

A Person as a Professional Narrative

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I believe that I have several skills necessary to provide quality counseling to clients. When I first discovered my passion for counseling, I was still in middle school. I believed that I could be a strong counselor because I wanted to be in a field where I could help others. I have always been good at listening to others and making sure to understand them rather than just hearing what they have to say. There have been several instances throughout my life where friends have confided in me with personal information about problems they have had, which I have protected and helped them with. Additionally, I learned from a young age that I have a passion for helping people in individual settings, rather than in larger settings across many locations. I have had several experiences with serving others over the years. Growing up in the church has allowed me to gain experience and see the impact that providing hands-on service creates. It has also allowed me to meet people I probably would not have otherwise. As a college student, I minored in Political Science and Religious Studies, diversifying my knowledge of matters of the world. I feel like I have learned a good amount about other religions and am also aware of the importance of service to those from different areas all over the globe. During my time in college, I also worked several summer jobs in settings with middle and high school-aged children, as well as with elementary age children. Working these jobs provided me with experience talking to and helping those from these younger age ranges.

Within my Psychology program, I also took many relevant courses that provided me with information that is important to being an effective counselor. I took classes on Personality Psychology, Grief and Loss, Lifespan Development, and Educational Psychology. I feel like all of these classes taught me a great variety of theories and practices to use with a wide variety of clients. There were great differences in the age ranges I learned about, spanning from working

with older clients in my Grief and Loss class to working with children in my Educational Psychology class. I also had the ability to study abroad one summer across three countries while taking a Psychology of Alcohol & Culture course. This course taught me a great deal about substance use and abuse as well as proper treatment planning for people of many different backgrounds. While it was a great experience taking these classes, I always remind myself that these were undergraduate classes and not part of any licensing process. Therefore, I continue to focus on my graduate classes as a means to accentuate all of my prior learning and become a more well-rounded counselor. I was also the president of an A Cappella group which helped to find my voice a bit more and talk through issues with some of my groupmates. I am also a part of Psi Chi which has provided me with resources to learn from and help me gain education in the mental health fields. My experience in undergrad gave me more of an ability to learn about tools that are effective for strong counselors than I had originally hoped for, and I am thankful for that.

One of the biggest things that I need to work on as a counselor is getting more experience with people who do not have the same experiences or upbringing as me. This includes working with clients of many different cultures, races, and sexual orientations. I grew up in a suburban community without a lot of diversity or difference in viewpoints. In college, I started to meet more people who were different from me which provided me with a good amount of exposure to and education about other ways of life. One of the reasons why I chose the program at Longwood was because I wanted to be tested and be surrounded by others who were coming from different backgrounds than me. Taking classes like Multicultural Counseling and Human Sexuality will help me to learn more about providing counseling to those who are different than me. Beyond that, being around the people in my cohort and starting to see clients will help me to build more experience with talking to and helping clients from diverse backgrounds. Another

thing I need to work on as a counselor is not coming off as too cold with clients. I have never been a very expressive person when it comes to my emotions, which I feel makes me come off as uncaring sometimes in my conversations. I can do better to show positive emotions during sessions which should help to make clients feel more welcomed and secure during sessions. Another thing I want to work on is finding a dedicated set of theories to use during sessions. While all of the counseling theories have at least some benefits for clients during sessions, it is inevitable that we will all pick at least one or as few to use the most. I am leaning towards being more humanistic with nature while also using existential counseling as well. I think that a combination of these two will serve me well in helping clients to feel at peace and comfortable during sessions, as well as encouraging collaboration between myself and my clients. Overall, I feel confident that I am on the right track with regards to my development as a counselor and that my class and work experiences in the present and in the future will serve me well going forward.