

Reflective Journal

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Reflective Journal

Journal Entry 1

I worked with a caseworker who ran a Peaceful Kids Program. This was under the jurisdiction of a non-profit organization known as Wesley Mission. The program was run in schools for those kids who were going through a lot of anxiety and depression. The caseworker explained to me the job description and all the details about how the program runs.

It was really challenging for me to see children only 7 to 8 years of age struggle with complex mental issues such as anxiety and stress. Most of these problems were due to their alleged comparative analyses with other peers due to depression. This program aimed to help the kids so that they could reduce their anxiety and stress.

My placement tasks included the following:

- teaching the children a diverse range of mindfulness meditations
- practicing positive psychology exercises with the students
- helping the students to learn techniques about how to worry less about petty issues
- instructing children about a wide spectrum of many expressive and practical coping strategies
- teaching children strategies to solve different problems
- practicing the art of journaling with students
- assisting children in the proper expression of feelings
- learning to become attuned to the minds and bodies of students
- coaching students about the preventative strategies so that they can avoid a buildup of stress

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- comprehending and successfully recognizing the feelings of the children with depression and anxiety

These placement tasks were not to be accomplished successfully if I had not applied my skills and the acquired knowledge to complete my placement tasks.

The feelings and lack of expression of these children also challenged me. Upon probing a little further, I realized that these children's families are having difficulty recognizing the role of mental health disorders. Similarly, the parents of these children knew about the symptoms but were unable to put a name on these symptoms and could not identify it as well. This, significantly motivated me to continue my efforts as a community worker. I know that while working for these children, I will have a strong impact on them and their families. In the peaceful kid's program, the children struggle the most to better their lives and have many challenges compared to their counterparts, who do not have to suffer through these issues.

During one of the placement tasks, children started to have frequent tantrums. While I was practicing the art of journaling with these students, I often heard talks of fear and worry from them. Some students were not interested in this while some were deeply sensitive about transferring their true feelings on paper and were hesitant to execute the writing process. At that point, it was extremely hard to distinguish between the emotional challenges those children were going through and the irritability manifested by their behavior. I overcame this challenge by deploying the strategy of talk therapy and engaging the children in talks that covered multiple aspects and issues about their lives. Through talk therapy, the children felt a direct boost in their self-esteem and through the course of the program, I thought that the children were highly interested in these sessions.

Journal Entry 2

I was with a caseworker for 5 programs, and the program he ran was called 'multicultural mum group'. The program targeted culturally and linguistically diverse mothers and was abbreviated as CALD. This program allowed mothers and their children to socialize with other mothers. All the mothers, the majority of whom were immigrants, shared their experiences of motherhood and how they tackled all their everyday challenges.

Every week, we used to have a different topic for discussion, and all mothers from different cultures participated in group activities: discussions usually revolved around well-being and health, parenting information, and family support.

The tasks that I undertook chiefly benefitted the children in my program. The mindfulness meditations that I helped the children to practice on a regular basis. In addition to the improvement in their physical health problems, these meditations also helped them to focus their attention on the moment. The benefits of mindfulness have also been examined scientifically and have proven to be an essential tool in assisting the stress reduction process. While I instructed a wide range of expressive and practical coping strategies to these students, it helped them to shift their thoughts from their excessive worries and led them to appreciate the bigger perspective.

The highlights of my placement tasks included successfully recognizing children's feelings and helping them monitor and manage all the negative feelings through the art or the essential skill of journaling. The release of pent-up emotions is not only a matter of contention for the adults, but this release is also very important for children. Children, by nature, are very sensitive and get the impression of every small instance. Journaling can give small children a more positive frame of mind and there exists a conspicuous buffer between the negative feelings

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in their minds and sense of well-being. Journaling is simply putting the thoughts that appear overwhelming to children on a piece of paper. It is a known fact that children aged 7-8 cannot write very well and may have problems maintaining their journals, but merely jotting down disorganized sentences or drawing pictures of their thoughts can do the job. These children are in the formative phase of their lives, and this is a skill that can help them shape their personalities into robust individuals. Journaling is a healthy way to manage negative emotions and release toxic energy. I noticed that children started to complain, but then I told them that it is ok.

The type of client interactions I had closely resembled that of a teacher and students. The main distinction between the formal teaching instruction and my method of instruction was that I was really frank with the children. During these interactions, I learned that each child has the potential to serve the community as a meaningful individual, but this requires consistency of effort.

