COUN503 Intro to Counseling

Colleen Gleason, Ed. M.

Person as a Professional Narrative

“People are just as wonderful as sunsets if you let them be. When I look at a sunset, I don’t find myself saying, ‘Soften the orange a bit on the right-hand corner.’ I don’t try to control a sunset. I watch with awe as it unfolds.”

“The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change.”

Carl Rogers

With the benefit of years, I am more able to hold myself in the way Carl Rogers described, with acceptance, and as an unfoldment. In this unfolding, I can never be completely known to myself, nor can another be completely knowable. Acceptance of this “not knowing” helps me soften, and the inhibiting qualities I have struggled with in my life, such as self-criticism, fear, emotional sensitivity and sense of others’ problems as my own, take a back seat to my being. When I accept myself, even when others may not, there is a palpable quality of this being, of presence. I have learned that I do not need to change, that I am absolutely loved as I am, where I am. There is nowhere to go, there is no need to do.

This “non-doing” brings a sense of peace, and treading a path to this core is a skill I have been practicing for years. This peace can provide space for a client’s exploration and unfolding; it can hopefully hold a client’s trauma. I feel that this ability to be with “what arises”, however shocking or unpleasant, will make a positive contribution to our profession. Yet, being human, I have triggers. Without the benefit of having been in the counselor’s chair, I would hope that my ability to have a neutral exterior while scrambling or experiencing a busy interior is a quality I can depend on. Congruence—being honest with myself as I process a client’s experience or information—will be an important quality to bring to my counseling practice.

I will need support as a counselor. In beginning my practice, I may struggle with questions of competency. I may experience excessive worry, feel burdened, or feel personally responsible for another’s progress. I can imagine many frightening moments as a counselor when I do not know what to say or do. I feel I have some ability to respond to my own fear, through my proactive acceptance of the state of “not knowing”, trusting in the process of unfolding presence. Receiving counseling will be imperative, as will maintaining my relationship to my self-care plan. An element of self-care that will be mutually beneficial to myself and my clients is an ongoing interest in training through conferences and workshops. Through patience, and with support, I hope to allow this path as a counselor to be one of abundant grace, like water pouring out of a fountain.