

Self-Care Mini Paper:

Bibliotherapy As A Form Of Psychological Self-Care

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NURS180: Stress and Strategies to Promote Well Being

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October 3rd, 2023

As someone who loves the precision and elegance of mathematical concepts, incorporating the therapeutic nature of reading (Monroy-Fraustro, 2021) into my self-care routine was not an easy decision to make. To outline my strategy, I chose to read a novel, which satisfies the psychological domain of self-care. More specifically, I chose a book called "Mornings in Jenin" written by Susan Abulhawa. It is a narrative that follows the Abulheja family through the eyes of a girl called Amal, as they endure the tragedies of the Israeli-Palestinian occupation. It's a book that I always wanted to read, mainly because I am a big fan of politics, with the only thing stopping me is that I find very little joy in reading non-academic articles. Incorporating the political aspect during book selection has added a layer of interest for me and engaged me further as it provides a means to learn and gain new perspectives (Butler, 2019).

I specifically chose this strategy because I wanted to use the task at hand as an opportunity to do something that I would not usually do on my own. And for transparency, I was strongly encouraged by a good friend of mine while we were discussing strategy options. For context, she is a big advocate of reading, to the point where she tends to read in unconventional settings such as at social functions, at parties, and while crossing the street.

To incorporate reading into my daily routine, I substituted it for listening to music during my hour commute to and from university. This simple change guaranteed that regardless of my hectic weekly schedule, I could consistently engage with my book during this dedicated 2-hour time. The frequency at which I have been reading my book is 5 times a week, and I usually read

around 30 pages at a time, However, I did not read during the weekend because I had plans to see friends and do not usually commute to campus.

Finishing the book was a very satisfying feeling that did not last very long, however, this activity transformed my downtime into a productive and enriching activity, even if it's not my favorite. Knowing this somewhat reduced the anxiety (Yuan, 2019) that arises from the fact that I could be doing something productive in those 2 hours. Another benefit that I experienced after I finished the book was a long and very engaging discussion with my friend. It gave us lots of common topics that we can talk about and engage in, like book reviews and recommendations.

I would like to point out that the trial period of a week was not adequate for me to form a lasting opinion on whether I would like to continue this strategy in the long term. A part of my hesitancy comes from the fact that when I ask most of my friends why they enjoy reading so much, their reasons revolve around escapism (Brewster, 2008). I am thankful that I never felt the need for fantasy and escapism to take a break from painful moments of reality. On the other hand, I found the fact that reading helps with memory, concentration, and enriching my general knowledge a motivational factor to continue exploring diverse genres until I find one that resonates with me, it's a possibility that I just have not found my genre yet.

In conclusion, I had a relatively positive experience reading "Mornings in Jenin", although I am not yet inclined to introduce reading into my routine. I am planning to continue this trial for a month, if proven successful, I will continue this strategy long-term.

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