

Reflecting on Counseling

Course Learning Fall 2015

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Author Note

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Introduction

While the formal title for the course is Communication and Group Process, one of the aspects for this course I have been most looking forward to throughout my time in the program has been developing a stronger counseling skill set. Leading up to my graduate experiences, my advisors and mentors have all emphasized the importance of having a good counseling background in the work that I'm interested in, as I could never guess what may occur in my meetings when working with Greek students or student leaders. I was also excited to begin a course that featured a faculty member from another degree program to expand knowledge that student affairs faculty might not usually be able to provide.

Because of my interest in counseling and counseling skills, one of the components that I was the most excited for and proud of were the counseling role plays. The thought of being in front of an entire class and counseling a student was initially intimidating. I was scared of what my peers might think when I worked with a student and I was also intimidated by my ability to navigate a difficult situation or a topic I'd never encountered before. Through this process in class, however, I've been able to learn about my own strengths and weakness in counseling, identify the different ways I might work with individuals, and understand ways to communicate ideas with someone I'm counseling (PLOs 2, 3, 7). I've also started to navigate how I might handle situations where I could be potentially triggered (Personal Goal 2) and how I might continue to grow as a professional (Professional Goal 4).

Links to Program Learning Outcomes

In the role play session, I was able practice elements of different counseling techniques we learned in class with a classmate who pretended to be a student. Leading up to the role play session, I was initially concerned in general about counseling a student whose situation I

wouldn't be prepared to navigate or about which I could have personal opinions or biases. Through learning about Person-Centered Therapy in class, I've learned that its appropriate to focus on the client and through a perspective of demonstrating unconditional positive regard, guide the client in coming to their own conclusions and decisions. This helped understand different strategies that exist in working with others and guiding them through issues that may arise (PLO 3).

When I started my counseling session, I was nervous because I realized that the role-play situation involved coming out as a student who identified as LGB, a situation that I was not previously experienced in navigating as a student affairs professional. That being said, while I developed some initial anxiety, my prior training in the classroom reminded me that even in this situation it was important to focus on the client. I thought back to the student development theory course and what I'd learned about being a student who identifies as LGB and how they might navigate the different phases at their own pace. With this understanding in mind, I continued to ask my role play partner questions before providing a recommendation on what they might do as a student at my campus. In this process, I came to realize that I'd developed a sense of self-regulation in working with students as well as an awareness of my own feelings in the situation.

Links to Personal and Professional Goals

In working with the concepts of Person-Centered Therapy, I was able to able to better understand how I could address triggers as they come up in my interactions with students. Through understanding that it may be appropriate the simply focus on the student instead of needing to interject with my own personal opinion, I've come to be confident that, although I may personally be triggered by certain conversation topics, I can focus on the student and let them drive the conversation. In doing so, I remove my personal opinions from the process and

instead focus on the student to let them arrive at their own conclusion. In debriefing my mock role play session, I've also come to learn that its important to not interject too much and instead focus on listening to the student. Through feedback from the instructors, I've learned that while I like to give advice to students, sometimes its important to just listen. This has allowed me to learn how I can continue to grow as well, specifically in listening to the student.

Conclusion

My original anticipation towards this class was definitely met, with exceeding amounts of learning. I've learned about myself as a professional and how I might be able to integrate counseling techniques into my practice as an advisor, and I am now more aware of my need to focus on the student. This also creates a level of comfort, as I learned that my conversations with students can focus on their thought processes. I am excited to continue utilizing the experiences from this course to continue guiding students and help them reach their full potential.