

Final Reflection Paper

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When I made the decision to pursue a change of career, I decided it was going to be Social Work. I did lots of research because I already had a bachelor's degree in a different career and even though I was a100% convinced I needed to make sure I was making the correct decision and was going down the correct pathway, I needed to validate my own thoughts. Why social work? Because years ago, while going through very serious personal challenges, I discovered our society needed compassionate, empathetic health care providers. People that were in the profession because of their passion and need to help others heal. This field pulls me towards people that are struggling, having the darkest and deepest emotions, people that are in pain and confused but don't know where to start to get help. I want to be that compassionate, empathetic, and passionate provider, a mental health worker who can offer that healing help that many people in our society need. Now that I am working on my master's in clinical social work, finishing my generalist year internship at an after-school program where the majority of the population is Hispanic and simultaneously working full time in my current job, I am learning not to allow work-related stress that my passion to help others and my actual work can lead me to affect my mental and physical health.

Reading chapters one and two from "Self-Care in Social Work" by Cox & Steiner (2013), was very helpful to me. Chapter 1 as a whole kept me engaged and wanting to continue learning about the different types of stress, but what I found more exciting was how stress affects us, I came to the reality that we don't consider stress and trauma happening to us in any type of work, more even in the field of social work because we get so busy in doing our work with the clients that we think we exempt from stress and illness physically and mentally. During this process where I am changing careers, reading this book opened my eyes to the cruel reality as my current

job is extremely stressful and full of uncompassionate people. The author's explanation on how stress affects the whole body mentally and physically. It is amazing how stress can provoke certain illnesses over time. This is very frightening and urges me to practice mindfulness and self-care. Learning about the different types of stress I did not have any idea of those existed and how damaging they are to the human body and mind. On page 27 chapter 2, something that struck me was that psychological studies also show that individuals' level of self-worth influences how well they take care of themselves. Something I found worrying was the history of self-care. On page 31 the concept of self-care as an antidote just became a phenomenon in the 21st century. I think this should have been a phenomenon a long time ago because stress affecting the human body has been around for years. Another point that stood with me was that I realized I have been going through organizational stress, I have so much work to do, the job demand and the low decision latitude are affecting my health significantly.

Chapters 3, 4 & 5 were definitely fulfilling, insightful, engaging, and exciting, mostly because of the awareness of the concepts of self-awareness, self-efficacy and self-regulation. Self-Awareness- I was astounded with this chapter, "Spotting Signs of Stress", the list of physical, mental, emotional, and behavioral signs a human being can experience (pg 46-47) it's concerning. On page 45, talks about how an individual experiencing workplace stress can show symptoms of mental or emotional illness, this makes me reflect on myself and think about how I was experiencing some of the signs described here because of excessive stress I was going through at my workplace. "Self-Regulation, "Minding your Mind" (pg 61) talks about how social workers experience a wide range of distressing events that could easily turn into negative, pessimistic, and judgmental towards others. Being new in the social work world I can relate to this; I tend to find myself being judgmental with my own emotions. Cognitive reframing

description I found it interesting to learn this is a powerful tool that can reorient our view of people and problems so that they are seen in a more positive light. I couldn't agree more with self-efficacy, having a positive attitude and always thinking of ourselves as skilled and capable at we do, we are definitely better at managing stress and maintaining our commitment to a difficult but yet rewarding career.

In chapter 6, "Burnout reflects an uneasy relationship between people and their work" like relationship problems between two people pg 99. I can relate very well to this, having a problematic relationship with your supervisor can definitely burn you out and cause a significant amount of stress in your work life. The definition of the word "culture" caught my attention as well, culture is the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution or organization. Chapter 7, supporting strengths and solutions. A strengths-based orientation promotes mutuality and partnership between the supervisor and the worker and "respectful give and take communication" pg 126. I totally agree with this approach, it is very important to have a cordial, open and respectful relationship with your supervisor and vice versa, having this can avoid a stressful work environment and will allow the worker to do a better job. Chapter 8, flexible work schedules pg 146, research suggests that employees find them helpful in balancing home and work lives and reducing stress. I can relate to this and can attest it definitely helps, after I started to have a flexible work schedule, I have been able to be more productive at work, I get to work around home and work schedule, however it can have its cons as well.