Journal Entry 3

In this fieldwork placement, I had the greatest support that I could ever ask for. My supervisor and caseworkers were the best company I could ever imagine being in close proximity with. They were always ready to answer my questions anytime. In addition, my caseworkers and supervisors always volunteered to print out resources for me and always promised to help me in the future.

On several occasions, I had meetings with my supervisor. One of the major learning goals which kept me motivated throughout the program was to help me understand the department of family and the associated community service (FACS). I also had a chance to probe into the details of how Wesley's mission is funded. My supervisor then further explained to me how their

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organization is being funded. I was also informed about the reasons why FACS cannot stop funding a program.

Feedback is highly important as it helps me improve my skills. I am also habitual in responding most appropriately to conflicts. I know that conflict can be an important component in situations where high-functioning teams are working, but at the same time, it is important that conflict must not escalate into a damaging situation. For example, I used to keep my nerves in check and ask myself the following questions:

What are my triggers?

What attitudes of the people around me are warning signs?

What are my defense mechanisms?

Answering these questions and updating my altered responses on a regular basis helped me immensely to avoid conflict and receive all kinds of feedback with an open mind.

During the program, I also learnt a lot about my learning style and communication skills. It turns out that I am a social and interpersonal learner. Children often came to me and asked for advice about small tasks they would execute. I was sensitive to their moods, feelings, and motivations and always boosted their confidence. I responded to the democratic management style mainly because it was participatory in nature. My supervisor at Wesley Missions retained the final authority on decision-making, but he sought my thoughts and ideas and took them into account before making a final decision. During my time in the program, I felt valued and heard. I was also able to come up with innovative and new ideas. I also took on more responsibility for the collective decisions taken by the team.

The most challenging thing while working with other people is that their internal energies tend to overwhelm me, and it results in overthinking. Spending time with children who had to

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fight with their internal struggles worried me too much sometimes. By nature, I am an empath and empaths literally feel the emotions and energies of others all the time. There were times when I suddenly felt that my energy stores have depleted, and I felt a sense of unknown danger. Working with children who had depression, I felt empath compassion fatigue, and now I am slowly trying to reverse this mental condition through increased self-care and awareness.

Journal Entry 4

As a caseworker, there are many personal and professional challenges in serving the community. I have noticed that everyone tells social workers to separate their personal lives from their jobs, but this is sometimes impossible. I had to deal with human inconsistencies and a lot of failures. Still, I also noticed that overcoming those failures was not difficult if constant dedication was targeted towards the children. One core concept that can assist a caseworker's smooth functioning is self-determination. I had to accept that my clients cannot function adequately, and I also had to overcome many biases and misconceptions.

Another professional challenge I faced was remaining calm and demonstrating compassion in the most hostile situations. Children could not cope with their internal skirmishes and brawls most of the time, but I had to keep them motivated. Many days, I also felt emotionally fatigued, but then my determination kept me on my toes. I faced a certain amount of emotional distress while facing these children but then the hope of good days and receiving thanks and letters of gratitude from mothers of those children also drove me further towards the completion of this program.

I also identified some strengths while working on this program. I have the ability to relate to children and gain their trust irrespective of their backgrounds. I had a flexible and highly practical approach to work and executed all the tasks with patience, empathy, and tenacity. Being

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a caseworker taught me that there is a need to understand children's desires and driving behaviors through multiple aspects, so I trained myself to listen to the unsaid as well.

The joys of working with small children are numerous and multi-faceted. Firstly, I was amazed by their thought processes and the way they struggled to keep up with their peers. This position was extremely rewarding, and the positive impact of this work extended beyond my role and transcended to the affairs of my daily life. I attained the satisfaction of being involved in the social, emotional, and most importantly, the intellectual development of many children who already had to face issues with their daily lives. My behavior was driven by my instinctive need to care for the children and the job demanded perseverance, patience, and intelligence.

Working with mothers belonging to diverse cultures and a lot of young kids during my placement taught me a lot of things. The most notable thing that I got to learn from this time was that every individual is different from the other, and they all have different approaches to diverse situations. Above all, the most important insight that I acquired was that there is always a major reason behind the behaviour of different people. Sometimes, that behaviour can be justified but on other times, there is no reason behind that behaviour. My experience with Wesley Missions as a fieldwork placement worker was great, and I have no regrets.

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