Mid-Term Self Reflection
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 Coming up on the halfway point in this practicum experience, there are several things that have become apparent in this learning through experience. It has always been challenging as well as encouraging to actually sit across from individuals and families in order to put into practice the theories and interventions learned throughout counselor training. This class has not been different. Several strengths and weaknesses have led to a focus on personal growth through an action plan.

**Strengths and Weaknesses**

 As with the work done with most of my clients, it is important to begin with positives and strengths of counseling skills and implementation. First, through feedback from the class as well as my supervisor, building rapport with clients has become my strength in the counseling process. Rapport can be argued as the most critical piece in the counseling process (Rogers, 2013). The ability to connect with clients and help them feel comfortable in a counseling session has been a focus of my counseling. Early in my counseling, I tended toward having strict separation from who I was and the counseling process. However, through experience with clients, much of myself comes out which can make the process more “real” for clients. Counseling comes out of the “soil” of the counselor (Rogers, 2013). Discerning the core hurt or fear for a client is another strength as well. Often, the problem of where the client is stuck comes to light within the first few sessions. Experience has been the educator in both of these areas.

 Weaknesses have come to light more clearly through this process as well. Many of the more clinical areas are still areas of needed growth. Proper diagnosis is a struggle. It has become hard at times to funnel a client into a specific diagnosis knowing there are many circumstantial impacts. Often the adjustment disorder diagnosis is given. Wakefield (2016) describes this as the “clinician’s dilemma” and can impact diagnosis for many counselors. This can be overcome through proper preparation and written reports for each client. I do not always write a full written report for each client (due to time as well as laziness). Doing this consistently will aid in preparation. Another weakness found has been some subtle countertransference. In watching the videos, I often say “right?” after a statement. Upon self-reflection it became clear this was a need for affirmation from the client that I needed to hear I was stating truth. There are several other improvements needed such as immediacy in clients, but these can improve with more practice and experience.

**Areas of Personal Growth**

Due to the fact that the person of the counselor is crucial to success within the counseling process, there are several areas of personal growth that need addressed (Sackett & Lawson, 2016). The first area of personal growth is to be able improve in session preparation. The goal would be to have a written report for each client as well as spend more time conceptualizing and evaluating each session. Being in the residency for licensure in Virginia, the business of life, and working full time outside of counseling my time is in demand. However, this should not hinder the work that needs to be done for each client. They each are in critical areas of life and are vulnerable. From a Christian perspective this necessitates much prayer as well. There is a spiritual battle going on that cannot be done in my own power. Time to pray and fight the spiritual battle must be improved upon.

The second area of growth involves more reading and research in order to better improve diagnosis and empirically supported interventions. It is not only ethical but empirically supported that a counselor should be up to date on proper diagnosis and interventions (Norcross & Wampold, 2011). Currently being in a PhD program has been helping in this area. However, one goal for this growth would be to continue having supervision beyond my residency. Having peers and those with more experience sharpen and improve my skills will force me to look deeper and evaluate myself more often. For myself, I can get too comfortable with a status quo and fail to constantly be improving skills.

 Finally, my final growth area is to simply eliminate the temptation to say “right?” so much in session. The first step in this goal is to simply be aware of it in session. This has begun to happen as I have watched myself in the videos. Next, will be to work on alternative words to use as well as become more confident in my skills which will come with preparation. This preparation will take time and an action plan.

**Action Plan**

 One of the main focuses of the action plan for the remainder of the semester as well as my residency will to be to actually cut back on counseling hours. My schedule is full with a full time job teaching aviation maintenance, being online faculty in the school of aeronautics, leading a life group at church, serving as a deacon, my PhD work, and family life with 3 kids. With all this, my life balance can get unhealthy and leaves little time to invest in session preparation. By cutting back to fewer clients as well as getting more rest, it will allow the time necessary to reach the above stated goals.

 Currently, my supervisor does not ask to see videos. In order to continue to assess myself and catch the things I have seen, videoing sessions at least once a quarter will be used to get better feedback beyond my own interpretations of sessions to my supervisor. The rest of this semester and class will be difficult yet exciting to see myself improve as a counselor and be the tool that can be used by God.

References

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