Professional Development Paper

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**My Values**

Several strong held values of mine, have led me to the career path of social work. One is the importance of people helping people. While it is important to have systems that help people out in hard times, I strongly believe that it is equally as important for people to create connections. I also value nature, professionalism, and creativity which will all be useful in a social work career because they will make me a more rounded professional. Another value that brought me to social work was diversity. My passion for travel has really opened my eyes to the value for diversity and culture within our global community. I believe that diversity should be cherished instead of an excuse for discrimination.

**Positives of Social Work**

I am most attracted to the field of social work because it involves helping people. I always used to say when I was younger, that I wanted to do something that positively impacted the world and social work allows me to do that. I also love social work because it allows me to be creative and constantly learn about different viewpoints. I love that social work has taught me how to realize when I’m making judgments so that I can overcome them and better try to understand people. Social work has already opened my mind and opinions and I have barely even started my career. Continuing my education throughout my entire career is a bonus for me because then I know that I am using the best-practice techniques in my interactions with clients.

**Negatives of Social Work**

The thing that really worries me about a career in social work is the threat of burn out and compassion fatigue. I worry that my happiness in life will be affected by my choice of career. I want to continue to be energetic and positive in outlook for life but I fear that working with frustrating situations on a daily basis will slowly bring me down. I feel comfortable with the fact that I have been supplied with some of the best self-care techniques to prevent burn out prior to entering the field. I am glad that my professors in this program have emphasized how important self-care is to my future career so that I can prevent this fear.

**Practicum Experiences**

My field practicum has shown me that social work was a good choice for me. I immediately felt like this was what I was supposed to be doing upon meeting my agencies staff members. I love how much I have in common with the members of my agency and how easily they inspire me to learn more about the field. Finally having the opportunity to put to use the material that I have been learning for the last four years has been exciting. I have learned that I enjoy the macro aspects of the field more than the micro. I have also learned that I am better at the macro aspect which was surprising to me. I came into this career thinking that I wanted to be a therapist but now I see myself working with policy and communities. My internship has taught me that I enjoy working with children and families which I never would have assumed since I have very little child experience prior to this year. I believe that my biggest weaknesses are professional experience and knowing when to take a break. My mentality has always been go-go-go and I’m starting to realize that with social work this will cause me to burn out. I need to prioritize my own health before the success of my career in order to be productive in helping create social justice. I understand that experience will come with time which means that I just need to continue learning and growing through new opportunities.

**Self-Evaluation Techniques**

I will engage in self-evaluation by listening to what others have to say about my work. I will also look at the outcomes of my own work so that I can gage if I am being successful in the outcomes that I am producing. I also believe that comparing how I am doing work to how my coworkers complete the same tasks is a good way to use self-evaluation. I have done this in my internship by comparing the way that I talk about the agency’s services to clients compared to the way that my coworkers do. I think that observing my coworkers in general will help me in being able to use self-evaluation. Lastly, realizing when I do make mistakes and thinking through how I would do it differently in the future will help me in self-evaluation.

**Self-care Activities**

The self-care activities that I engage in on a weekly basis are journaling, reading, exercising, swimming, and mediating. I have recently developed a self-care plan with my supervisor and have tried to achieve my goals for each week. When creating my self-care plan I choose to examine six areas of self-care: physical, emotional, spiritual, psychological, relationship, and workplace. I have come to understand that in order for me to be successful in life I need to have balance in all areas of my mental health. At the bottom of my plan I included the saying “Above all else strive for balance among work, internship, family, friends, school, play, and rest.” These are the areas of life that are the most important to me and these need to be my priorities during my busy semesters. To focus on my physical health I have set the goals of going to the gym twice a week, swimming once a week, getting at least six hours of sleep a night, and taking a nap when needed. Next, I looked at my emotional health and set the goals of writing in my feelings journal (which I share with my supervisor during supervision), laughing, letting myself cry when I need to, and staying in contact with close friends. Psychological health will be focused on by reading books that I enjoy, asking questions when curious, and stop answering emails after 8pm each night. Next, I planned out my spiritual health by mediating for 15 minutes a week, spending time in nature, and contributing to a cause that I believe in. Relationship health will be focused on by spending time with my dog each day, making time to visit with my friends, and spending time with my family. Lastly, I wanted to focus on my mental health at the workplace which I will do by eating lunch away from my desk, arranging my work space to be more comfortable, and taking time to get to know my coworkers. Even within the short five weeks that I have been working at my internship, I have come to realize the importance of self-care in the social work field. I want to be productive and helpful and in order to do this I need to make sure that I am taking care of myself.