This book has made it clear how indispensably and important it is for social workers, other health care providers and any other profession to have a perspective of self-care that considers it an essential component to have a healthy well-balanced life where we can recognize

our own signals of distress when we encounter situations that might affect us as we work with clients.

How and what I have integrated into my personal journey and work regarding self-care is to learn my body and my mind. I am learning how to recognize the signs my body and mind send me to understand when it is time to take care of me. This is vital for me in the field work (social work and in my current job in the fashion industries) and incorporating the art of cognitive reframe which adjusts my view of people. In understanding my own stressors and taking responsibility to maintain a well balance mind, body and soul will help me not to show up to practice and or work with a negative mind or to be judgmental towards my clients.

My self-care journey and spirituality will now consist of continuing to observe my mind, the way I think and where I am looking. I will be observing and paying attention to how I perceive and receive the world around me which includes my clients, coworkers, and their worldviews. I am also getting in the routine of including the Lord into every session and into my thoughts, to help me continue with my passion of helping, to help me process every case I might get assigned and continue to pray for wisdom.

My spirituality has deepened as I learned to “craft a rule of life” because it has taught me a new discipline. According to the book “Crafting A Rule of Life” (Macchia, 2013), our personal rule of life is a holistic description, it is spirit empowered that includes both the rhythms and relationships of life to be humbly full field for Christ Glory and the ideal example of the embodiment of a spirit empowerment personal rule of life (pg 16-17). After reading this book and creating a rule of life I have learned how to be more present to myself (self-care), how to be more disciplined, how to be accountable to myself and those around me. I have learned about me

I can be a compassionate catalyst through Christ, I am capable of allowing the Lord Jesus Christ into my heart I have learned I am able to help others without forgetting about helping me. I will follow my rule of life from now on, it will be governed how I live out of my roles, gifts, desires, my vision, and my mission within society.

After reading the book “Compassion” by Nouwen, H.J.M. McNeill, D.P & Morrison (1989), what I found more meaningful and interesting was the definition of the word compassion which is derived from the Latin words *pati and cum*, which means “to suffer with.”

Compassion is not a natural phenomenon, as human beings we do not recognize suffering as something we desire or to which we are attracted to, it is something we want to avoid at all costs. Therefore, compassion is not among our most natural responses. Peregrine Worsthorne expresses an “in compassionate” point of view: A genuine compassionate society, one that succeeded in achieving the ideal of putting itself in the shoes of the unfortunate, will soon find itself marching in the direction of the collective solutions inimical to individual freedom. God is a Compassionate God. God has chosen to be God-with-us.

Asking several questions such as, when do we as human beings receive real comfort and consolation? When do we hear words of reassurance or hope? Sometimes. Most of the times in situations of suffering and despair having someone’s company or having a word of advice is more important than any particular action. However, in these times where there are techniques designed to change people, to influence people’s behavior, we have lost the simple but difficult gift of being present for one another. These reflections show us what it means God is a God-with-us, a God who came to share our lives in solidarity. His solidarity consists in the fact that God is willing to enter with us into our problems, confusions, and questions.

The advantage of calling God Immanuel is as soon as we call God, “God-with-us” we enter a new relationship of intimacy. This is necessary because by calling him God Immanuel, we recognize God’s commitment to live in solidarity with us. To share our joys and pains and defend and protect us, and to suffer all of life with us.

As social workers whose jobs are to pursue justice, which is an attribute of God, we must understand that in order for us to be with our clients, just as God is with us, we have to open up our hearts and minds in order to truly help people. This description of compassion makes me understand that as a Social Worker who is also a Christian, the profession goes beyond the wanting to help others, I must be humble, be open to enter the lives of our clients with compassion, to listen and comfort them as they express their problems or sorrows. This description affects my emotions in a way I must question myself and work on my feelings, on having more sympathy and being more compassionate.

References

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