

# Counseling Practicum I Lecture 3 Counselor Self- Assessment

Lecturer: Susan Gitau (PhD)



# Introduction

When a student is preparing to go for practicum, a lot is required of them in terms of counseling competencies, interpersonal communication skills, personal needs, and motivation as well as openness to experience the world outside of theory class.

Self-awareness and self-assessment therefore become very significant undertakings.



# Expected Learning Outcomes

At the end of this lecture, you will be able to:

- (i) Enhance your self-awareness
- (ii) Identify stress and burn out signs and symptoms
- (iii) Develop a self-care plan



# Enhancing Your Self-awareness

Many interns have loads of questions about who they are and how they can relate this with their practicum/internship expectations and demands. The following areas discussed in this lecture are helpful to analyze.



# The Intern's Self Concept

This refers to how you view yourself in many aspects including your physical traits (body image), health, self-image, self-esteem, ideal self and internal locus of evaluation.



# *Body Image*

How you know your physical traits is quite important.

This refers to your physical wellbeing, physical traits among others. Some practicum sites will require you to stand for long hours, sit for long hours, work for long hours, or use your physical muscles.



# Self-Image



This will focus on your interests, hobbies, skills, competences, aptitude areas, attitude, gifts and talents. You will realize lack of certain required competencies for your practicum may cause you a lot of anxiety and therefore working on the same may help reduce these anxieties.

# *Ideal Self*

The person you wish to become in future to give you the ideal counselor can push you to either reinforce some of the attributes you already have or start developing those that you do have and /or are weak in. this may relate to area(s) of expertise, where you want to practice, how you want to practice (private or public) and the influence you wish to give to the counseling profession.

The counselor is ever becoming so don not give up on developing your capacity.



# *Self Esteem*



This refers to the value you attach to yourself, your sense of value. If you do not have a well developed self-esteem system within, you are likely to be brought down by certain experiences from the field. Clients may let you down in many ways like missing therapies, premature termination, arrogance among others.

Self-compassion is a powerful self-care practice especially when we feel let down or guilty about our practice or when things do not go our way.

# *Locus of evaluation*



How, who and what you use to judge yourself in many aspects determine how you progress to your desired counselor level in practice during practicum and in future. If you rely so much on others to validate you, you are likely to suffer from low self esteem and lack of self confidence.

# Stress and Burn Out

Counselor practice calls for a lot of energy and commitment. This journey begins when a counselor student is in micro practice. Many a times; the counselor experiences stress and burn out and this situation can be so overwhelming that a counselor can break down.



# Stress and Burn out in the Workplace

The following is true about workplace stress and burn out:

People who work in highly demanding and risky environments sometimes show signs of psychological distress, at times showing symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), mainly as a result of either primary or secondary traumatization

Continuing to work without adequate social support or care leads to burn-out, declining functioning and risk of mental health problems



# What Is Burn Out?

Burn out is a state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion caused by long term involvement in emotionally demanding situations and adversely affects health, relationships and productivity. Interns suffer from burn out due to many reasons like work overload, lack of support and supervision amidst personal challenges.



# Signs and Symptoms of Burn Out

- Heavy responsibilities /work overloaded
- Inadequate resources
- Lack of support (administration, peer, social, spiritual)
- Vicarious trauma



# Signs and Symptoms of Burn Out

- Ignoring own feelings and needs
- Neglecting family interactions
- Unfair treatment of at the practicum site



# Signs and Symptoms of Burn Out



## Physiological

Changes in  
appetite

Weight loss or  
gain

Decreased  
immunity

Sleep  
disturbance

Lethargy

Chronic  
fatigue

Pains  
(physiological  
or somatic)



- Compulsive worrying
- Paranoid thoughts
- Inability to solve problems/indecisiveness
- Forgetfulness
- Volatile moods/depression
- Sense of helplessness/hopelessness
- Anger
- Disillusionment

Psychological/Emotional

# Behavioral

- Loss of enthusiasm/commitment to work
- Lateness and absenteeism
- Decline in work performance
- Prone to accidents
- Irritation/ intolerance with others
- Temperamental/harshness in dealing with colleagues
- Detachment from family or co-workers
- Increased consumption of substances



# Spiritual

- Loss of faith, trust and hope
- Loss of life's meaning and direction
- Despair and alienation
- Feelings of emptiness
- Meaninglessness/loss of interest
- Joylessness
- Questioning a lot about life, man and his existence, God in suffering



# Effects of Burn Out



- Chronic exhaustion
- Detachment from clients
- Declining performance and ineffectiveness
- Chronic absenteeism

# Effects of Burn Out



- Chronic exhaustion
- Cynicism and detachment from one's work
- Declining performance and ineffectiveness
- Loss of purpose, loss of meaning, loss of self

# Effects of Burn Out

- Loss of morale
- Deterioration in relationships
- Deterioration of health;  
increased sick leave
- Irritability and blame game
- Shaken belief system



# Prevention and Management

- ✓ Positive coping, self-care and social support from:
  - ✓ Friends, family members, or significant others outside the work environment
  - ✓ Coworkers and supervisors within the work environment.
  - ✓ Terms of service well explained
  - ✓ Workload/scheduling
  - ✓ Assertiveness
  - ✓ Boundaries



# Positive Coping, Self-care and Social Support



- Ongoing support
- Rest and relaxation breaks
- Supportive work atmosphere
- Friendly communication channels
- Spiritual nourishment

# Physical Wellbeing

- Regular exercise
- Adequate sleep
- Healthy nutrition
- Drinking enough water
- Laughter/smiling
- Sports and games



# Psychosocial Self Care

- Nurturing relationships
- Interaction with family/friends
- Talking/laughter/smiling
- Ongoing support group(s)/peer support



# Psychosocial Self Care



- Reflection: journaling, writing, meditating, poetry
- Setting boundaries and limits; assertiveness
- Creative activity such as drawing, sculpting, cooking, painting and photography
- Movies, books, music

# Psychosocial Self Care

- Having balanced priorities; use of vacations and breaks from work
- Understanding what stresses you and how to avoid the same
- Keeping expectations realistic, counseling, coaching
- Participating in a group or project of meaning and purpose



# Psychosocial Self Care

- Regular times of prayer, reading, meditation
- Singing or listening to meaningful music
- Fellowship, contact with religious mentors or inspiring individuals
- Time with art, nature or music
- Solitude



# Developing a Self Care Plan



- Have a commitment to self-care
- Have a positive attitude to relaxation
- Make a daily plan to care for yourself
- Tailor the self-care plan to your interests
- Remember that new habits need practice
- Have an accountability partner
- Just “DO IT”—for your sake, family, friends and productivity at work

# Conclusion

As an intern, you can be so immersed in your work and forget to look after your physical and emotional wellbeing. Lack of self care can lead to loss of enthusiasm and of meaning in one's work, raising the risk of harm to self and others. Some organizations may have some policies and practices for their counselors' care, but ultimately it is the individual's responsibility to ensure their self-care for own health and effective performance.



# References



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Thank you!

