sit across from a client and listen to them, it is important to understand where they come from and how this affects who they are and how they may feel. In order to do this, we must be culturally competent. We must understand how our own culture and worldviews affect how we see our clients, and we must educate ourselves on our client's cultural identity and worldviews. As noted by Corey, G. it is an ethical obligation for counselors to develop sensitivity to cultural differences if they hope to make interventions that are consistent with the

values of their clients (2013). As we will work with clients of different cultures, socioeconomic backgrounds, religions, ages, genders and racial ethnicity; education becomes a key factor in facilitating positive change for our clients and increasing our own awareness.

As a Christian entering the counseling field, I have learned that my faith will be useful not only when working with clients and other colleagues, but also as a firm foundation for myself. Being a counselor holds a great amount of responsibility; we will be privy to the trials and tribulations of others, we will be called to help guide our client's choices, and we will be exposed to events that may cause transference. The conversations that we will have with our client's will more often than not, be about a trauma that they have either personally experienced or have been exposed to. Being a new counselor our feelings and emotions may often get caught up in what the client is sharing, causing us some hardship in the process. Our faith will be useful in these moments, so that we can not only guard ourselves from these hurt; but so that we can also pray for our clients, extend mercy and grace, and ask the Holy Spirit to work through us within the counseling process.

Galatians 6:1-2 notes the following, brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ (NIV, 2023). As Christians we are called to help others in need and as Christian counselors we are called to counsel those in need, but it is important to remember that we cannot impose our own beliefs on others. According to the American Counseling Association Code of Ethics, section A.4.b. Personal values; counselors are aware of and avoid imposing their own values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors (2014). Keeping this in mind, it is imperative that we acknowledge that although we are Christians in a counseling

setting, we are not in the business of imposing our beliefs onto our clients, or judging them for their beliefs.

When given the opportunity to work holistically with a client who has shared their faith with us, it is important to understand that each client's faith or journey will be different from one another and different from our own. Religious beliefs, for many people, convey a worldview that is an orienting force in their lives. A holistic psychology of persons allows the clinician to explore spirituality not simply as a utilitarian force for personal betterment, but as a legitimate encounter between persons, religious communities, and God, while simultaneously recognizing biological, psychological, and sociological forces ... (Entwistle, D. 2009).

Proverbs 31: 8-9 and 25-27 encompasses the type of counselor and woman that I aspire to be. Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy (Proverbs 31: 8-9. NIV, 2023). These are clear instructions that we are to help, care for, and advocate for others; and this is what I hope to be able to effectively succeed at doing for my future clients. She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come. She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue. She watches over the affairs of her household ... (Proverbs 31: 25-27. NIV, 2023). As a mother, a wife, a friend, and a student; this is the type of woman I consistently work towards. I try to emanate the grace of God through my actions with my children, co-workers, and friends; and I plan to do the same with future clients. I plan to utilize the education and training that I have received to help clients through their trials and tribulations, and I plan to encourage women to challenge social and cultural stigmas that have caused false beliefs.

References

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