

Student Self-Evaluation of Counseling

Gregory C. Wright, LCPC, NCC

Department of Counselor Education & Family Studies, Liberty University

Author Note

Gregory Cecil Wright

I have no known conflict of interest to disclose.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Gregory Cecil Wright.

Email: gcwright@liberty.edu

Challenges

During this semester, I have faced minimal challenges. There were two situations, which stood out to me more than anything else. At one of my locations, I did not receive a day of training on their computer system as I had imagined. I had to start meeting with clients almost immediately and had a full day of clients. They told me that they believed in my abilities due to my credentials and years of experience. I navigated as well as could be expected in this new and unfamiliar EPHR, but I learned quickly and made minor mistakes along the way. They were receptive to my questions and gave assistance when needed.

This particular site was fast-paced and made their expectations known. I overcame uncomfortable feelings by giving myself grace to learn their system and by reminding myself that it is all right to make mistakes and to be vulnerable during the learning process. While I strive to do my best, I am reminded to respect the process and to remember that everyone has to start from somewhere.

Another challenge dealing was dealing with some of the clients' ambivalence towards mental health and attending their therapy appointments. Sometimes, this population can be ambivalent when it comes to attending to their mental health. So, the challenge was not to take it personally when clients did not come to their appointments for whatever reason. I was reminded to work with people where they are, to give them that same grace, and to be open to work with them if and when they show up.

Successes

I love working with people. If I were to talk about successes that I have experienced, I would say that a great success is to work with people, who honestly are dedicated to the process of change and growth. A few of my clients recognized the root of their issue(s), dedicated

themselves to the process of change and recovery, and are recommitting themselves daily to their goals in the treatment plan. We talked about making SMART goals, what they look like, and why they are important. Using SMART goals set people up for a level of success.

Learning the EPHR at my 1st site was a success within itself. I had to be patient with myself and did not let that stop me from my obligations, even though I do consider myself to be a fast learner. Regarding group supervision, I was the last to present my case conceptualization. While I love communicating with people, I was extremely nervous, and the responses from my professor and fellow colleagues were encouraging. Concerning supervision, I felt humbled that they entrusted me to work with their clients and were confident in my skillset to do so.

Overall, I am encouraged to continue to work with people, even more so with people in the addictions and recovery population. I have walked away with more knowledge about this different EPHR. I am encouraged about the power of advocating for myself as a counselor. Finally, I am encouraged about what kind of counselor educator I would like to become. It takes patience, meeting people where they are, and giving them what they need to become successful.

Strengths

There are a few areas, which I would consider to be areas of strengths. I am empathetic, am attentive, and am encouraging. Empathy is something that can help a client feel heard, validated, and safe. It is something that I strive to do because each person has a story and an experience that they might want to share but has no one to listen. Attentiveness to detail and to what the client is saying and how they are reacting reassures the client that I am actively listening and am there. I love to encourage people, to remind them about their strengths, to remind them of their successes when they feel that they have none, and to work with them as they process through their situations.

The video that I showed for my presentation in supervision showcased some of my counseling skills. I know some of the things that my clients, whom I have worked with, have told me, but I do not like to see myself talk. During this video, my client was experiencing mania. My professor and classmates encouraged me in my quietness (“quiet strength”), as I actively listened and was peaceful and calm during the dialogue. That video/scene was just who I am. I felt empowered by the responses that I received in class. My goal is to become the best version of myself that I can become. So, I am open to become better in every aspect.

Continued Growth & Improvement

I believe that there is always room and space, as it pertains to continued growth and improvement. There are several areas for improvement that come to mind. First, I would like to continue to work on the use of silence during the session. This gives the client time to think, reflect, and respond about the question asked. This also allows me to observe the client’s reaction to the question and how the client processes the question. It further allows me the opportunity to process the client’s response. My professor suggested that I work on the areas of immediacy, confront, and here-and-now, which were not seen in my presentation video. I will make sure that I continue to grow in this area. Next, I would like to work on communication. I believe that it is important to effectively communicate with my client. I do not have to respond as quickly and can take my time in responding to the client. Overall, I want to continue to grow and to improve in every skill set. It is necessary, especially in the field of counseling.

Countertransference

Countertransference is something that I do my best to avoid. An area of countertransference that I experienced pertained to one of my client’s, whose father was not there for him when he needed him the most. During the conversation about his father, a thought

and experience about my father came to mind. I caught myself wanting to respond, “I know what you mean!” However, I stopped and reminded myself quickly that this was the client’s story.

Although it was similar, it was not the same, and this was his time and his story to work through.

I try to stay aware of countertransference because I want to remain objective and want the client to process what he/she might be experiencing. I also do not want to influence the client in how he/she might process through his/her situation. I have to remind myself that I am the professional in these sessions. I believe that this is healthy and ethical and promotes best practices.

Theoretical Orientation, Interventions, & Growth

My theoretical orientation is built upon Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and integrated with elements from Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT), Motivational Interviewing (MI), Narrative Therapy (NT), and Person-Centered Therapy (PCT). I have used some of the following interventions: positive self-talk, thought stopping, cognitive refocusing, journaling, homework, SFBT tools, and other CBT tools. Concerning new tools to implement during this practicum, I learned new tools from my fellow colleagues/classmates during our weekly presentations. One of my classmates told me that during a session I could give my client a stress ball to hold onto when that client is experiencing mania. Another classmate told me that the client and I could toss a football or something small to each other to decrease the client’s manic levels during a session. That was enlightening to me, and I am interested in using these as interventions. I am open to learning new theoretical knowledge and practice(s). The idea is to be able to reach each client with the modality that will be most effective in treating the client’s presented issues.

Development Outcomes

I believe in continuous growth and have remained open to every opportunity to learn something different. As it pertains to goals, I wanted to make sure that I was prompt for my sessions, that I was sensitive to the client's needs, and that I practiced the skill of silence when needed. I used SMART goals to accomplish these goals. One goal was to get to that particular site 20-30 minutes before my first session Monday-Friday for the months of the practicum. It was a struggle to meet this goal consistently; however, I did get there before my session times. (I had surgery on my left foot, which is still swollen but healing.) Concerning my second goal, I listened attentively to each client and provided them the support that they needed for each weekly session Monday-Friday for the months of the practicum. I believe that I did well in this area and met the client where he/she was mentally. Concerning my 3rd goal, I made sure that I practiced silence when needed during the client's weekly session Monday-Friday during the practicum months. I did well and need continued practice on this skill. I would like to continue to grow in all areas honestly. I would like to continue to improve in the area of self-care also. I work a lot and need to make sure that I attend to my own mental health needs.

Supervision Experience Reflection

In reflection, I enjoyed all aspects of the supervision experience but enjoyed the faculty and group the most. I really enjoyed the interaction and engagement with my faculty supervisor and with the group. I enjoyed the weekly supervision and learning from the weekly meetings and presentations, which challenged me to grow in my skill set. Learning a new EPHR was daunting, but I got through it and learned. I remained professional and kept moving forward. I had to give myself the same grace that I had encouraged my clients to do. In my future supervisory relationships, I will make sure that I provide the same grace to others and will make sure that I apply that same grace to myself as well. It is all about learning and growing. I am ready for it!