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Position Paper 4

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As professional counselors, we listen to our client's stories and work with them according to their goals. As a Christian attending a Christian university, I've been constantly questioned about how my faith informs my future work. Professional counselors must be able to empathize with their clients and teach them clinical skills that they will continue to use when sessions end.

Our clients often come to us as a last resort because they can't support their current situations. Some of the clients I've had knew that if they didn't get help soon, they would harm themselves. Others need help dealing with their day-to-day lives. No matter the reason why a client comes to us, as professional counselors, we need to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses and form the best plan of action. We help our clients develop plans to reach their goals. We also help clients process their trauma.

Professional counselors have to be organized and ethical. Even though the main goal is to help our clients, we have admin duties that we complete to keep everything moving. In terms of ethics, we have to make sure that we are providing ethical care and respecting our client's boundaries.

Holeman states, "The issue is not about liking or not liking one's clients, but about the capacity to fulfill Jesus' command to 'love one another' under the best of circumstances, or the challenge to 'love your enemies' under more trying clinical conditions" (Holeman, 2012). There will be moments when I desire to refer a client out due to my inability to see the client or due to constantly clashing with the client. I was born into the church and attend services almost every Sunday when I'm not traveling. I attend a Haitian Pentecostal church and have seen the shift from mental illnesses being seen as spiritual attacks or the Devil to something that can be addressed in conjunction with the belief in God. As I grow older, I question what I used to

believe and have a more liberal sense in counseling my clients. I still believe in God and love Him, but I don't see certain clients the way some of my church members might.

As a counselor who happens to be Christian, I can decide to put some things aside to portray God's love to those who come seeking help.

Holeman also states, "I am transformed so that through the grace of God I can be formed in the image of Christ and participate in expressing God's love for the world (Holeman, 2012). In terms of my faith, I am still a Christian. However, as I get older I've begun to question things that I've learned in the church more and more. The more I meet with a diverse range of clients, the more I question why they had to experience what they went through.

Foster mentions, "The closer we come to the heartbeat of God the more we see our need and the more we desire to be conformed to Christ (Foster, 2018). Nyack, now Alliance has forced me to constantly come to terms with my beliefs. I've been in courses where my fellow peers would whip out the perfect scripture to relate to a client or assuage our nerves about counseling. I would tell myself that I don't necessarily need to do so in my sessions with my clients because even though Alliance is a Christian school, I wouldn't be a Christian counselor. However, I've learned that I'm not expected to go around and transform every client, but to let my faith work through me in my sessions. Instead of dropping scripture every second, I could extend grace and support. This does not mean that using scripture is wrong, especially when we encounter clients that vocalize that they want a Christian aspect in their counseling.

Foster also says, "If we have God-given compassion and concern for others, our faith will grow and strengthen as we pray. If we genuinely love people, we desire for them far more than it is within our power to give, and that will cause us to pray" (Foster, 2018). We've joined this

field because of our desire to help people. There are random times when I think about what my client is going through and all they have suffered.

At times I want better for them so that

Holeman declares, “I am transformed so that through the grace of God I can be formed in the image of Christ and participate in expressing God’s love for the world” (Holeman, 2012). I believe that I have been called to counsel those in need. In the past, I believed that I was better at helping others than helping myself. Through the program, I’ve learned about self-care and making sure that I take care of myself while I take care of my clients and do their work. I came to Alliance to learn.

References

Foster, R. J. (2018). *Celebration of discipline: The path to spiritual growth*. HarperOne.

Holeman, V. T. (2012). *Theology for better counseling: Trinitarian reflections for healing and formation*. IVP Academic.