

Synthesis of Winter Quarter

Amber N. French

Western Washington University

This quarter my learning was focused around the interactions between two individuals and building interpersonal and communication skills. Building interpersonal skills, evaluating and developing an understanding for personal and professional human service ethics and values, and developing an understand of what promotes and limits human functioning are all valuable skills I have gained throughout the last ten weeks. From knowing yourself to the ability to understand how to manipulate the perception of personal and professional experiences, one can develop excellent skills to proceed in the human services field. However, in order to reach the ultimate goal of success in this profession, there are multiple considerations when working among other individuals within the field of human services.

From my perception, the most central skill to utilize is a developed knowledge and awareness of yourself. "In order to promote the well-being of others we must know and have an awareness of our own limitations, thoughts, and feelings. In essence we must know ourselves." (Smith and Smith, 2008) It is key to reflect and recall personal biases, temptations, opinions, and reactions in multiple scenarios in order to work well among diverse populations. The over-all generalized goal in the human services profession is to be a helpful advocate for those who need it. We will not be able to do this well if we are not educated about how we will react to different situations. Over the course of this quarter I have been taught to reflect and understand myself in ways I haven't done before. By doing so I learned that I can effectively work with almost any population as long as the ultimate goal is to help them get to a better place. I have also gained insight that I do have biases, such as to work harder for children who are deaf, but also that I need to learn to deal with my biases effectively to work successfully.

When successfully working with others, having the ability to transform relationships through communication is a significant element. This is one dominant skill I learned through the dyad experience and reading True Partnership. According to Carl Zaiss, our interactions among other individuals can be shaped by how we speak and how we listen. (Zaiss, 2002) This is one theory that I have learned to agree with indefinitely. After working with my dyad partner it has become clear that when effective interpersonal skills are used the conversations and work load gets accomplished much more smoothly. Throughout the quarter my schedule never matched up with my partners and we had to continuously converse to plan out our activities. It is clear, reflecting on the experience, active listening and creative thought were key elements allowing us to effectively work together.

Among these significant elements it is important to remember a successful professional relationship highly depends on having awareness about how your attitude can affect the outcome of a conversation. I came to learn that in order to contribute to a successful discussion and to develop effective interpersonal skills, it is essential to understand "...the basic attitude of the individual plays a very important role, and can make a big difference in how someone responds." (Lama, Dalai and Cutler, Howard C., 1998) Activities, such as the values exercise, has taught me that having a unique awareness for my personal values, reactions, limitations, and personalities among different individuals is key to being educated on how to produce competent dialogue in a conversation. I would say this might be the most significant skill I have gained recently. Endless amounts of thoughts and relationships can get lost in conversations if any involved individual isn't able to portray their message in a proper manner. If I was unable to express my disgust for running in a way that showed her I respect her idea but I would

appreciate a different activity more it could be misinterpreted to say that I was thinking of her in a disrespectful manner because she came up with such an idea. This can break bridges in relationships and can be especially harmful within a client-professional affiliation or even between organizations at a larger level.

Within the human services profession it is imperative to have an understanding of how personal choices and decision making processes can affect other individuals. The result can be small and strictly between two individuals or it can be large and affect multiple populations. I have gained both respect and responsibility for my choices in the past and it is something I will continue to cherish. This has been taught to me time and time again from my parents and friends and now through my education. I found it is incredibly vital to comprehend the affects your choices can have in order to provide an influence for the desired outcome. This was coherent particularly in the guided pair conversations. Throughout this assignment I had posed a question and responded to my partner in a way that influenced their train of thought which in turn fed my curiosity of the topics. Within the human services field this can be beneficial when working with clients seeking resources. The skill can be utilized to help them to understand what changes they can make to help their well-being and reach their desired goals.

It was particularly evident that a number of interpersonal skills are necessary when reading *Turning Stones* by Marc Parent. Parent encountered many different individuals and situations making it clear that anything can happen when you are working with children at risk. The situation can change on a dime and as a professional we need to know how we will react to that and how we will work with the people involved. Not only is this effective with children but

in any area of the field. I have learned having the knowledge, skills, and high competency level to interact among individuals is incredibly important when working with diverse populations.

With all of these skills, the task of working with another person can still have its challenges and benefits. The entire experience is not solely based around one individual's set of skills, but rather between two unique people with different sets of abilities. The biggest challenge my partner and I had to work around was one that was mostly out of our control, our schedule. Working with the Department of Social and Health Services I have learned that this is an important part of working in the human services field and can directly relate to my internship next quarter, working with Child Protective Services. Different organizations have different schedules, just like my partner and I did. This is one issue that can be positively affected by having excellent interpersonal skills.

All of the reading was interconnected and helped me to understand important skills of a professional in the field of human services. Each book influenced me differently through demonstrating a number of different perspectives as well as focusing on different key aspects of a professional. I found this to be beneficial and opened my mind to different perspectives on what is necessary to work efficiently as a professional. I gained insight on the importance of being aware and knowing myself (my ethics, values, biases, and personality), the perspectives of working in the field and everyday stressors, how a partnership/relationship works and how to help it work effectively, and how to manage the stress that is bound to come when working in a field so diverse.

I feel through acquisition of all these essential skills I am more determined to help. I have the desire to help the entire world but I know that alone, I cannot accomplish this. Instead I need to realize it “is not [our] task of fixing the entire world all at once, but of stretching out to mend the part of the world that is within our reach. Any small calm thing that one soul can do to help another soul, to assist some portion of this poor suffering world, will help immensely.” (Wheatley, 2010) I have learned through reflecting on my actions with my dyad partner that if we can be a friend and help the person nearest us, the people within our reach, there is much that can be accomplished over a period of time. Though we won't be directly saving the world, we can help many of the people who may need saving in our own community. All of the skills that have been elaborated on this quarter have been to help prepare me as a professional and to better understand what I can do to help the world, simply by beginning with what/who is around me.

This quarter has been a learning experience to improve my thoughts and perceptions of how I interact with other individuals. My interpersonal skills have become more developed and I feel I know how to better effectively work with a partner. From working with my dyad partner I have gained an understanding that I am someone who can work with others easily but tend to accommodate for them more than I may need to. This is something I feel I could improve on. Valuing myself and my own time is essential to self-care and time management, which can also be utilized within the field on a regular basis. Reflecting on the activities and books which I have analyzed over the last number of weeks I can say that I have become more competent and skilled in knowing how to act in partnerships and relationships, both professional and personal,

and also in knowing and being aware of my own values, ethics, beliefs, personality, and interpersonal skills.

I would say this quarter I have grown the most in my interpersonal communication skills and my ability to talk to other individuals has improved exponentially. I know I can utilize these skills in the field conversing with clients and other professionals and continue to build connections and rapport among organizations at a larger level. Everything I have learned this quarter has been interconnected to influence reflection and growth among my skills working with diverse populations, partners, and on a personal level. My abilities not only grew in just one area like I expected, but they grew in many sections of my life. Building interpersonal skills, evaluating and developing an understanding for personal and professional human service ethics and values, and developing an understand of what promotes and limits human functioning are all essentials that I have grown to respect, understand, and grow to be competent in.

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