**Values Paper**

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Social Work 201

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September 9, 2020

Growing up I have always believed you are who you are based upon who you surround yourself with. Since the day I can remember my mom has always planted that in my head. She has always told me to surround myself with good people that have good morals and respect for themselves. I truly believe I am the person I am today based upon who I have been surrounded with throughout my life. Growing up I think I had the best support system and people surrounding me. I am really grateful that I grew up the way I did. I grew up in a nice neighborhood and never had to worry about anything. My mom and dad didn't grow up like that, and wanted different for me and my little brother. My parents both went to college, graduated, got very successful jobs and moved into the house I have forever lived in. My parents worked the hardest they could so that me and my brother could have the best lifes. Though I have always lived like that and havent had to worry about anything, I am reminded everyday how grateful I am for everything.

The two main core values I think I have had my entire life is having empathy and being nonjudgmental. I have always had empathy for others and have always cared for others before caring about myself. My family has always told me how much I care for others and how big of a heart I have, but that I need to care about myself too. I totally agree with that. I am always the first person to be there for someone in need and to care for them and I love that about myself. I would say I have received this value from my mom, Lorrie. She has been my best friend since I can remember and I definitely picked up on this trait from her. She has the largest heart and is there for everyone no matter what. I think being surrounded around her my entire life has led me to being the empathetic person I am today. The second value I have is being nonjudgmental. This value I would say I've gotten from my friends and family. Growing up, I had friends of all sorts. I had rich friends, poor friends, adopted friends, and have never judged them based on who or what their background was. Over the years, my values have definitely changed and gotten stronger. The more experiences I have and the more people I meet help my values to grow. I would say my values align with social work very well. I think having empathy for others and being nonjudgmental are very good qualities for social workers to have. Even though I have never been involved with any kind of social work issues, I think I would be the perfect person to be a social worker and to help others. Being empathetic to others and being nonjudgmental to people that may be in tough situations is something I know I would never get tired of doing. Knowing that I could help someone improve their life and going to sleep every night knowing I'm doing something to benefit others, is the best feeling I think you can have.

Some issues I could see myself having as a social worker is not being able to always relate to people and their issues. I grew up in a stable home, with two parents that worked very hard so that I never had to worry about anything and could have everything I ever asked for. I realize that in the field of social work, that is not always the way families are. I am so grateful that I was able to grow up the way I did and never had to worry about anything. Though I had everything, I had friends in my life that didn't, and it didn't make them any different of a friend than anyone else to me. One of my best friends since middle school was in foster care when I met him. His mother was an alcoholic and his father was not in the picture. He got taken away from his mother and was put into foster care. After being in foster care for a while, his best friend's family adopted him. I remember him telling me awful stories and me wanting him to be in a better home. He was the best guy and very popular in school. Unless you were one of his best friends, you would have no idea what his home life and story was. To this day I am still his best friend and he is someone that has motivated me so much to help others. Sometimes I worry that because I didn't grow up a certain way, will I not be able to relate and help others that are living differently than I did?

The last couple years I have been fascinated with adoption, foster care, and social work. I remember the day I went to my mom and asked her if we could foster a kid. I have always wanted to foster or adopt children and hope to in the future. At my church I've gone to since I was a kid, we had a family who adopted 3 children from Africa and I thought it was the coolest thing. Before coming to college, I thought of several different jobs I could see myself doing. From working as a counselor in prisons, working with the law and children in trouble, to working with adoption, to social work. I truly believe that I am going down the right path and made the right decision to go into the field of social work. I think social work is a field that can go many different directions and has different positions to work in. I could see myself being a school social worker or a licenced social worker, and I hope one day I will be!

I think several of my values can be a great strength to social work for many reasons. I am a very persistent person and once I start something I will not give up. For example, if I start working with a family, I will do whatever I can to make sure that everything is okay and will never give up on them. I am also a very good listener. This is a value I have picked up over the last couple years. Growing up, I was not the best listener, but over the years I've become a very good listener. I love when people talk to me and I can give them my opinion and try to help them. I am also a very organized and dedicated person. These qualities are a few of my values I would use to describe myself and that I feel would be a strength to have as a social worker.

A time in my life that my values have been challenged was a time period of my life in middle school. In middle school, I was severely bullied. It was really hard for me to have a smile on my face and be my bubbly self as people know me during this time period. I had really bad anxiety and depression that made my core values disappear. I no longer had empathy for others, because I didn't feel bad for the people that bullied me. My trust and loyalty I had for everyone went away as well. This time period of my life was something that has shaped me into the person I am today. I am constantly trying to put myself in other people's shoes and never want anyone to experience the experiences I had. This life experience made a huge impact on who I am and how I want others to see me. I regained my values after changing schools and starting over. I realized who my friends were, who my peers were, and who was really there for me. I know what it feels like to feel as if you have no one on your side and you're alone, and I would never want anyone to experience that, especially a child. It's heartbreaking to me to think of children that constantly feel alone and have no support system. If it wasn't for my family being there for me I don't know what would've happened to me. My family being there for me was my motivation to continue everyday, and I can't imagine a child going through issues and not having a support system like a family. Experiences like this, make me think I can relate to children that are going through issues. I have been in those shoes and know what it feels like to feel alone. I hope one day I can at least impact one child's life and at least be there one support system.