**Person as a Professional Narrative**

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The most important thing I bring to the counseling field at this time is a wealth of personal experience and empathy. As someone who has been in treatment for depression and substance use disorder, I can relate to clients in a deeply personal way. Of course, that experience brings about the challenge of “over-empathizing.” And it’s my hope that the formal education I’m receiving will be the much-needed missing ingredient.

Along with my personal experience, I am a highly conscientious person. As a substance abuse counselor, I have repeatedly been commended for the quality and timeliness of my documentation and for my knowledge of resources and ability to connect clients with those resources. Clients have called me “easy to talk to” and have told me they prefer my counseling style to that of fellow counselors at the same organization. I understand, of course, that such statements don’t mean I’m a better counselor than anyone else. They do mean, however, that I’m doing something right.

I believe I possess good listening skills and the ability to distill a lot of information into a few key points. This can be a double-edged sword, as I can oversimplify things. I hope more training will help me with that shortcoming.

I have long held an interest in politics and government, and I was a professional journalist for many years. I hope to combine that background with my counseling experience to advocate on behalf of the profession and the people we serve.

I also need to remember not to fall back too much on my personal experience and not to expect clients to follow my pathway and do what works for me. Though that might happen sometimes, my role as a counselor is not to give advice and be a life coach. I need to help people find their own paths to wellness ‒ however that looks to them.

Impatience is another shortcoming of mine. I too often set expectations on others based on my values and aptitudes. Again, I anticipate my training at Longwood and in my residency to “smooth out the sharp edges” of my limitations.