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At the beginning of this class, I did very little to practice self-care. However, the readings helped me to understand that self-care is very important to the social work profession. Being in the child welfare field for over six years, I often felt overwhelmed, stressed, and burned out. This was because of poor time management, high caseloads, long work hours, and the lack of support from both leadership and co-workers.

The readings made me realize that I was practicing avoidant regarding my professional work. I would avoid discussing how I am feeling and try my best. This caused me to shut down and isolate myself from society. This sometimes would also carry over into my personal life. This practice created several conflicts for me. For example, my children would feel like I wanted to spend less time with them. Page 15 made me realize that I need to work on the attribution style when working in the child welfare field (Cox et al., p. 15).

Another positive response to the reading is that I must re-evaluate how I manage stress. It made me aware that some stressors are silent, and that can trigger my mental well-being. If an environment triggers my well-being, it is okay to re-evaluate and see how I can improve it. Since reading the first two chapters, I am more self-aware. I know when I need to utilize those personal days to regroup and be the best reflection of my professionalism (Cox et al., p.23). I know that even though I am one person, there is no I in a team. It is okay to ask for support from my colleagues and seek additional supervision and guidance if needed. I now understand how traumatic events can play a vital role in how I engage and perform my task, whether it is professionally or personally.

This class helped me identify methods to utilize coping techniques to handle those stressors and traumatic events. Self-care practices that I have applied in my professional and personal life are meditation and devotion. I would practice devotion for 30 minutes in the

mornings before I start any task. I believe that I am spiritually in the right mindset by asking God for guidance, blessing, and grace (Macchia, p.83). I cannot start my day without God, which is a vital part of becoming a social worker.

Also, if I feel stressed at work, I will find a quiet area and practice a guided meditation for about 15 minutes. That helps to re-center, re-group, and try again (Cox et al., p.64). Meditating during the day helps me to self-reflect and find peace within me physically, spiritually, and mentally. This allows me to be at peace and ease with any stressors that might present themselves during work. Sometimes I would also go for a quiet walk during my lunch break. I would walk to a spiritual and motivational podcast or motivational gospel music.

I recently started journaling, which was recommended by a colleague of mine during a small group session about self-care. I believe that journaling helps me write down how I am feeling and helps me get over depression and anxiety. In addition, it can allow me to voice my concerns and conflicts safely instead of bottling up those feelings. I am known for avoiding discussing what is causing a shift in my mood because I do not want to impose my stress on others.

I feel better by practicing self-care and utilizing the coping mechanism listed above. I have not experienced burnout and understand that my well-being is very important. I must be healthy and continue to include God in everything I do. I am managing well and practice self-care daily by meditating, journaling, and devotion. I also do self—care once a week by going to the spa, the movies, or having a game night with my family.

Creating a rule of life helps to refocus and regroup my priority, which is including God in everything I do. Being a social worker is God's calling for me. The rule of life helped to keep God at the center of my life spiritually, personally, and professionally. While working on the rule

of life, I realized that I need to work on my vision and mission, which encompasses my work of including therapy and faith in everything that I do with my work. I am not imposing my faith on others; however, I am not wavering in my faith and beliefs for someone. I am staying judgment and bias-free and praying for God's guidance.

After the retreat, I could identify where I needed to improve spiritually and mentally. I can function at my best because I include God in everything; I start my day with God and end my day with God. I have that one ad one conversation with God through devotion, prayers, and singing.

By doing the exercises during the retreat, I realize I am grateful to have a great relationship with my family and friends. It made me realize that I need to acknowledge my relationship with my mother and husband. Doing the exercise made me realize that I need to try to have at least once a month self-care with my mom. My mother plays a significant role in the woman I am today, and I need to ensure she feels appreciated. It also made me aware that I need to strengthen the relationship between my brother and me. I can teach him some of the self-care techniques and help him to create a rule o life. I believe he needs to be motivated to strengthen his relationship with God, well-being, and mental health.

The retreat made me feel like one with my classmates. I felt that my classmates encouraged me not to give up. They motivated and reassured me that it is okay to fall short; however, I pick myself up and use my gifts to encourage and inspire change in others. I saw how to incorporate my faith and gift into my work and the community. I could reflect on my accomplishments and see my vision and mission for the future. It also made me realize that I need to include my home country of Guyana in my vision and mission. Many teenagers can

benefit from my gift, and also, I can use it as therapy and an outlet for teenagers wanting to change their behaviors.

I learn that God has a plan for me to be a social worker. I will go wherever God is calling me. I realized that I could do anything with God by my side. I am ready for the new chapter as a Licensed Social Worker and to continue to do God's work.

After reading "Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life," compassion embodies the Social Work profession. Before reading the book, I thought compassion was just being empathetic to one's feelings. The book went into more detail. It explained that compassion is how we interpret what is being conveyed. Compassion can be both verbal and non-verbal. I can show compassion by offering a hug to a client and telling them that it is okay to have negative feelings, and we will learn how to change those feelings and behaviors together.

Being in child welfare, I often felt compassion fatigue, which led me to want to build a wall. However, it made me realize that it is okay to have compassion; it is okay to empathize with our clients and have feelings by what is being shared. I agree with the text that compassion needs patience, prayer, and action. That statement is fundamental to the social work field. I agree that compassion is best displayed in the community. Compassion can be patient and understanding that change can be a long process, and everyone goes through behavioral changes differently.

I need to continue to work on compassion through praying and asking God for patience, guidance, and understanding. By praying for my clients and community, I am asking God to help them be compassionate in the struggles or trials that person or environment is experiencing. The book states that compassion is God's way of loving us and teaching us how to love others. God's work is everlasting and ever-loving, and we must ensure that God's love shines through in all we do.

This class helped me to understand that self-care is essential. I plan to work on how to continue to practice self-care in the field. I also would like to encourage others in child welfare to take self-care seriously. I plan to form a small group to meet to inspire and motivate each other.

## References

Cox & Steiner (2013). *Self-Care in Social Work*, NASW Press.

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